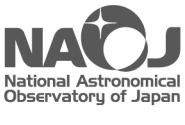
Doc #, ver. 1.0 | December, 2011

ALMA Cycle 0 user satisfaction survey

María Díaz Trigo



www.almascience.org

ALMA, an international astronomy facility, is a partnership of Europe, North America and East Asia in cooperation with the Republic of Chile.

User Support:

For further information or to comment on this document, please contact your regional Helpdesk through the ALMA User Portal at **www.almascience.org** . Helpdesk tickets will be directed to the appropriate ALMA Regional Center at ESO, NAOJ or NRAO.

Revision History:

Version	Date	Editors
1.0	December 2011	María Díaz Trigo

Contributors

Paola Andreani
Felix Stöhr

Contributors' Logos

In publications, please refer to this document as:
Author/Editor, Year, Complete Title, Version #, ALMA

Contents

This page was intentionally left almost blank

Chapter 1

Executive summary

This document summarises the results of the ALMA user satisfaction survey conducted from November 17 to December 3, 2011. The survey was sent to 2890 registered users of the ALMA Science Portal and 442 valid replies were received.

On October 3rd, ALMA started early science operations. The ALMA Regional Centres (ARC) and the Joint ALMA Observatory (JAO) worked together to provide the users with support from the moment they registered at the ALMA Science Portal until the moment they received the results of the ALMA Proposal Review Process. The survey queried the users about the quality of all the services provided to the community during this time. The preparation of the Scheduling Blocks (SBs) for accepted proposals (Phase 2), scheduling of such proposals and distribution of data to the Principal Investigators (PIs) was not included in this survey since at the time at which the survey was conducted Phase 2 had just started. The aim of the survey was to highlight aspects of the user support that worked particularly well during Cycle 0 and those that could be improved for the upcoming cycle.

The report of the results is structured as follows. Each chapter corresponds to one section of the survey (included in Appendix A). For each chapter a short overview of the results is first given, followed by the detailed statistics and the user comments. The statistics were computed for the whole sample, per executive and per expertise level. We considered three expertise levels: student, postdoc or "other". The category "other" was reserved for users that did not identify themselves as students or postdocs, implying most likely a permanent position and thus a high level of expertise. The experience in the radio/submm domain and in particular in interferometry were evaluated separately (see Chapter 2). However the three levels of expertise considered above had a direct correspondence with the statistics about expertise in the radio/submm domain.

The questions are divided in two categories: the first type of questions are answered by "Yes" or "No". The second type of questions ask for a rating between 1 and 5 for a particular statement: "1" corresponds always to the most positive answer (e.g. "totally agree" or "very good") and "5" to the most negative one (e.g. "totally disagree" or "awful"). For purposes of clarity, in the overview preceding each chapter we considered answers 1–2 as "above-average", 3 as "average" and 4–5 as "below-average". All the user comments are preceded by a number which is attached to a particular user. Although the survey is anonymous, the number allows to relate comments from particularly happy or unhappy users.

Overall, the percentage of users rating the different aspects of the Science Portal and the Helpdesk above-average was equal or above 60% and less than 10% rated them below-average. The quality of the Call for Proposals, the process of proposal preparation (including the Community Days offered by the ALMA Regional Centres) and of proposal submission were also rated above-average by more than 70% of all users. In contrast, the users considered that there is still room for improvement in the Proposal Review Process, with ∼20% of users considering the quality above-average versus ∼50% of the users considering it below-average. The major criticisms were related to the scientific assessment of the proposals and the consensus report sent to the PIs.

Chapter 2

Users profile

2.1 Overview

The number of users that answered the survey was proportionally higher in EU if we take the ALMA executive share into account. The majority of the users that answered the survey, 85%, were PIs of an ALMA proposal in Cycle 0 (see Chapter 7). This could explain partially the fact that the number of replies was not proportional to the executive shares. Instead, this percentage could be predominantly driven by the number of PIs in each executive.

Overall, the general expertise of the users was high, in the sense that only 15% of all users were students and 30% postdocs. The level of expertise varied only by 10% among executives. This is most likely a consequence of the information published in the Call for Proposals regarding the advantage of experienced users for working with ALMA Early Science data products.

The general expertise was consistent with the radio/submm expertise declared by the users. While only 17% of all the students declared to have an expertise above-average in radio and/or submm observations, the percentage increased to 34% for postdocs and to 53% for "other" (i.e. neither students nor postdocs). Similarly, the expertise in radio/submm interferometric observations was lowest for the students, with only 14% of them declaring an expertise above-average in such field, followed by 44% of the postdocs and 45% of "other" users.

Interestingly, 50% of the EA users declared an interferometric expertise above-average, versus 42-44% of EU and NA users.

2.2 Results

Number of questionnaires answered: 455

Number of valid responses: 442 (97.0 %)

Questionnaires answered per executive: EA (91, 20.6 %), EU (213, 48.2 %), NA (138, 31.2 %)

Users expertise [ALL]: Students (70), Postdocs (139), Other (234)

Users expertise [EA]: Students (23), Postdocs (25), Other (43)

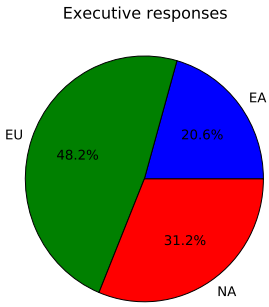
Users expertise [EU]: Students (22), Postdocs (79), Other (112)

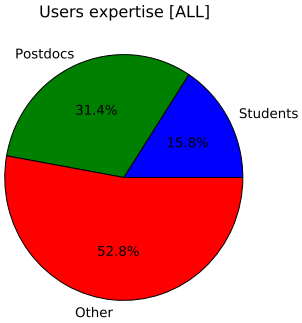
Users expertise [NA]: Students (25), Postdocs (34), Other (79)

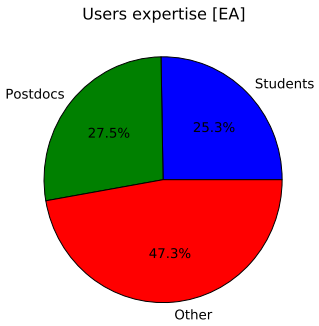
Users expertise [STUDENTS]: Students (70), Postdocs (0), Other (0)

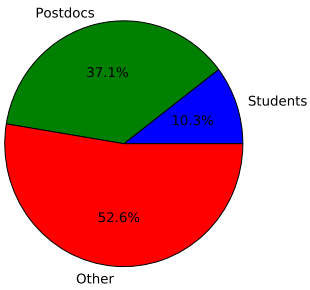
Users expertise [POSTDOCS]: Students (0), Postdocs (139), Other (0)

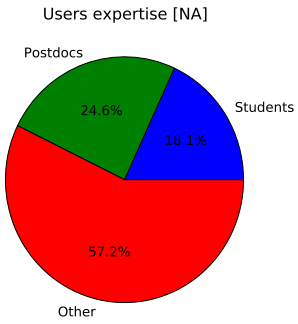
Users expertise [OTHER]: Students (0), Postdocs (0), Other (234)











[ALL] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 443]

[EA] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 91]

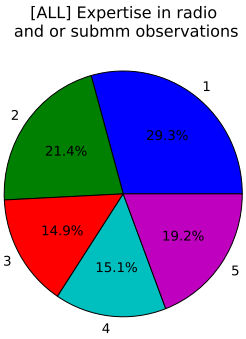
[EU] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 213]

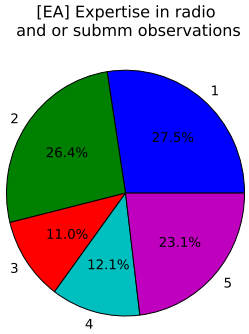
[NA] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 138]

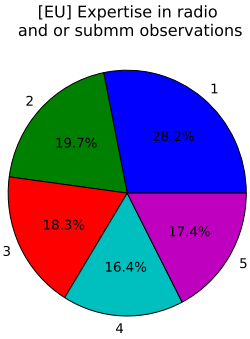
[STUDENTS] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 70]

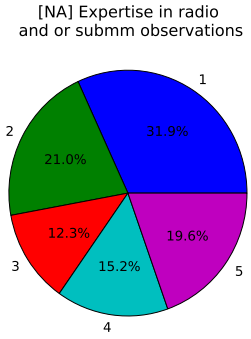
[POSTDOCS] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 139]

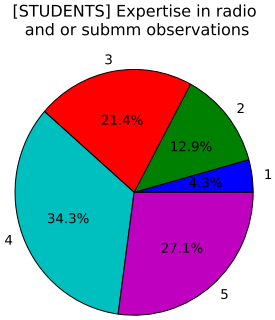
[OTHER] Expertise in radio and or submm observations [Replies: 234]

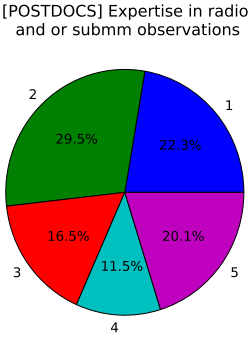


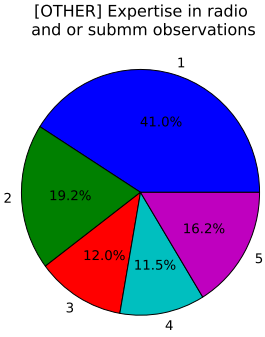












[ALL] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 443]

[EA] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 91]

[EU] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 213]

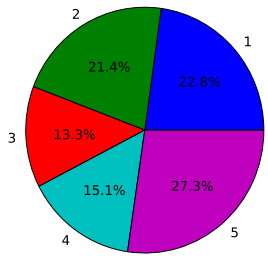
[NA] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 138]

[STUDENTS] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 70]

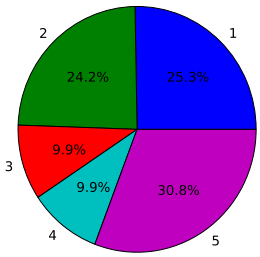
[POSTDOCS] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 139]

[OTHER] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations [Replies: 234]

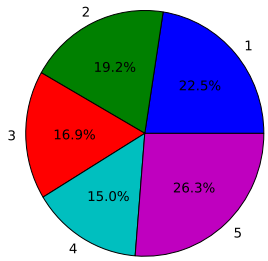
[ALL] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



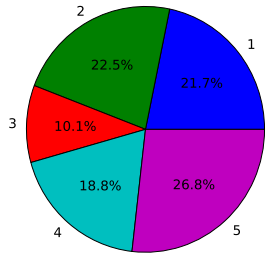
[EA] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



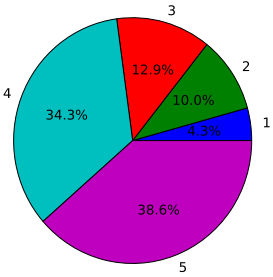
[EU] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



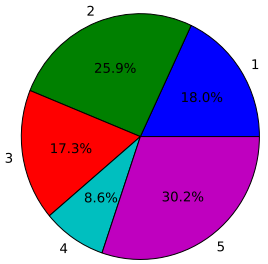
[NA] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



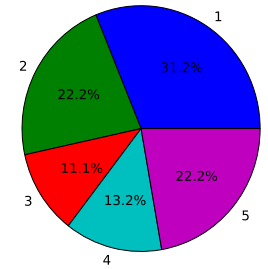
[STUDENTS] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



[POSTDOCS] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



[OTHER] Expertise in radio and or submm interferometric observations



Chapter 3

Science Portal experience

3.1 Overview

Overall 60% of the users rated the user-friendliness of the Science Portal (SP) above-average. The SP experience was similar for all levels of expertise. In addition, EA users had a slightly lower percentage of users rating above-average the user-friendliness of the SP, 51% versus ∼60% for EU and NA users.

Similarly, a high percentage of users, 83%, could find all the necessary information for preparation/submission of their proposal in the SP. The percentage of users that could not find all the information increased slightly from 11% (EU) to 19% (NA) and 28% (EA). Interestingly, the percentage of students and postdocs that could find all the information was higher, ∼86%, compared to other users, 80%.

A small percentage of all users, 7%, encountered problems with registration at the SP. The percentage was similar for all executives and levels of expertise. 76% of such problems were solved within a short (hours) timeframe. The number of problems solved within hours was highest for EU users, 92%, followed by EA, 80%, and by NA, 43%. This could reflect the overlap of time zones between Chile and the executives, since JAO is responsible for the solution of the registration problems. In any case, it should be taken into account that the total number of cases not being resolved within hours is only 6, and therefore the percentage has a low significance.

The main comments specific to the SP were related to circularity of the portal and insufficient, inconsistent or repetitive information at different places (e.g. regarding the correlator capabilities in Band 9, monitoring programmes or ToO and time-critical targets). Additional comments addressed the technical problems with given software versions when running the tools or the change of policies/information/definitions with respect to the what was indicated in the SP.

3.2 Results

[ALL] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 368]

[EA] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 70]

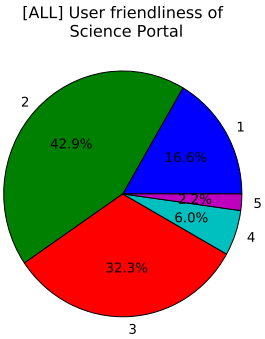
[EU] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 176]

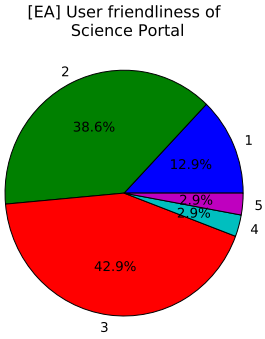
[NA] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 122]

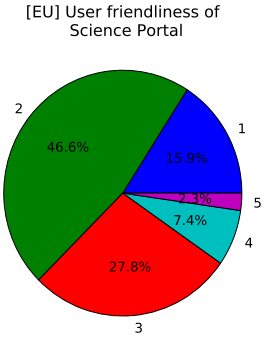
[STUDENTS] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 55]

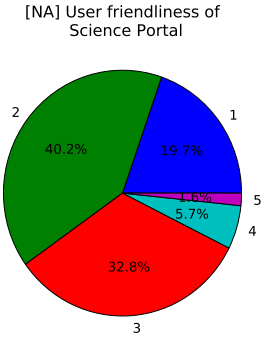
[POSTDOCS] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 116]

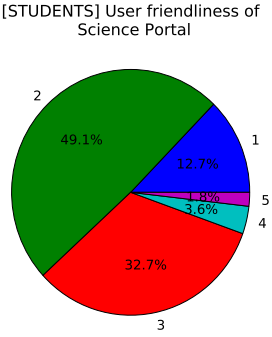
[OTHER] User friendliness of Science Portal [Replies: 197]

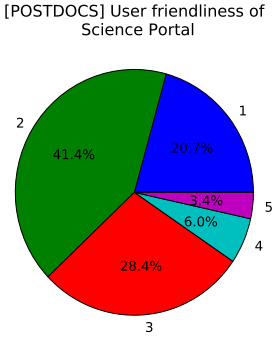


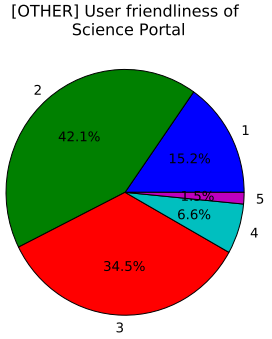












[ALL] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (280), No (58) [Replies: 338]

[EA] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (48), No (19) [Replies: 67]

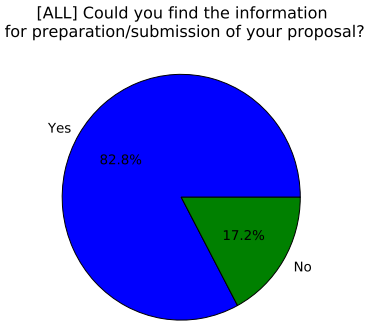
[EU] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (138), No (17) [Replies: 155]

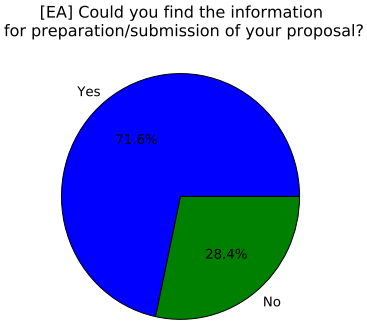
[NA] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (94), No (22) [Replies: 116]

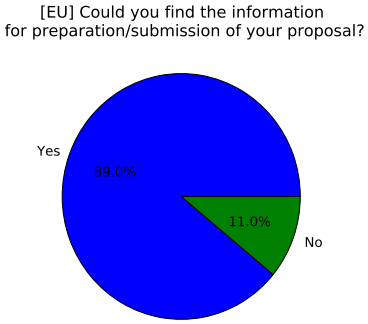
[STUDENTS] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (41), No (7) [Replies: 48]

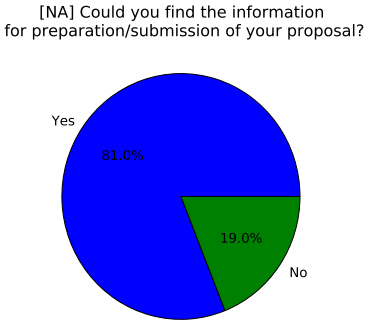
[POSTDOCS] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (95), No (14) [Replies: 109]

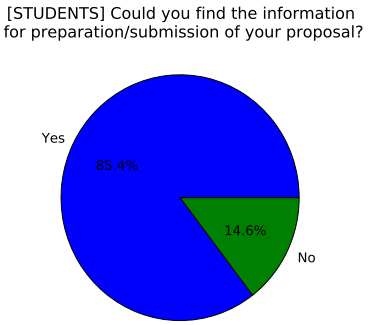
[OTHER] Could you find the information for preparation/submission of your proposal? Yes (144), No (37) [Replies: 181]

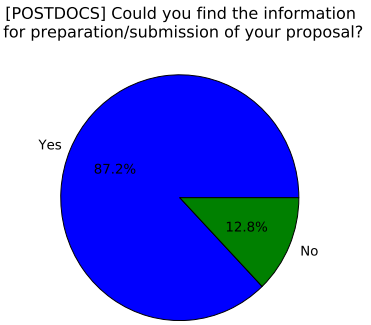


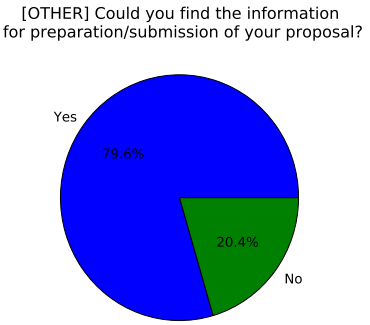












[ALL] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (31), No (385) [Replies: 416]

[EA] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (6), No (81) [Replies: 87]

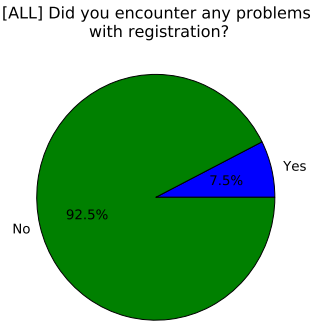
[EU] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (16), No (183) [Replies: 199]

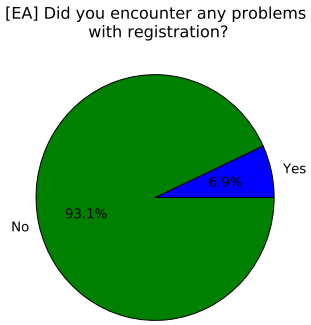
[NA] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (9), No (121) [Replies: 130]

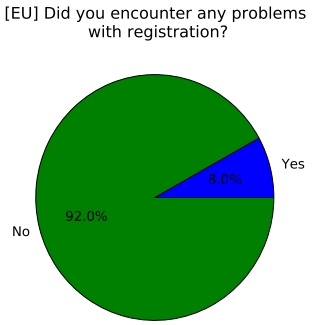
[STUDENTS] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (4), No (64) [Replies: 68]

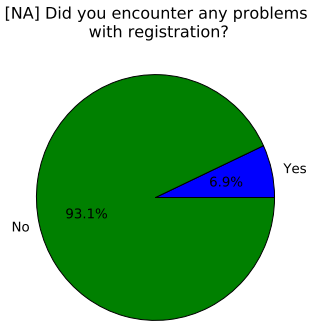
[POSTDOCS] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (7), No (124) [Replies: 131]

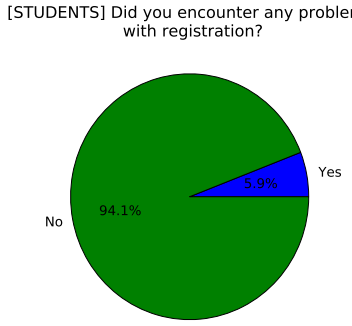
[OTHER] Did you encounter any problems with registration? Yes (20), No (197) [Replies: 217]

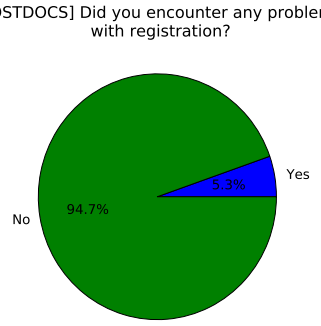


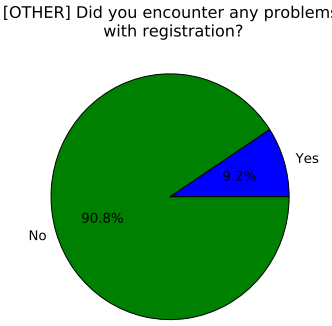












[ALL] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (19), No (6) [Replies: 25]

[EA] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (4), No (1) [Replies: 5]

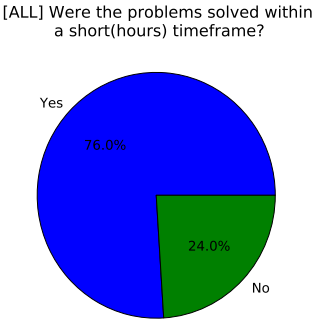
[EU] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (12), No (1) [Replies: 13]

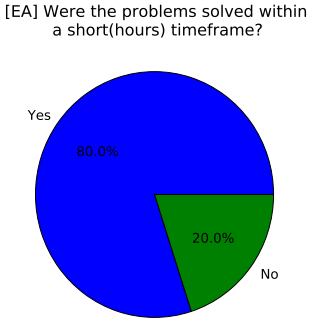
[NA] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (3), No (4) [Replies: 7]

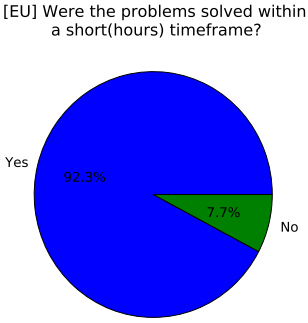
[STUDENTS] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (3), No (1) [Replies: 4]

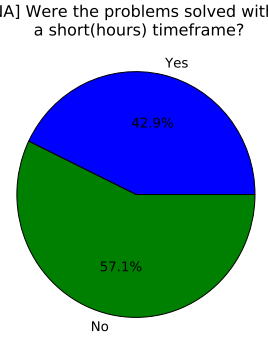
[POSTDOCS] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (6), No (1) [Replies: 7]

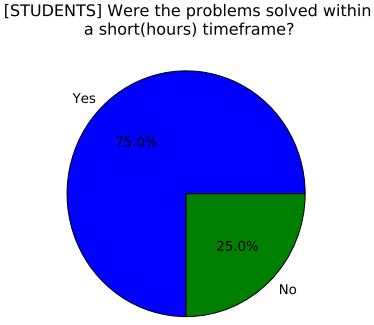
[OTHER] Were the problems solved within a short(hours) timeframe? Yes (10), No (4) [Replies: 14]

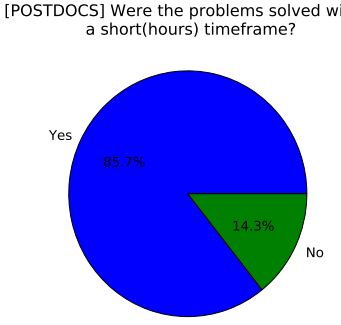


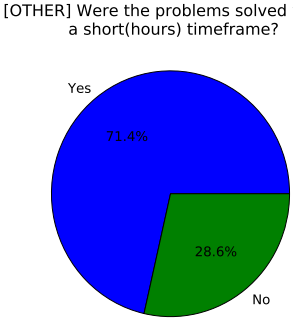












3.3 Comments

4. More information about ToOs time-critical observations and transients required.

Also more detailed technical information required.

35. The information on the correlator capabilities for the 650 GHz band was not good enough.

48. Info was found on the portal, but the information is difficult to find and contradictory at various locations. It was also confusing to see changes in policies/information/definitions that were not announced nor explained. In the end I got what I wanted, but just because I REALLY wanted it and also chatted with ALMA insiders to solve the contradictions on the documentation on the science portal. If I was not super-motivated I would have given up.

66. my main comment is that I put in a proposal for monitoring observations. I checked everything I could in advance and sent a few emails and all seemed fine. However my proposal was immediately rejected as you wouldn't do monitoring. So I was mislead and wasted a lot of time.

71. I don't remember seeing a science portal.

107. I did this before the summer, so it is a bit difficult to remember all the details now.

133. rIapliedforpostdoctoralpositiofor2012andIamwaitingforyourspositiveconfmaton.

151. there ws a bug in the registration software - took a few days to fix - and I could not use the helpdesk because I could not register,

153. It's a bit long time since I did all this so my memory has already faded. It would have been better to start this survey a month after the deadline!

154. I had some trouble finding information about the correlator setup when preparing my ALMA proposal. My problem was that in band 9, one cannot put all correlators in the lower sideband (which I eventually found out through the helpdesk).

159. It was necessary to speak to a NAASC rep. a few times during the submission process, but this is understandable given the early call.

171. Everything is pretty clear, there were lots of examples of proposals and the help-desk is neat.

189. I only used the portal to gain access to proposals for review. I did not use it to create a proposal.

191. Unclear from proposal documentation about support for non-sidereal targets.

196. see ticket 1557

214. There are too many different overview documents, it would be better to concentrate the information.

236. The portal website seems somewhat circular

246. The software shouldn't require the very latest version of Mac OS and Java. This really created serious problems. First, lots of time was wasted trying to get the software to run under 10.5, and I get mixed responses as to whether it should work on that platform. Then, after I upgrades to 10.6, ALMAOT ran but most of my other software was trashed to the changes in X11 in 10.6. PLEASE!!!! ensure that your software is backwards compatible a few versions. Or, supply every potential user with a sparkling new laptop!

296. Ourproposalisneartoberesubmitted. Informations useful for our submission could be the actualized instrumental performances and the various pressure factors by science domains

309. the difference between channel spacing and spectral resolution needed to be more explicitly stated

336. ALMA isn't an interesting instrument t present.

358. I was not the main author on the proposal.

370. iama collaborator, not the main person who filed the proposal

397. Detailed calibration accuracy and dynamic range to be achieved in Cycle 0 were not clearly mentioned in SP.

415. The SP is friendly. The Helpdesk can be a bit more cumbersome than simply using email.

423. Affiliation would not show properly, and it took multiple tries to correct.

Chapter 4

Helpdesk experience

4.1 Overview

43% of the users consulted the knowledgebase (KB) articles. The percentage of users consulting the KB articles was higher for the NA users, with 57% of positive answers, versus 36% of EA and EU users. In addition, only 33% of the students consulted the KB articles versus ∼45% of more experienced users (postdocs and experts).

Overall, 60% of the users consulting the KB articles found their quality above-average, 36% average and only 4% below-average. The EA users had slighlty more extreme opinions about the quality with 68% of users rating the articles above-average and 7% below average. The percentages for EU and NA users were 57-59% above-average and 3% below-average. There were no significant differences on the rating of the quality of KB articles by expertise, although a small fraction (between 5 and 10%) of articles shifted from a quality above-average to medium as the expertise of the user increased.

The helpdesk was used by 26% of the users. The fraction was higher by 10% for the NA users compared to EA and EU users. In addition the percentage of users requesting help via the helpdesk increased with the expertise of the user. A reason for the lower use of the Helpdesk in EU compared to NA could be the existence of the ARC nodes distributed throughout Europe and the fact that users may have contacted personnel at the nodes instead of issuing Helpdesk tickets.

A total fraction of 9% of the helpdesk tickets, equivalent to 8 tickets, were not solved. The percentage of non-resolved tickets is higher for the EU ARC where 17% of the tickets were not solved, as opposed to 6% for NA and 0% for EA. We observe a trend with expertise. The fraction of non-resolved tickets increased with the expertise of the users.

The helpdesk performance was highly rated. A total of 78% of the users rated the helpdesk performance above-average and only 5% below-average, corresponding to five users. These five users belonged to EU. As the expertise of the user increased, the users were more critical with the performance of the helpdesk. However, even in the group of most expert users, 76% of them rated the performance of the helpdesk above-average and only 3% below-average.

The usability of the helpdesk was also highly rated, with 70% of the users rating it above-average and 8% below average. In this case, the percentage of users rating the helpdesk usability below-average was similar for EA and EU executives, 10%, and slightly lower for NA, 3%. The number of users rating the usability above-average increased with the expertise of the user, 74% of experts versus 46% of students.

The most relevant comments addressed the fact that some tickets were not resolved because no information was available to the Helpdesk from "ALMA", or that the information given by the Helpdesk, the Science Portal and the documents was inconsistent. It was also mentioned that KB articles were not updated when some conditions were changing (e.g. the configuration schedule). Two comments addressed the usability of the Helpdesk and expressed the opinion that using e-mail would be easier than a Helpdesk system.

4.2 Results

[ALL] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (173), No (232) [Replies: 405]

[EA] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (30), No (53) [Replies: 83]

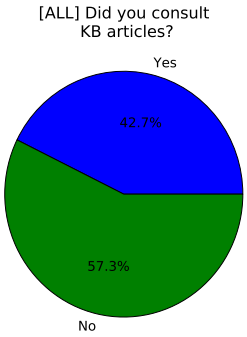
[EU] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (70), No (123) [Replies: 193]

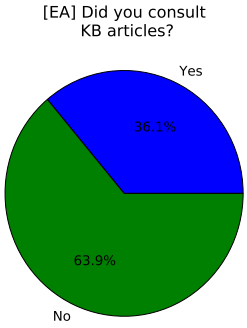
[NA] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (73), No (56) [Replies: 129]

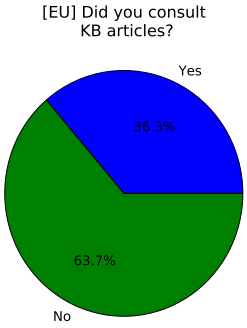
[STUDENTS] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (21), No (42) [Replies: 63]

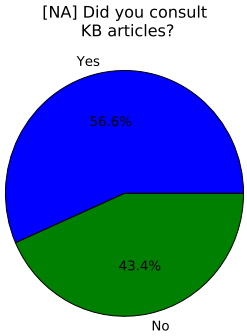
[POSTDOCS] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (59), No (70) [Replies: 129]

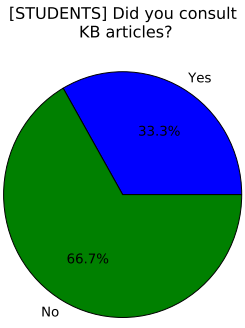
[OTHER] Did you consult KB articles? Yes (93), No (120) [Replies: 213]

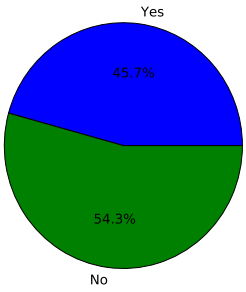


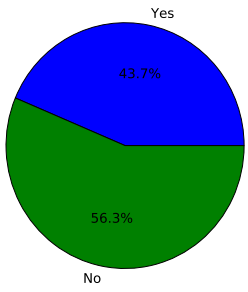












[ALL] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 164]

[EA] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 28]

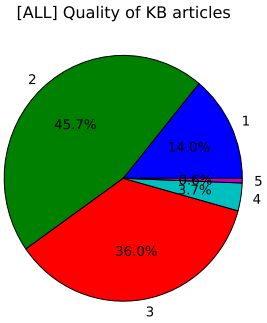
[EU] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 65]

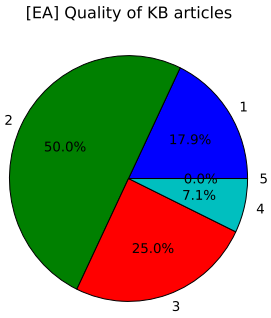
[NA] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 71]

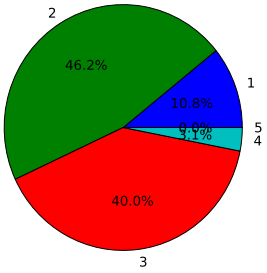
[STUDENTS] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 20]

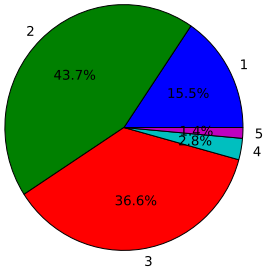
[POSTDOCS] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 57]

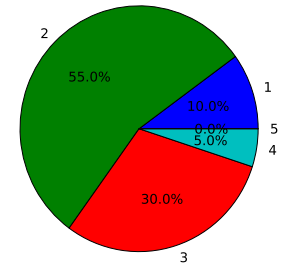
[OTHER] Quality of KB articles [Replies: 87]

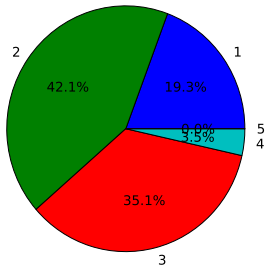


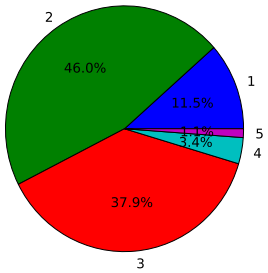












[ALL] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (107), No (299) [Replies: 406]

[EA] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (20), No (64) [Replies: 84]

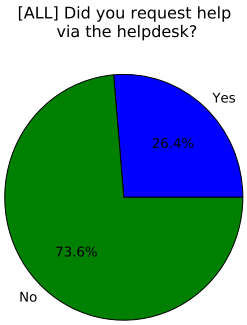
[EU] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (45), No (148) [Replies: 193]

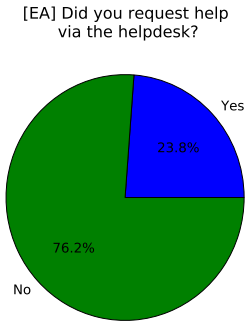
[NA] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (42), No (87) [Replies: 129]

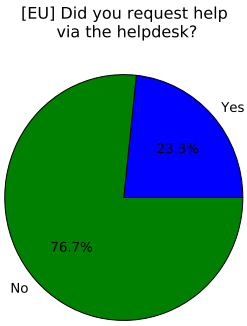
[STUDENTS] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (9), No (54) [Replies: 63]

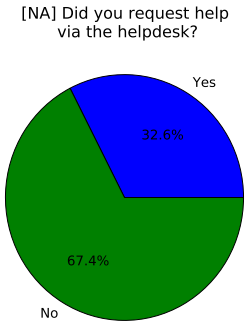
[POSTDOCS] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (33), No (97) [Replies: 130]

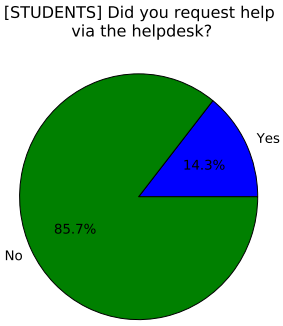
[OTHER] Did you request help via the helpdesk? Yes (65), No (148) [Replies: 213]

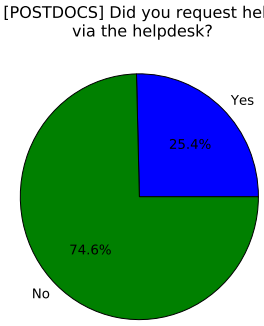


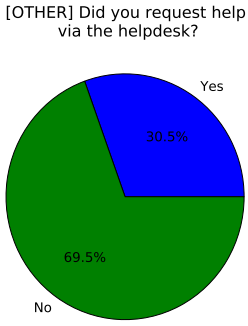












[ALL] Was the problem solved? Yes (82), No (8) [Replies: 90]

[EA] Was the problem solved? Yes (18), No (0) [Replies: 18]

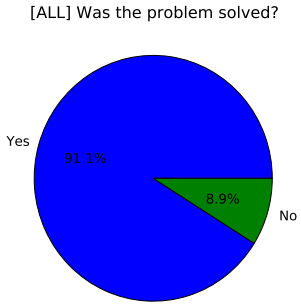
[EU] Was the problem solved? Yes (30), No (6) [Replies: 36]

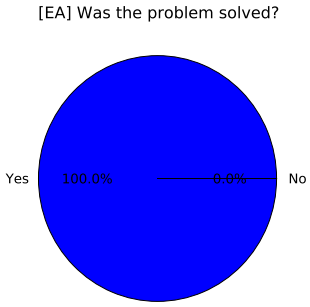
[NA] Was the problem solved? Yes (34), No (2) [Replies: 36]

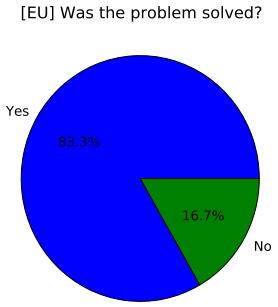
[STUDENTS] Was the problem solved? Yes (8), No (0) [Replies: 8]

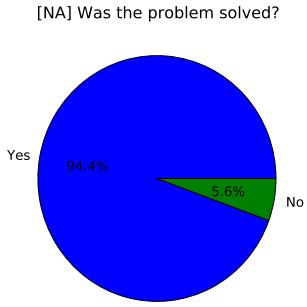
[POSTDOCS] Was the problem solved? Yes (28), No (2) [Replies: 30]

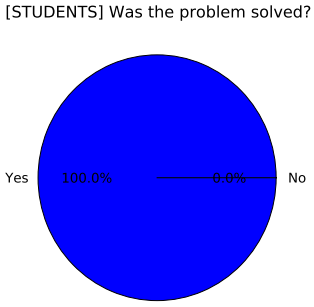
[OTHER] Was the problem solved? Yes (46), No (6) [Replies: 52]

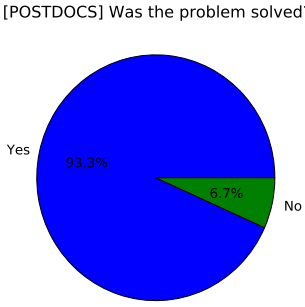


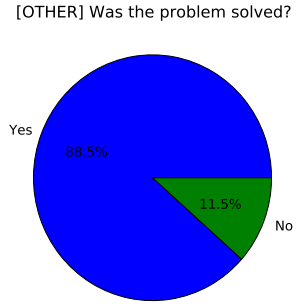












[ALL] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 103]

[EA] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 20]

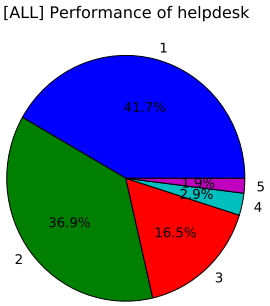
[EU] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 41]

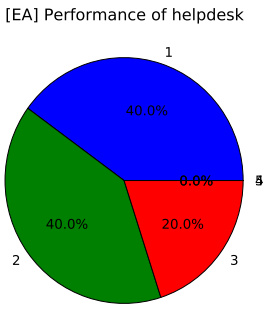
[NA] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 42]

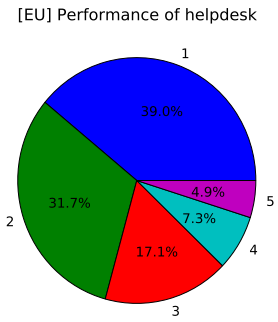
[STUDENTS] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 9]

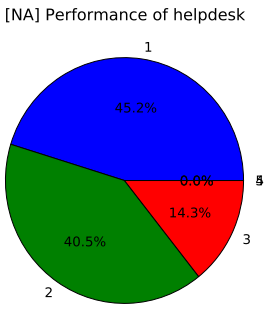
[POSTDOCS] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 32]

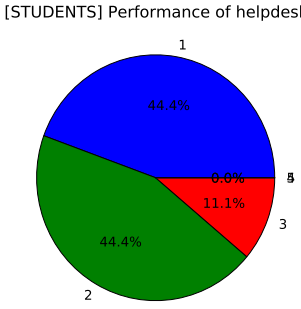
[OTHER] Performance of helpdesk [Replies: 62]

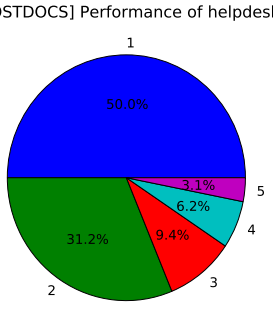


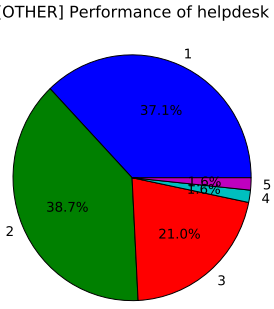












[ALL] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 177]

[EA] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 40]

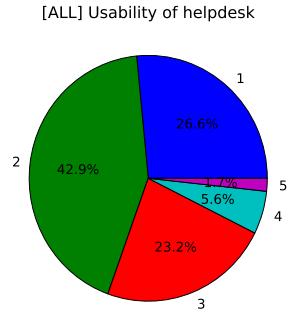
[EU] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 72]

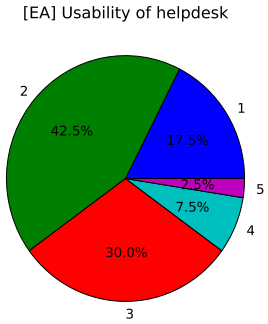
[NA] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 65]

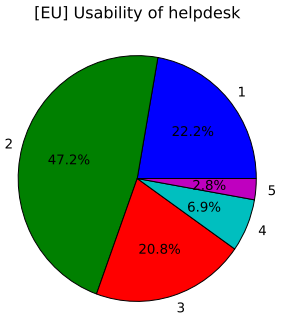
[STUDENTS] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 23]

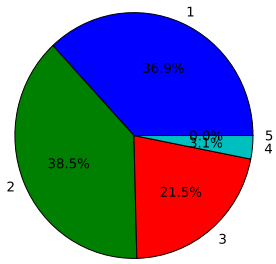
[POSTDOCS] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 59]

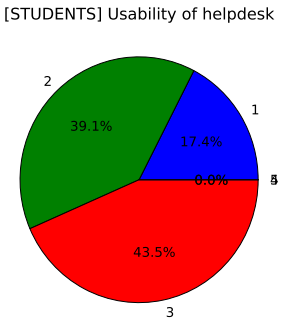
[OTHER] Usability of helpdesk [Replies: 95]

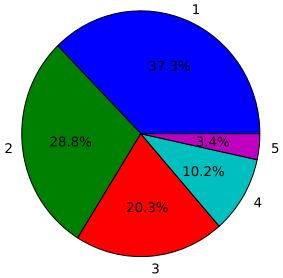


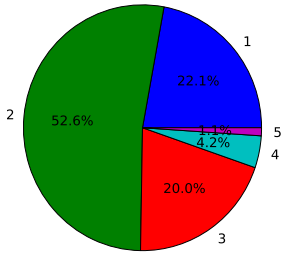












4.3 Comments

34. Quick and precise replies of the helpdesk.

66. I did send a number of emails to experts regarding monitoring, but I can't remember if I specifically asked the helpdesk. I read all the blurb and didn't find anything that said it wouldn't be allowed.

70. I had a problem which was solved just the day of the submission deadline

71. I only consulted a "guide for alma early science" document.

81. It was impossible to fully print the title page. Even the helpdesk could not do it afterwards. This implies that till now I have no full printed version of my proposal.An incredible situation!

98. The Helpdesk facility itself I thought worked well - I got fairly timely responses and the answers were good to a point. The problem was that many of the issues that arose (regarding proposal assignment, technical review, and science evaluations, etc) were beyond the purview of the Helpdesk...so their response was limited to what they could pry from ALMA itself, which was often quite unsatisfying.

119. There were small unconsistencies between helpdesk responses/ documentation / information given at meetings

163. I ended up sending in several tickets on the same issue... it was not clear to me that I needed to follow within the same ticket. I got a e-mail from the helpdesk begging me to stick to one ticket only... oops!

164. It would be useful to be able to search for other people's questions to the helpdesk, in case someone has asked the question I'm about to ask.

171. I haven't used the helpdesk for ALMA proposals, but I did for CASA troubleshooting and they answered immediately and solved my problem right away.

192. slow comunication

203. Good responses, some problems still being clarified. Some users I support hit reply to 'donotreply' emails and get confused.

212. I was looking for CASA scripts to do basic things (i.e., make spider diagrams. They didn't exist and I was informed of this.

214. Knowledge base articles should be updated for changing conditions (e.g. shift of the plan for the configurations).

274. I don't know really if the information I read belonged or not to the "knowledge base articles available at the Helpdesk". I just search, click, and try to get the information, wherever it is.

393. did not use Helpdesk

403. I did use the help desk, but not specifically for help with a solvable problem.

415. The web-based helpdesk is ok, but email is easier.

424. I may have looked over some knowledge base articles - it has been long enough ago now that I don't recall for certain.

Chapter 5

Call for Proposals

5.1 Overview

The vast majority of the users, 89%, considered that the Call for Proposals (CfP) included all the necessary information. The percentage of users who considered that some information was lacking was slightly higher for experienced users, 16%, compared to students and postdocs, 6%. There were no significantly different opinions among executives.

There were a number of comments enumerating lacking, inconsistent, or confusing information in the Call for Proposals. The comments were related to several levels along the process, from technical issues to operational capabilities or the proposal review process. Some examples are: change in telescope configuration, unclear information about correlator capabilities and IF/LO systems, availability of mosaicing and high frequency observations, inconsistencies of the CfP with the Technical Handbook, incomplete or lacking information on calibration strategies, abilities and limitations for solar system observations, fast switching between bands, spectral sweeps, mapping of Time Allocation Comittee ratings and scheduling priorities, minimum possible sampling time for observations, maximum permitted time for a proposal, type of targets, communication of proposal review results to PIs, optimal bandwidths, exact meaning or expectations of review committee regarding "related proposals" or "public promotion" sections, expectations for Cycle 0, distribution of targets in the sky, availability of monitoring observations, accuracy of sensitivity estimates, handling of Target of Opportunity (ToO) moving targets, absence of fast ToOs, vague and confusing control parameters in the Observing Tool (OT) and availability of Science Verification data.

5.2 Results

[ALL] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (358), No (45) [Replies: 403]

[EA] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (70), No (12) [Replies: 82]

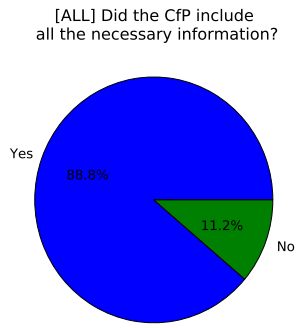
[EU] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (175), No (17) [Replies: 192]

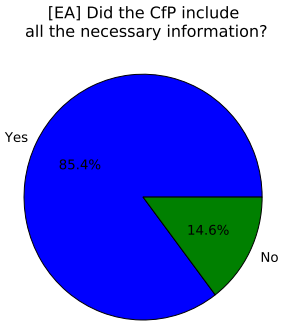
[NA] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (113), No (16) [Replies: 129]

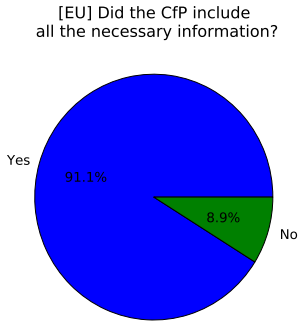
[STUDENTS] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (59), No (4) [Replies: 63]

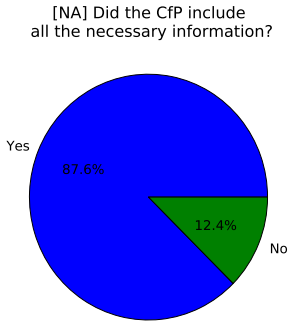
[POSTDOCS] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (121), No (7) [Replies: 128]

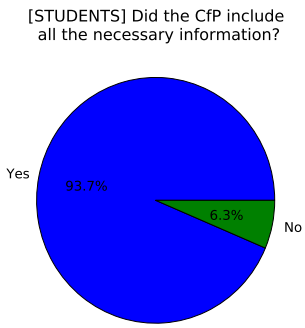
[OTHER] Did the CfP include all the necessary information? Yes (178), No (34) [Replies: 212]

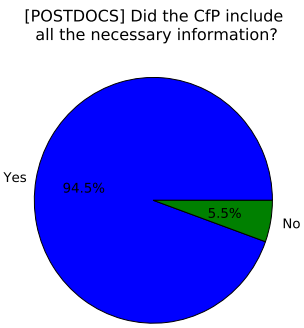


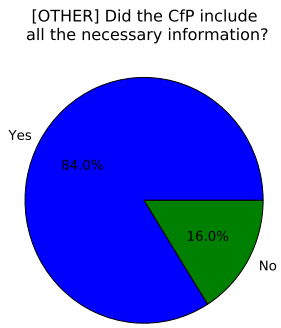












5.3 Missing information in the Call for Proposals

4. Information on repeated fast switching between bands was missing.

19. the change in telescope configuration schedule after the submission potentially meant proposals which were feasible weren't submitted.

34. One of the TAC comment was that our program was to ambitious for the commissioning period. The call does not specify that cycle 0 is a commissioning period.

35. The correlator capabilities was a bit confusing.

66. Didn't say you wouldn't monitor

72. I was confused about the 'real0 aviability of mosaicing and high frequency observations.

89. + The Call for proposal was inconsistent with the Technical Handbook regarding TFB shifts

+ The (ALMA-imposed) calibration strategy were not announced (possibility of having two gain calibrator, allowed accuracy of the bandpass)

98. Much information regarding abilities and limitations for solar system observations were not delineated.

102. Information about breakpoint policy (later added to knowledge base).

130. The call lacked about any information on how the TAC ratings would be translated to scheduling decisions.

150. A clear specification of the minimum possible sampling time of the data was missing. Only the dump time was apparently dealt with

151. I was not possible to enter certain observing sequences in a sensible format.

160. Proposals greater than 20hr were rejected out of hand by the ARP. This should have been stated in the Call, or the ARP better directed.

176. Proposal format written in CfP was a bit confusing. In particular, whether figures and tables should be prepared in separate page or same page within the main text is not clearly specified.

191. Clarity about types of target that could be observed and method for notifying PIs/CoIs.

192. n/a

196. I'm not certain, but as far as I recall the call itself did not explicitly mention whether solar observations would be offered in cycle 0.

212. The tone and sense of the CfP was not really in line with the ultimate results of the TAC approved programs (which leaned heavily on planetary science and seemed to include things discouraged in the CfP).

219. It was not explicitly written that variable sources was not recommended for observation.

228. Optimal bandwidth centers for continuum emission should be established, perhaps for a variety of spectral indices.

229. The meanings of "related proposals", "public promotion", and some other items were completely missing. ARC(s) shall specify what shall be written and what shall be required in those items very very clearly.

235. a lot of the background info only became clear with the alma staff visits to our local institution

236. Which region to belong to (EA, EU, US) was somewhat unclear for people working at a certain region with stringer ties with another region.

271. It was unclear exactly what kind of project was expected, and what role the kind of project would play on the final proposal acceptance decision.

300. information that indicated that the time allocation committee (i.e., the proposal referees) would ignore proposals with particular science, scope or source declination if they deemed so appropriate.

314. uncertainities due to atmosphere and equipment to estimate phase noise

347. The information on the technical part was far from being complete along with the simulation part.

350. ALMA IF/LO systems not very well documented.

355. There were various rumors circulating about the availability of different RA's.

357. It was not clear that "complex" observations involving spectral sweeps would not be supported.

408. Feasibility of Monitor observation.

426. There were a number of issues related to sensitivity estimates (particularly in how to relate these in the OT) that were confusing (or misleading). I found the description of spectral resolution vs. channel spacing

very confusing, despite considerable experience with 4 other interferometers. But, its a complex instrument, so naturally there will be some expected evolution in the descriptions.

437. Little information on how to handle target of opportunity moving targets.

5.4 Comments

45. Actually I don't know.

71. I did not read the CfP carefully. This question should have a "no answer" option.

163. I learned a day before the deadline that the time calculator was a super rough estimate that I should mentally multiply by a factor of a few to get a realistic estimate. This was informed to the audience at the ESO/ALMA conference in Santiago right during the deadline period. If this is indeed the case, it should be highlighted somewhere so that it's evident for the inexperienced user!

192. n/a

209. I find the category names to be a little vague- I would recommend clarifying them somewhere in the documentation.

228. As Early Science was only on a best-effort basis, it was disappointing that there was no opportunity for rapid ($<$ 3 week) targets of opportunities.

300. Next time, please have the committee decide on this issue before the call for proposal so that proposers do not waste their valuable time writing proposals that are not going to even be looked at just based on the science or position of the source.

308. Mostly; the part about the science control parameters was very vague and confusing. I suggest that that part is deleted in future calls since the time justification is described in teh technical section and can very often not be captured in a few numbers.

357. The next call should be very specific about what kinds of projects will not be considered.

358. I did not read the call for proposals.

389. Far too long, it could have included less.

408. Please improve how to announce the capability of Science capability.

424. I'll qualify this by noting that the call for proposals did point users in appropriate directions, but there were still somewhat open areas that users had to continue to monitor and seek other documents. These were to be expected given the status of ALMA, and were items like available observing modes, whether verification data were available, etc.

Chapter 6

Proposal preparation

6.1 Overview

The vast majority of users, 79%, did not encounter problems during proposal preparation. This percentage was slightly larger for students (82%) than for postdocs or experts (78%). No significant differences were observed among executives.

Overall, the problems encountered during proposal preparation were mostly related to the OT (46%), followed by simdata (18%), the ASC (14%), lacking documentation (11%) and the OST (10%). Only 2% of the users reported inconsistent documentation.

Interestingly, the problems encountered during preparation had a different weight per executive. While the OT showed the largest number of problems in all the executives, 39-53%, the second source of problems was simdata for EA and NA users, 18-27%, but the ASC, 18%, for EU users. Similarly, while the OST was the third source of problems in EU, 13%, it was only in fifth position in NA, 3%. This could reflect the use of different tools per executive.

The user comments were very useful to identify the problems associated to each tool. Section 6.3 shows all the detailed comments. As an example, problems encountered in the OT included: slow behaviour, fields not well described, manual spectral-line frequency set-up, cover page not correctly printed, mosaic pattern difficult to control, problems to enter certain observing sequences or to save the output file, issues with overlapping bands or selection of lines at band edges.

A particular section (see 6.4) addressed the workshops organised by the ARCs and ARC nodes with the purpose of training the community, so-called Community Days.

Overall, 57% of the users attended Community Days. The participation was somewhat lower in Europe, with 52% of users attending the workshops, versus 60-62% in the other executives. The students had a lower participation (46%) versus postdocs ane experts (58-60%).

The quality of the Community Days was highly rated. 72% of the attendants rated the quality of the workshops above average, 19% as average and only 9% below average. The quality was rated highest by the students with an 86% of rates above-average and lowest by the postdocs, where 16% rated the quality below-average.

Per executive, the EA community was more pleased with the workshops, and only 4% found the quality below-average, versus 9-11% for EU and NA.

Some relevant comments were that not too much information was available at the time of the Community Days or that many things changed between the date of the Community Days and the Call of Proposals. A number of users suggested to include more practical examples, to add/improve workshops for data analysis and to separate beginners from experienced users. Finally, some users had problems with the installation of the software.

6.2 Results

[ALL] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (84), No (311) [Replies: 395]

[EA] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (23), No (57) [Replies: 80]

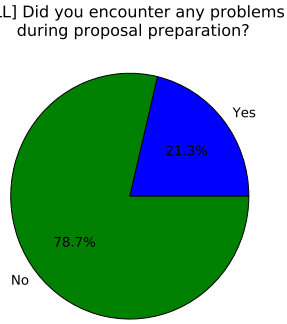
[EU] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (33), No (156) [Replies: 189]

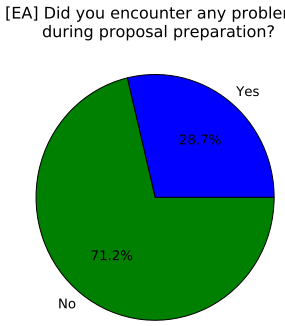
[NA] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (28), No (98) [Replies: 126]

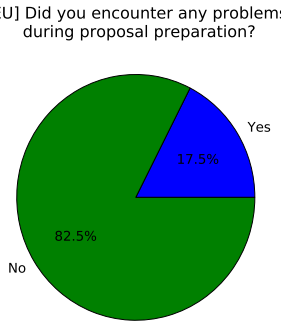
[STUDENTS] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (11), No (50) [Replies: 61]

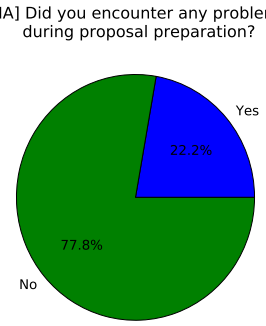
[POSTDOCS] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (27), No (98) [Replies: 125]

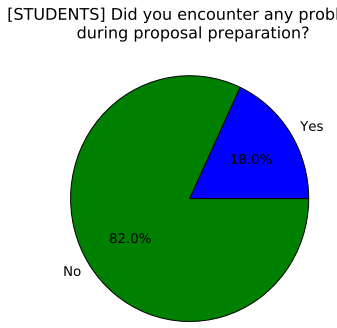
[OTHER] Did you encounter any problems during proposal preparation? Yes (46), No (163) [Replies: 209]

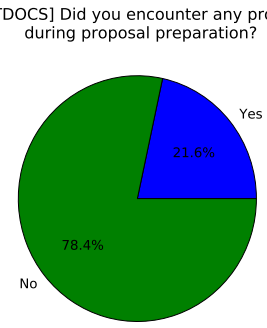


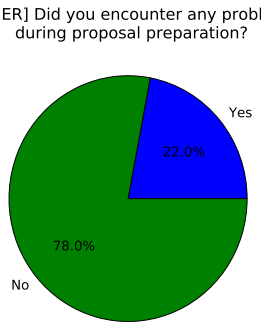












[ALL] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (52), ASC (16), OST (11), simdata (20), lacking documentation (12), erroneous documentation (2)

[EA] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (17), ASC (3), OST (3), simdata (6), lacking documentation (3), erroneous documentation (0)

[EU] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (22), ASC (9), OST (7), simdata (4), lacking documentation (5), erroneous documentation (1)

[NA] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (13), ASC (4), OST (1), simdata (10), lacking documentation (4), erroneous documentation (1)

[STUDENTS] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (7), ASC (2), OST (1), simdata (4), lacking documentation (1), erroneous documentation (0)

[POSTDOCS] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (18), ASC (7), OST (5), simdata (5), lacking documentation (3), erroneous documentation (0)

[OTHER] The problems encountered during proposal preparation were related to: OT (27), ASC (7), OST (5), simdata (11), lacking documentation (8), erroneous documentation (2)

Erroneous documentation: no erroneous documentation specified

6.3 Problems encountered during proposal preparation

6.3.1 Observing Tool (OT)

4. For monitoring experiments it was not possible to enter time on source""

12. OT was on working on my laptop (java problem), the online version was often slow and overloaded shortly before the deadline

26. for some fields, it was not totally clear what was exactly expected we had to fill in

34. The text in the pdf version of the proposal overfilled the available boxes.

55. setting line observations was not trivial

71. setting spectral line frequencies by hand

81. Big problems with thhe title page.

82. Nothing in specific. I guess the difficulties I encoutered were purely related to my inexperience in radio/(sub-)mm observations.

89. Slow

96. I had some problem getting transitions from on-line catalogue showing up in the bands in the receiver setup part.

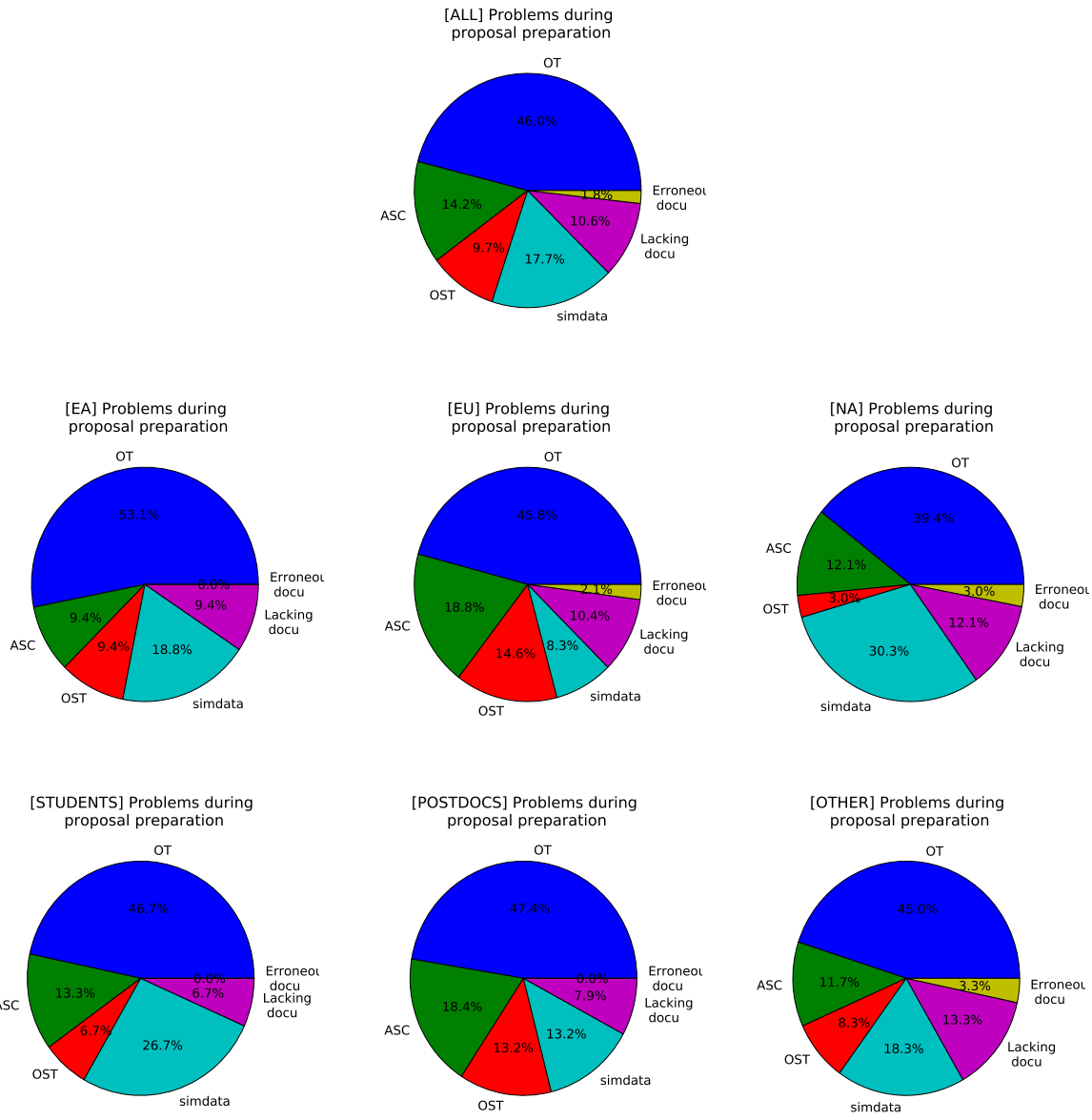
107. I had some problems with setting up the parameters in the right way.

112. preparation of spectral line observing was unnecessarily complicated

114. The ASC sometimes showed strange behaviour, for example, it gave the different results with the same parameters after updating OT.

131. mosaic pattern was very difficult to control, visualization of lines was painful, OT self documentation is pretty useless

132. aot file could not be saved



149. proxy problem

151. not able to enter certain observing sequences

161. limited flexiblility in specifying rest- vs. redshifted frequencies & frequency setups. sometimes auto-updates" fields incorrectly."

182. submission

202. Problem/difficulty in displaying selected frequency range.

212. the learning curve took much longer than I had anticipated.

232. insert target information

240. could be more user friendly

270. time estimate only for standard weather conditions available

278. during submission it stopped working for some time. I couldn't resubmit my proposal because the OT said it couldn't connect to the server.

293. Selection of lines at edge of band

295. some issue with overlapping bands

299. calculation for calibration time had a bug

316. difficulty to run under Suse Linux 11.x

350. Installation

356. difficulty getting some parts to work

359. Apparent bug with sensitivity calculations if the OT is left up and running for too long. Restarting the tool fixed the problem. Others have encountered this, but it was note clearly noted as a known problem in the documentation.

389. I don't remember exactly, but it was related to some incompatibilities within the OT and I solved them soon (most likely trying to observe several different lines).

395. field of view varies when viewing different database images

402. We had to distinguish line and continuum observations in the proposal even in the case of the same bands.

421. display of frequency windows

423. Collaborator information was not transferring correctly.

431. Very nice, but a bit opaque for beginners

6.3.2 Sensitivity Calculator (ASC)

5. not easy to use, very obscure

11. more explanations on what the defaults mean

82. [same as above]

131. results of sensitivity calculations are automatically pasted" which makes it difficult to use it for exploratory calculations"

151. trouble with local firewall settings

176. equation used in the ASC was wrong.

232. it crashed many times

278. Also during submission phase the ASC gave different values for subsequent calculations although the parameters were identical.

293. Marginally resolved objects e.g. distant GMC

367. Not enough info for non-experts, black box

415. Poorly determined overhead time for obs. near an atmospheric absorption line

6.3.3 Observation Support Tool (OST)

34. The default configuration is ALMA"

148. OST could not handle rotated (fits) frame

361. Images were not created properly

397. It took long time near the deadline of proposal.

6.3.4 CASA Simulator Tool (simdata)

11. did not know how it worked

34. No

112. various bugs that were resolved by the helpdesk

158. Applying realistic phase noise. Getting the visibility data out of CASA to do model comparison.

161. coordinate conversion for some (here: non-AIPS) fits file formats problematic.

178. using CASA

236. input data requirements unclear

270. new data structure in CASA 3.2 - my skripts where for CASA 3.1

299. source hour angle could not be specified.

332. has to run in 64-bit mode, but that was not specified

372. effect of atmosphere on image quality not easy to include (I never got it to work). It should be a simple switch.

426. Some issues with very large images. It would be nice if the simulator would actually mimic more realistic overheads (ie, including time off source for gain cal, etc).

431. Not very user friendly for beginners

6.3.5 Lacking documentation

34. No

78. spectral integration time

150. documentation of the available sampling time

154. Specifically, I was trying to place 4 correlators in the lower sideband of band 9, which isn't possible. I was not able to find this information anywhere.

203. Allowing for Vlsr in narrow bands; high proper motions

299. the standard calibration strategy and its expected accuracy

308. see above comment on confusing science control parameters (expected source properties for technical assessment)

350. ALMA LO/IF systems

397. We needed more detailed information to prepare the technical justigication in Proposers Guide.

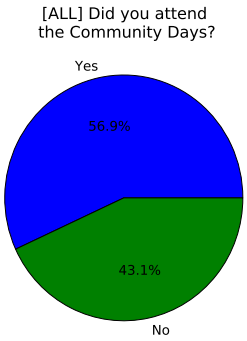
6.3.6 Erroneous documentation

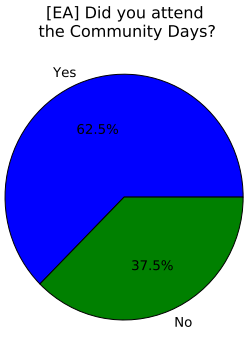
34. No

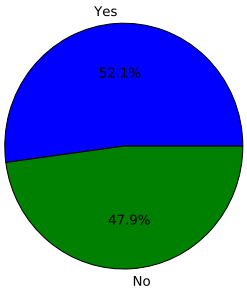
89. Inconsistent rather than erroneous

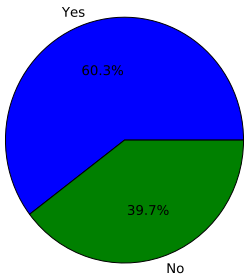
6.4 Attendance to community days

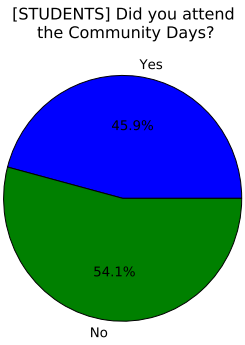
[ALL] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (224), No (170) [Replies: 394]
[EA] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (50), No (30) [Replies: 80]
[EU] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (98), No (90) [Replies: 188]
[NA] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (76), No (50) [Replies: 126]
[STUDENTS] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (28), No (33) [Replies: 61]
[POSTDOCS] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (75), No (49) [Replies: 124]
[OTHER] Did you attend the Community Days? Yes (121), No (88) [Replies: 209]

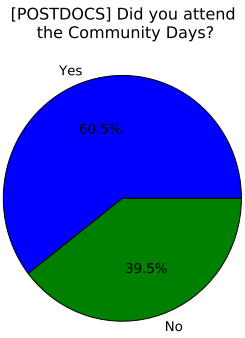


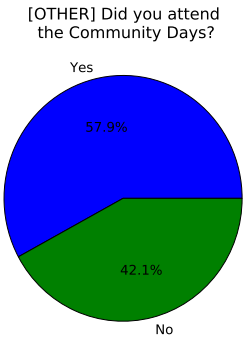












[ALL] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 218]

[EA] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 50]

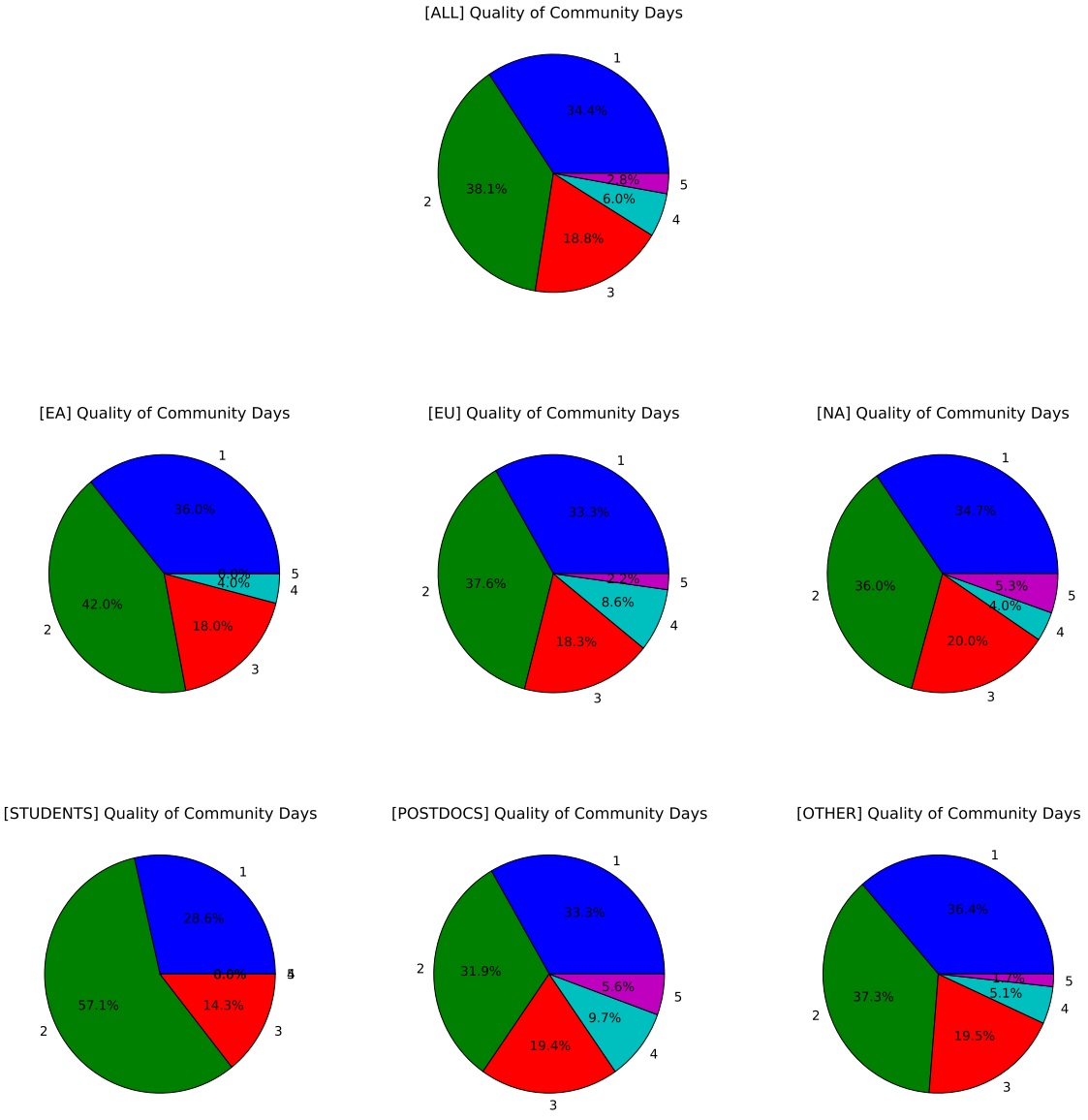
[EU] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 93]

[NA] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 75]

[STUDENTS] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 28]

[POSTDOCS] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 72]

[OTHER] Quality of Community Days [Replies: 118]



6.4.1 Comments on community days and suggestions for improvement

7. I suggest to make them a bit longer (e. g. 2 days presentations + 2 days hands-on tutorial). I found the schedule a bit tight so far (only 1 day for each).

18. Build practical examples together with potential users.

25. the workshops were too early, before the real tools were available.

26. Things/ideas were still very vague at the moment of the meeting.

72. I attend to the Grenoble meeting in November 2010. Many things changed since the meeting to the call of proposals.

82. I always feel that a little bit more of practice part would be helpful, but I understand it's hard as each person has its own working speed..

106. More hands on stuff. Fewer presentations. You would still have the same amount of information by assigning background reading. I would also segregated the "expert" users from the novices.

107. It would be useful to teach newcomers in the field more about how to analyse interferometric data using CASA.

119. In the workshop I went to, there was no hands-on training. Some of the technical information was not detailed enough - difficulty of doing a workshop for people with wide differences in expertise

125. The overhead to learning time ratio seemed very low.

126. Once there's data to work with, it would be great to have data reduction tutorials designed around real ALMA data.

132. Presentation by members in Chile

137. I think the event was fine for people who had less prior knowledge of the array.

154. The community day workshop was great and the people running it were very helpful. My only suggestion is to offer it more broadly!

159. The data analysis session still was in the early stages so there is room for improvement there. More varied data sets, more examples of pifalls, etc. This will come as the first set of data gets out and people become more familiar with the reduction issues.

164. I'm part of the ARC node, and I think we did pretty well.

166. The ALMA Community day I attended had no hands-on session (due to space constraints I believe), which was what I really wanted. The science talks were nice, but I don't think is useful for proposal preparation. Splitting up the time instead for several workshops with in-depth demonstrations of simdata would've been much more helpful.

171. It was my first event of this kind so I wouldnt know. I just found it great.

182. More practice is better

209. I went to one of the first Community Days, so there is a chance this was addressed later, but during the data reduction bit it would probably make it easier if a script was provided so people could just copy and paste in the relevant lines, rather than trying to keep up with the speaker. Also, some of the youngest students didn't know basics like "run CASA in the directory where the data is located, or else you'll need to provide full path names", so some clarification there might be useful.

215. Difficult to say, this was the first call...

222. Maybe good to have a tutorial again within a month of the next deadline.

246. Couldn't install software, so I couldn't do the examples even though I was there. No one there understood how to install the software. What a huge waste of my time.

270. CASA was explained by skripts (for CSV data) from the CASA-wiki-homepage (kind of copy and paste). Unexperienced people need to know how to reduce data in principle and why - what to pay attention to, the effects of wrong or missing calibration, etc. Of course, there are interferometry schools, but it was said that ALMA should be accessible to people that have no experience.

298. Excellent. NRAO should do more of them. Kudos to the NAASC staff who staffed and organized it!

300. have more than one type of mock observation for participants to practice proposal preparation

308. I attended the Leiden ARC node meeting in April, which was very good.

332. too much time spent on the trivia, not enough on the 'big picture'

335. The hands-on to learn how to use the CASA simulator for ALMA observations was insufficient. It would have been better to devote at least one day for this. One of the fits files from the proposed examples did not work.

347. Smaller groups, more focussed excerci

356. more time to do work and be able to ask questions

357. The science talks were not very useful.

361. It was somehow difficult to follow the calibration and reduction of data using CASA, since each person had different problems at different stages. The steps to be done are easy to follow as they are posted in the web. However, at the end it is almost reduced to a mere "copy and paste", so you don't really know what are you doing.

372. Provide test data, or be clearer on where to get them. I spent most of my time to try to get the simulator to deal with my input image properly and little time on the actual simulations. Also, give less screen shots and more actual demos. (I went to workshop in Victoria)

400. many workshops in japan were held for local people, which means, usually, all the talks and slides were, mostly, only in japanese. that was not so helpful to foreign researchers in japan.

406. The event gave me the idea how to use OT.

415. It was perhaps too lengthy for the amount of material that was presented.

418. Registration said no experience with interferometry was required - but then the workshop assumed too much familiarity with interferometry to make it useful...

424. I'm not sure I have an answer to this, but it was a little bit "preaching to the choir." I think just about everybody there knew they'd submit a proposal, had a good idea of the Cycle 0 capabilities, and a pretty well developed plan of what their proposal would be already.

425. Focus more on "tutorial style" approach, with brief presentations followed by lots of time for hands-on activities

426. Well, at the time there was basically not much information provided (presumably because the NAASC was not aware of the "right" answers at that point in the facility's evolution).

431. More introductory talks with general concepts

6.5 Comments on proposal preparation

65. The cover sheet format was missing some information and editing this info and then viewing it was very cumbersome. Thus, iteratively working on the coversheet data, especially the abstract, was overly difficult compared to other competitive facilities.

82. I believe ALMA consortium should keep encouraging workshops for both first time users and supporters.

110. I don't what what you are calling "ALMA Community Days"... I did attend a couple of "Preparing for ALMA workshops" however. Perhaps that is the same thing.

118. Although I did not attend in person, I did watch the video of Space Telescope Institute session later. It was very helpful, and I certainly think more such events with web video would be valuable.

151. Had attended previous pre-proposal ALMA early science meetings

153. As I said before, it's been too long to remember the details!

174. I didn't attend a NA ARC community day but I did attend one held in Australia (with input from NA/EU/Chile ALMA experts)

176. I could not find the information about detail of calibration plan so as to meet cycle 0 specification, such as 10% amplitude calibration accuracy, etc. This is very important information and strongly related to observation plan. It would be helpful if such documentations were prepared in advance.

203. Found it useful as a tutor to see what people wanted to know - plus learning from experts myself

208. My collaborators were knowledgeable about the technical details of ALMA - I was responsible for the science justification.

209. The total time, including overhead, seems to only appear when you print out a summary from the technical part of the proposal; it would be useful if this appeared elsewhere in the proposal tool so one does not have to hunt for it.

236. I attended EA workshops while I'm associated with US.

237. Hands-on demos at the community days were very helpful, presentations on the science were less so

246. Software would not run under most versions of Mac OS X. The help desk was not able to work with users to fix the problems.

296. too early to answer

299. The overall quality of documentation for the phase I (proposal submission) was quite good, even though there could be a little more details.

320. I attended community days by U.Chile

332. CASA is AIPS made worse – the worst software package I have ever used, anywhere

350. Installation of OT was not as simple as other systems such as Spitzer and Herschel. Web-based installation was required on Mac and would not work on Linux and manual installation was required on Linux and did not work on Mac. There were not sufficient system configuration documentation and users were required to try things via trial and error. These sort of tools are standard now, so not sure why the ALMA system is so system dependent.

355. Cover sheets unsightly.

403. I attended a workshop for prospective ALMA users, but I don't think it was called a "community day".

424. Some items in the proposal tool took some getting used to, particularly things like window interfaces for setting up the correlator. Going in having looked over documents I wasn't too comfortable with this.

425. The simulator was severely lacking in user-friendliness. It took a great deal of coaxing by the experts in the room before most of the attendees of the meeting could install and run it at all

428. My participation in the ALMA Community Days at ESO Garching in April 2011 had to be cancelled on short notice, unfortunately.

436. The pdf was printed badly on one PC, but well on the other. This was slightly inconvenient, but not serious.

Chapter 7

Proposal submission

7.1 Overview

The large majority of users found the proposal submission very smooth. A total of 75% of the users rated proposal submission above-average and only 11% below-average. The percentage of users rating proposal submission above-average was higher for NA users, 85%, compared to EA and EU users, 69%. Looking at levels of expertise, the percentage of students rating the proposal submission below-average, 23%, was higher than for postdocs or experts, 10%.

The majority of problems (41%) were encountered when trying to re-submit a proposal, followed by 22% of problems with archive search and 18% of problems with first submission. In EA, the number of problems with submission, 36% of the total, and re-submission, 55% of the total, was particularly high compared to EU or NA, for which "Archive search" was more problematic, 25% of the total, than submission, 10-15% of the total. Interestingly, the students did not have any problem with archival search, most likely because they were not involved in a large number of proposals compared to postdocs or experts.

Some comments addressed the problems encountered to generate the summary of the proposal in PDF format and the archive failure in the hours previous to the deadline. A suggestion was given to provide a LaTeX template for the proposals.

7.2 Results

[ALL] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (329), No (58) [Replies: 387]

[EA] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (62), No (14) [Replies: 76]

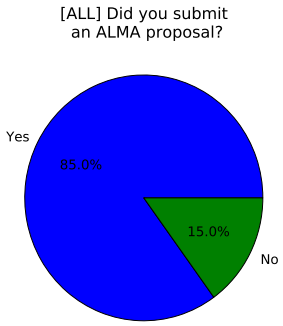
[EU] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (158), No (27) [Replies: 185]

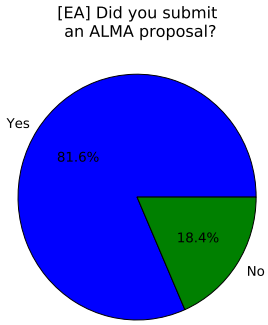
[NA] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (109), No (17) [Replies: 126]

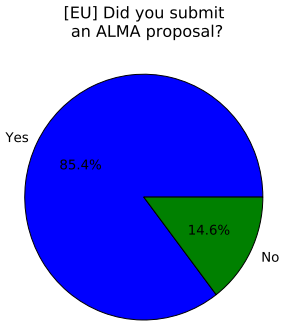
[STUDENTS] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (47), No (13) [Replies: 60]

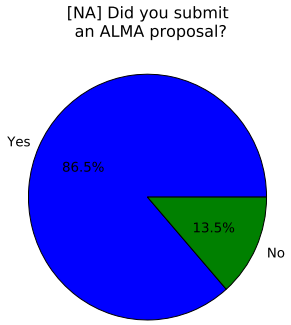
[POSTDOCS] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (103), No (19) [Replies: 122]

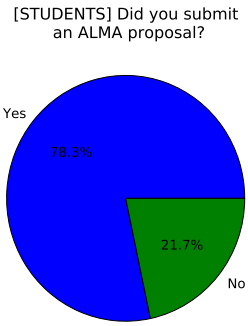
[OTHER] Did you submit an ALMA proposal? Yes (179), No (26) [Replies: 205]

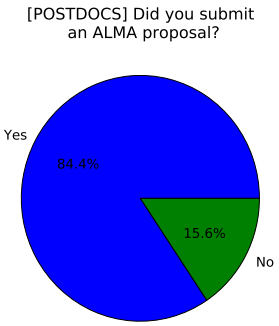


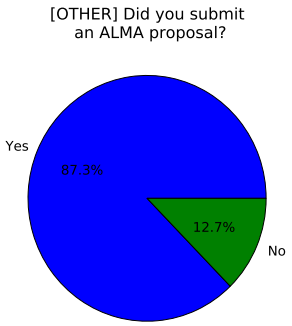












[ALL] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 238]

[EA] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 51]

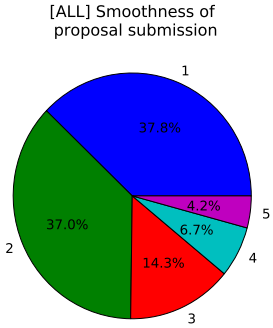
[EU] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 105]

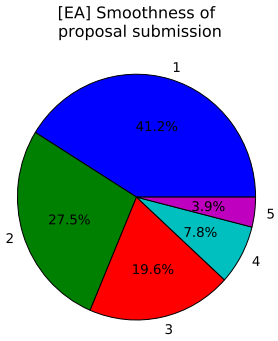
[NA] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 82]

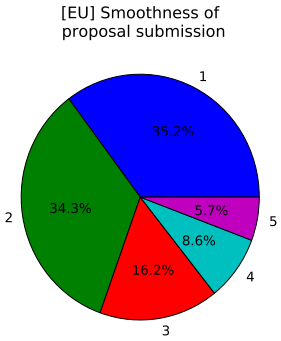
[STUDENTS] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 26]

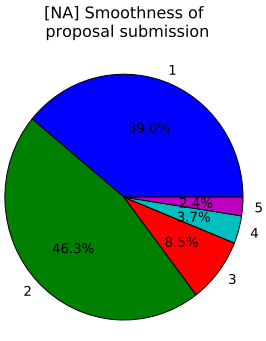
[POSTDOCS] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 79]

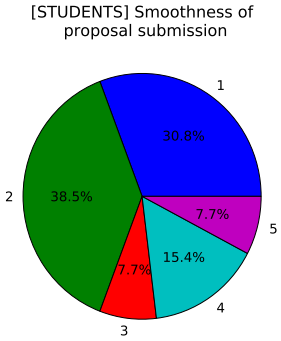
[OTHER] Smoothness of proposal submission [Replies: 133]

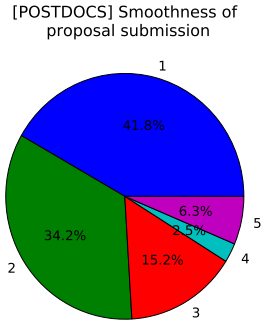


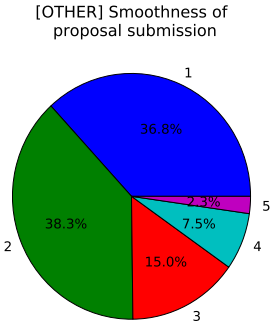












[ALL] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (11), Not able to re-submit (26), Not able to search the archive (14), Other (12)

[EA] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (4), Not able to re-submit (6), Not able to search the archive (1), Other (0)

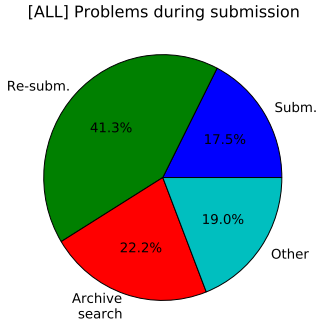
[EU] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (5), Not able to re-submit (13), Not able to search the archive (8), Other (6)

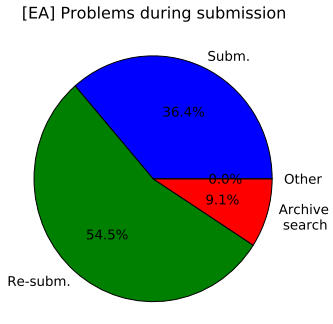
[NA] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (2), Not able to re-submit (7), Not able to search the archive (5), Other (6)

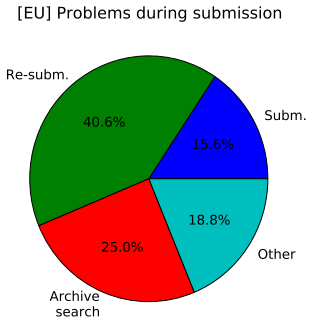
[STUDENTS] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (1), Not able to re-submit (5), Not able to search the archive (0), Other (1)

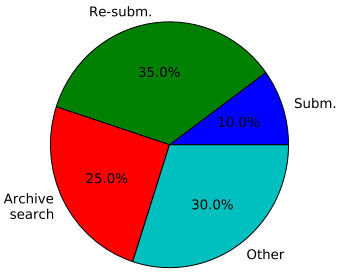
[POSTDOCS] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (3), Not able to re-submit (10), Not able to search the archive (5), Other (6)

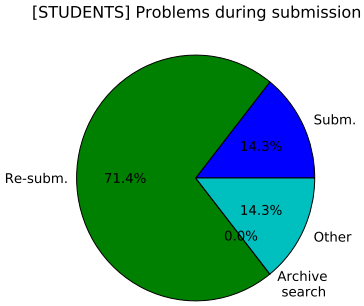
[OTHER] Problems encountered during proposal submission: Not able to submit (7), Not able to re-submit (11), Not able to search the archive (9), Other (5)

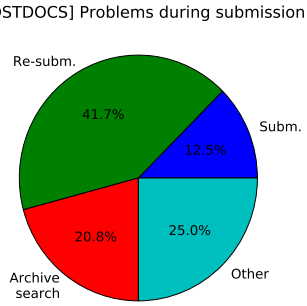


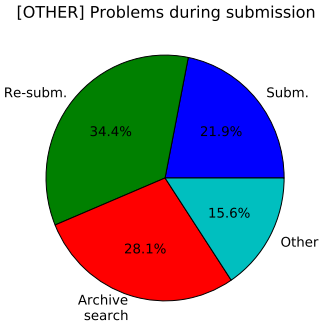












Other problems encountered during proposal submission

34. No

51. searching extremly slow

71. submission got registered twice

131. archive failure just before the deadline

161. server time-outs close to the deadline, difficult to track which version went in.

163. the server kept crashing (ok, ok... there was only one hour left before the deadline!) and I was having problems resubmitting updated versions of my proposal.

200. Proposal handling

265. Submission tool did not accept one of the default settings, but a small modification fixed this.

311. the resubmission was successfull after several tries

375. I had a little trouble getting the proposal resubmitted, but it eventually went through

426. Unable to get a reasonable looking PDF of the proposal cover page (in *any* browser). This makes it a pain to share a complete draft with collaborators.

441. server done before deadline

7.3 Comments

6. Proposal preparation and submission tool is quite heavy and slow

12. overloaded shortly before the deadline

68. when server died, resubmission seemed not to work.

98. The overall system seems fairly bulky and unflexible in some ways.

126. Very straight forward proposal software.

141. Currently, it is not possible to change easily the position of CoIs in the Co-Author list. To do this, CoIs have to be deteleted and typed in again.

153. I remember some small problem where I had to redo something but ....

166. I submitted early enough to avoid the database fiasco in the last hour, but that didn't seem pleasant for my collegues.

174. The only problem I encountered was in the last 20 mins before the deadline when I couldn't upload the final version - the server was down. I contacted the helpdesk and got a response immediately with an alternative way to submit my final version of the proposal if the server wasn't restored in time. It was and the proposal was submitted through the OT without problems. I was very impressed with the way this was handled considering how stressful this time must have been for the all the support staff.

178. It was hard to figure out.

198. If I remember correctly, shortly before the deadline, I encountered problems with the re-submission. It did not always work. I had to try several times until the re-submission was successful.

200. The combination of technical frontpage and added PDF for justification of the science appeared a bit complicated, as it was not possible to display both together during the preparation, before submission, respectively.

203. Occasionally Archive was inaccessible

215. affiliations of co-authors were not properly handled by the pdf creator

286. There is no need to send the confirmation emails to Co-Is every time when the proposals are resubmitted.

308. I got caught in the server being down during the last hour and it took me 12 tries to resubmit my proposal sucessfully.

327. The pdf version of the OT proposal cover render had a strange layout and was incomplete with the version installed on my Centos OS laptop: only the , the and the would be shown i.e., from the nothing would appear.

381. the server failed to respond in the last hour or so before the deadline, therefore the final (minor) revision was not submitted.

389. I sent two proposals with no problems one day in advance. Then the third one hour prior to the deadline and the system did not let me until about 10-15 minutes before the deadline. I learned afterwards the deadline had been delayed due to server problems.

402. We had to distinguish line and continuum observations in the proposal even in the same bands.

403. One of our co-Is was (and is) an ALMA employee. He had a high level of knowledge about the submission process.

413. When you resubmit your proposal, probably all of your coIs receive a nortification e-mail. It is too many. Please send the nortification e-mail only to PI. The e-mails to all of coIs should go in two cases; 1) when you first submit your proposal and 2) when the observatory confirms the submission after the deadline.

418. A latex template would have been good to have

427. The database system was too slow and stressful.

436. About 2 hrs before the deadline, i was not able to update one of my PI proposals. In the end, after the formal deadline (which had fortunately been extended) it was resubmitted through the HelpDesk as a new proposal, but was then not correctly labeled as a duplicate proposal. This was all resolved rather painlessly (except for the nervous collapse caused by the web server downtime just before the deadline ;-).

Chapter 8

Proposal review process

8.1 Overview

Overall, 23% of the ALMA PIs rated the quality of the consensus report regarding the scientific aspects of the proposal above-average, 26% rated it average and 51% below-average. The percentage was similar for all executives. The percentage of PIs considering the quality of the report above-average was higher for students and postdocs, 33%-36%, compared to experienced users, 15%.

The usefulness of comments by the review panels on the strengths/weaknesses of the proposal was rated slightly higher, with 26% of the users rating it above-average, 28% average and 46% below-average. EA users rated slightly lower the quality of the comments on strengths/weaknesses compared to EU and NA users. The most experienced users were more critical with the usefulness of the comments with 18% considering them above-average, versus 30-38% for students and postdocs.

The usefulness of comments on shortcomings of the proposal was considered low. Only 17% of all users considered it above-average, versus 57% that considered it below-average. The percentage of expert users considering the quality of the comments regarding shortcomings of the proposal below-average, 62%, was again higher than for students or postdocs, 48-51%.

A total of 8% of all proposals were considered technically unfeasible. The percentage was similar for all executives and expertise levels. Four users considered that better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities would have helped to avoid technical problems in the proposal and five users that the project would be more appropriate for later cycles.

The quality of the e-mail sent by ALMA to notify the results of the proposal review process was considered above-average by 49%, 40% and 44% regarding the content on grading, scientific comments and technical aspects of the proposal. 22%, 34% and 30% of the users considered the quality of the e-mail below-average regarding the same aspects.

The large majority of comments related to the consensus report or the review process expressed the concern that selection had been driven by political considerations or conservative scientific ideas and that their proposal had not been properly read and hardly any comments were given or were wrong (according to their judgement). Three users expressed their preference for receiving raw comments from all members of the panel versus a consensus report.

The comments about the e-mail notifying the results raised mostly the concern that the e-mail was confusing and not easy to read and that the ratings had changed with respect with what was announced at the time of the CfP. The inclusion of the proposal number in the title, the rating of the proposal at the top line and its probability of being observed were suggested.

8.2 Results

8.3 Consensus report

[ALL] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 226]

[EA] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 46]

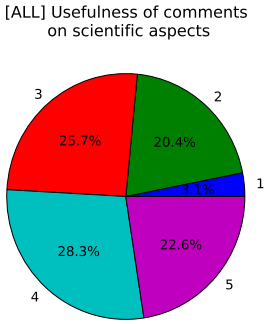
[EU] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 100]

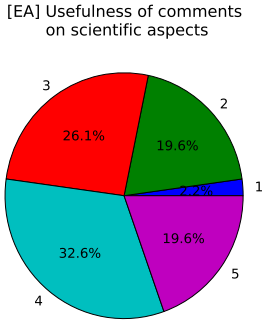
[NA] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 80]

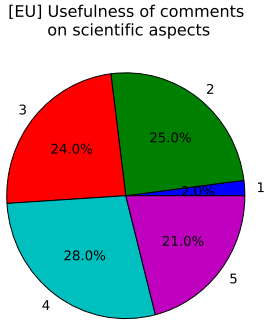
[STUDENTS] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 24]

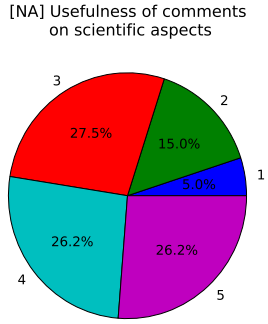
[POSTDOCS] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 73]

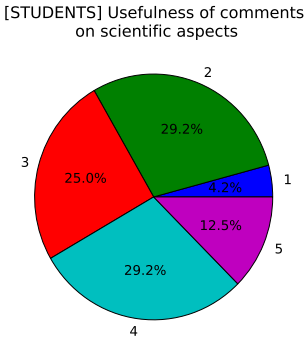
[OTHER] Usefulness of comments on scientific aspects [Replies: 129]

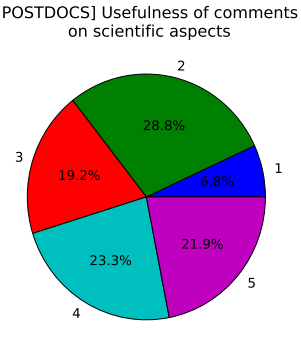


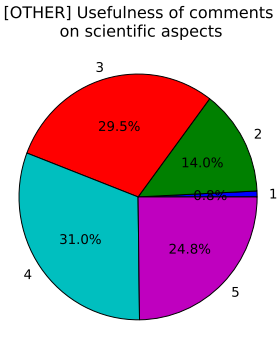












[ALL] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 230]

[EA] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 47]

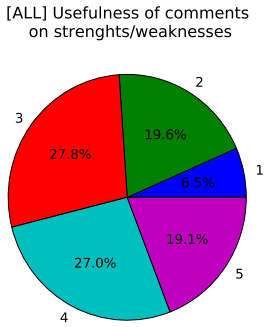
[EU] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 103]

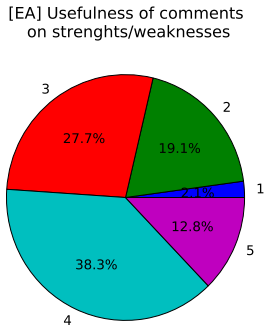
[NA] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 80]

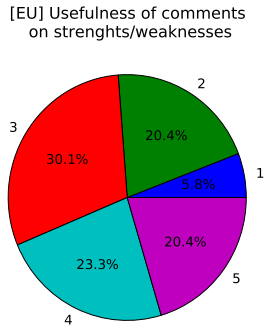
[STUDENTS] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 22]

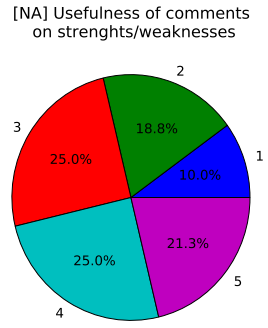
[POSTDOCS] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 79]

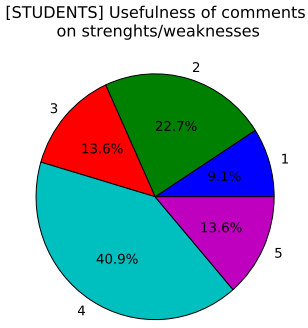
[OTHER] Usefulness of comments on strenghts/weaknesses [Replies: 129]

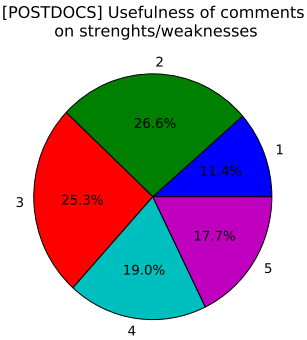


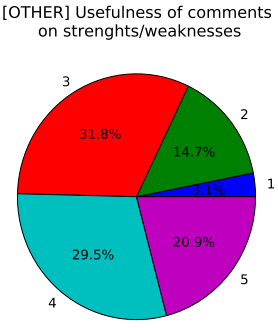












[ALL] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 221]

[EA] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 44]

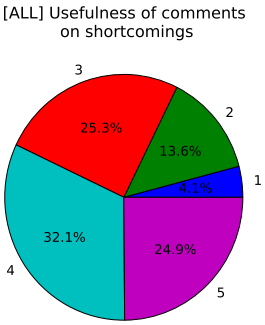
[EU] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 98]

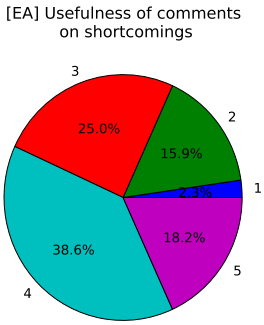
[NA] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 79]

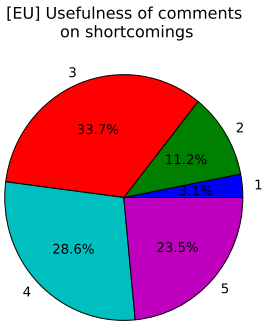
[STUDENTS] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 23]

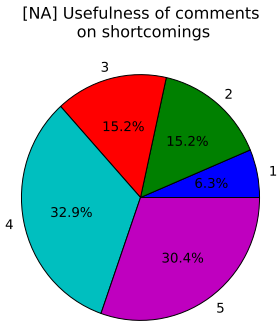
[POSTDOCS] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 74]

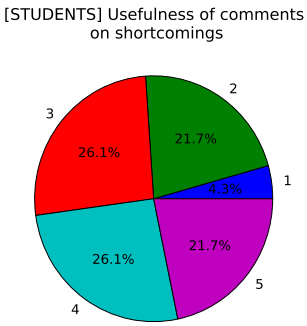
[OTHER] Usefulness of comments on shortcomings [Replies: 124]

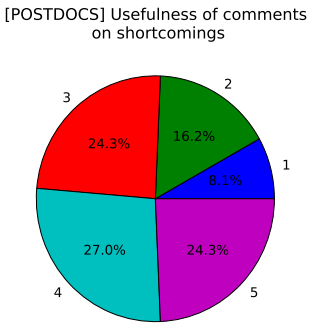


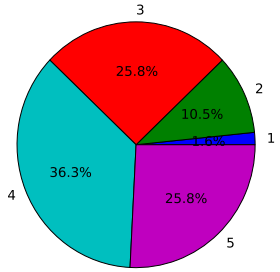












8.4 Technical feasibility of proposals

[ALL] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (19), No (221) [Replies: 240]

[EA] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (5), No (46) [Replies: 51]

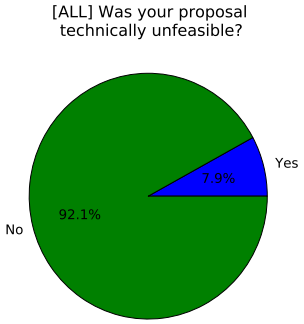
[EU] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (6), No (100) [Replies: 106]

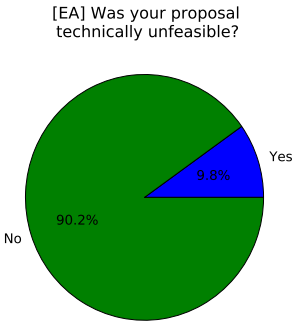
[NA] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (8), No (75) [Replies: 83]

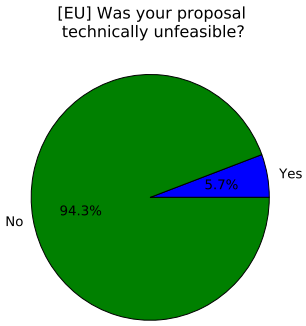
[STUDENTS] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (1), No (26) [Replies: 27]

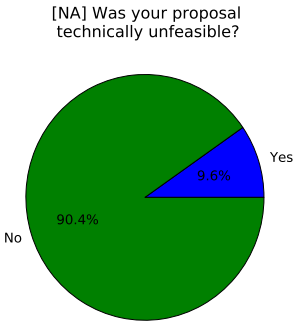
[POSTDOCS] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (7), No (72) [Replies: 79]

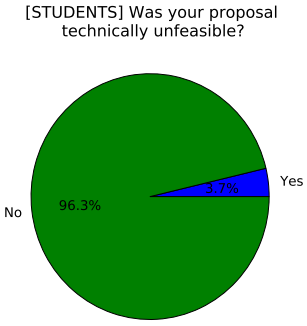
[OTHER] Was your proposal technically unfeasible? Yes (11), No (123) [Replies: 134]

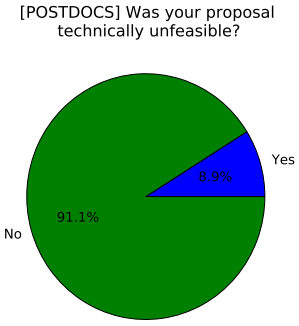


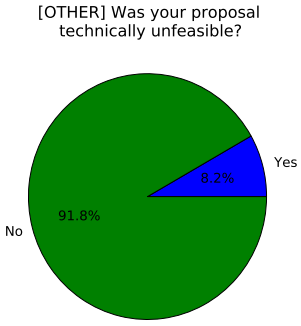












In your opinion, how could your proposal have avoided the technical problems?

[ALL] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 11]

[EA] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 3]

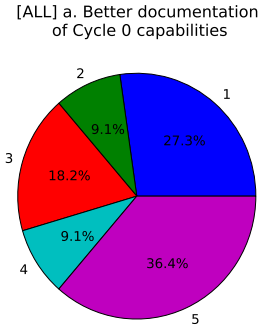
[EU] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 4]

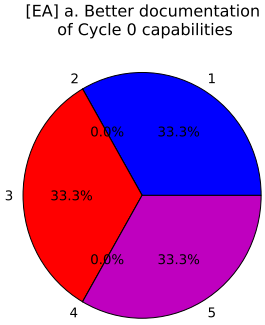
[NA] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 4]

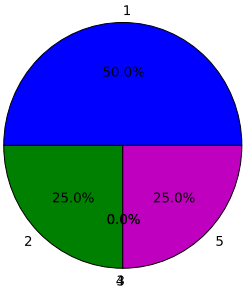
[STUDENTS] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 0]

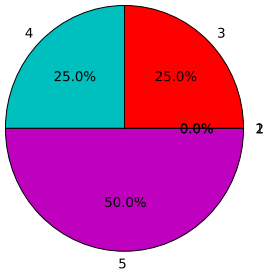
[POSTDOCS] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 5]

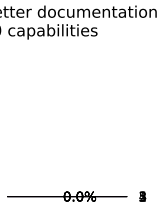
[OTHER] a. Better documentation of Cycle 0 capabilities [Replies: 6]

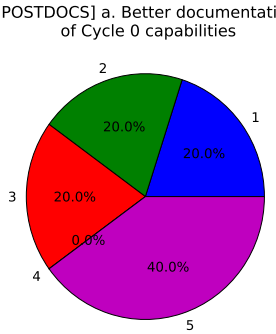


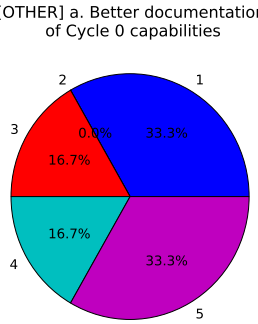












[ALL] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 10]

[EA] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 3]

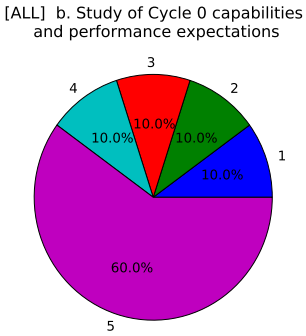
[EU] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 2]

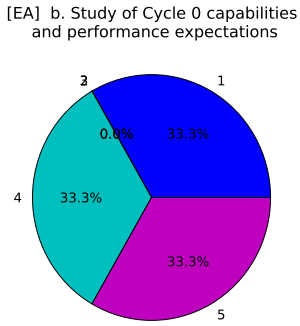
[NA] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 5]

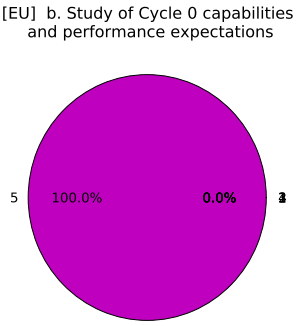
[STUDENTS] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 0]

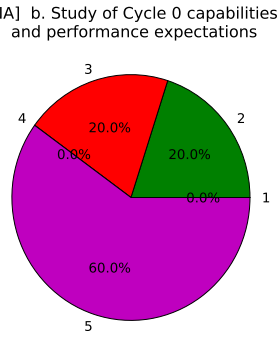
[POSTDOCS] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 5]

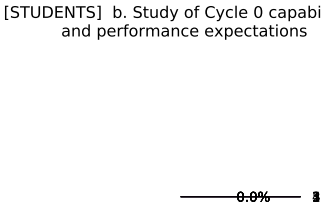
[OTHER] b. Study of Cycle 0 capabilities and performance expectations [Replies: 5]

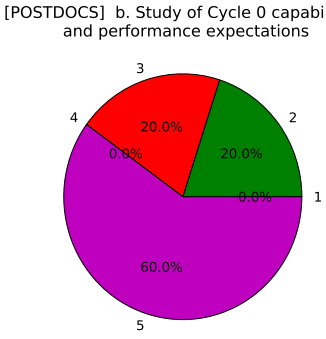


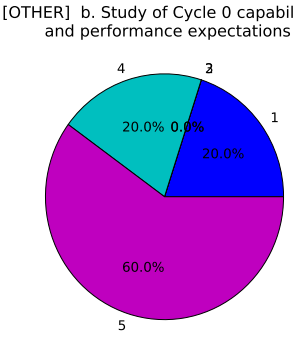












[ALL] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 9]

[EA] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 2]

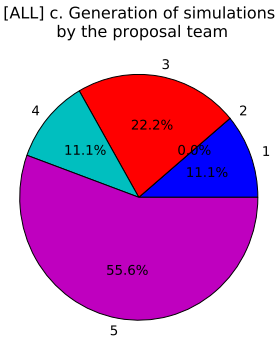
[EU] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 3]

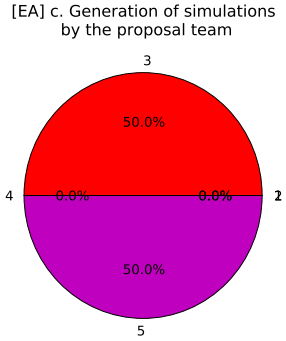
[NA] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 4]

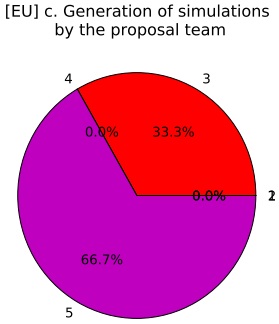
[STUDENTS] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 0]

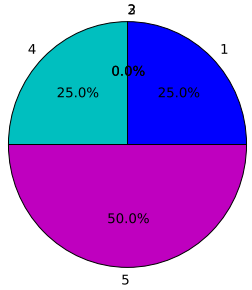
[POSTDOCS] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 4]

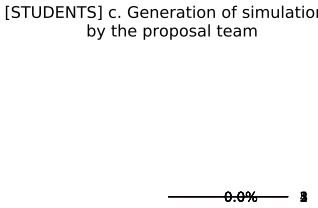
[OTHER] c. Generation of simulations by the proposal team [Replies: 5]

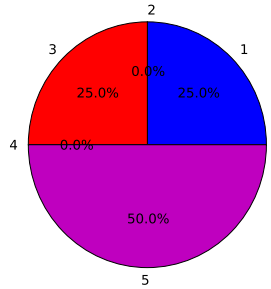


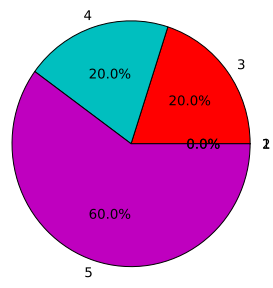












[ALL] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 8]

[EA] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 2]

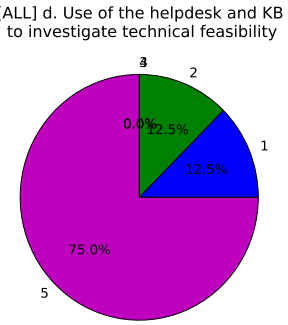
[EU] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 2]

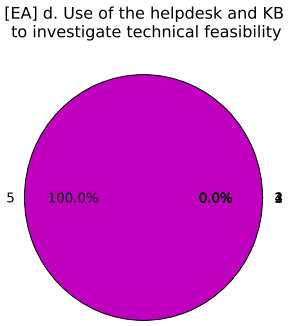
[NA] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 4]

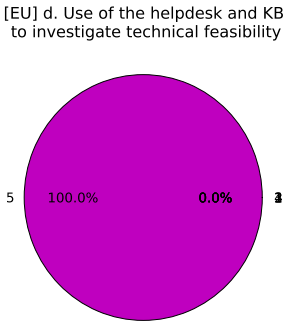
[STUDENTS] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 0]

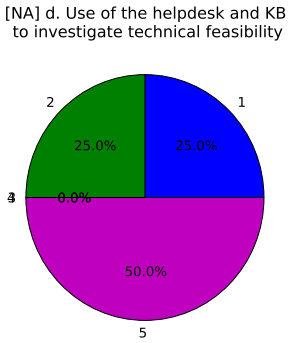
[POSTDOCS] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 4]

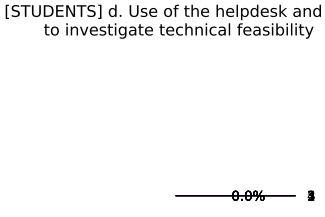
[OTHER] d. Use of the helpdesk and KB to investigate technical feasibility [Replies: 4]

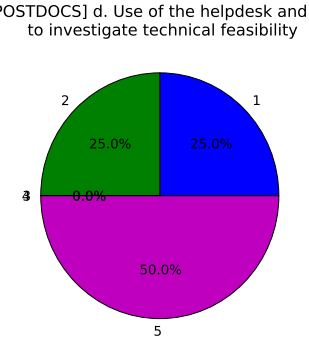


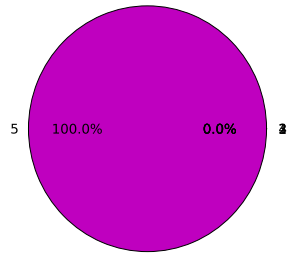












[ALL] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 13]

[EA] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 3]

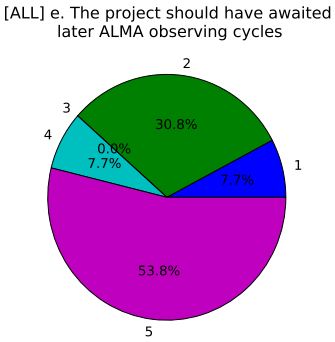
[EU] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 4]

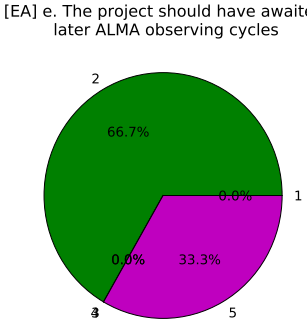
[NA] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 6]

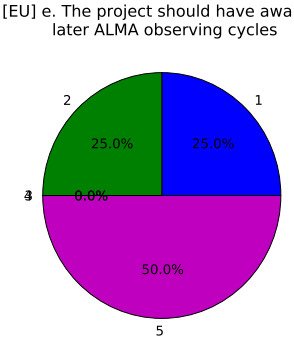
[STUDENTS] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 0]

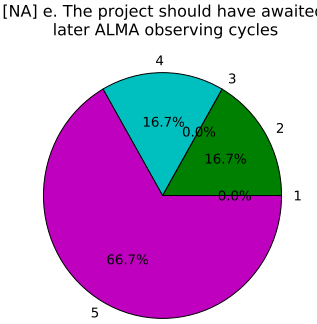
[POSTDOCS] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 7]

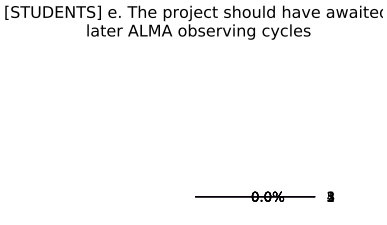
[OTHER] e. The project should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles [Replies: 6]

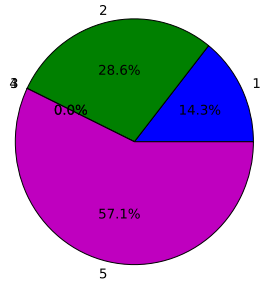


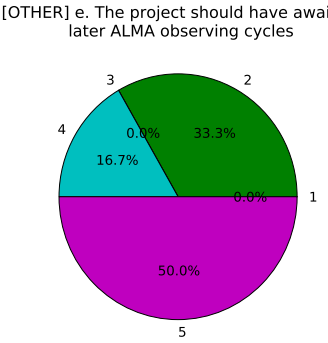












8.5 Quality of e-mail reporting the review results

[ALL] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 223]

[EA] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 46]

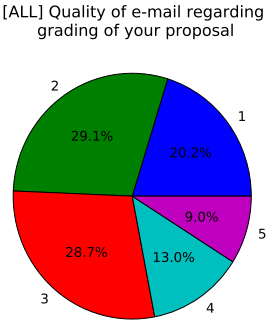
[EU] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 100]

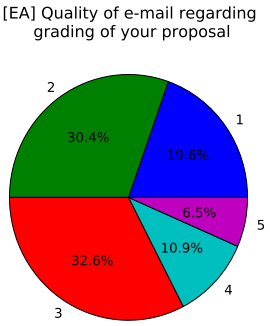
[NA] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 77]

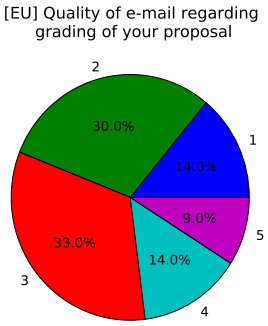
[STUDENTS] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 22]

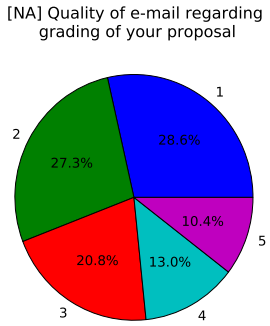
[POSTDOCS] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 74]

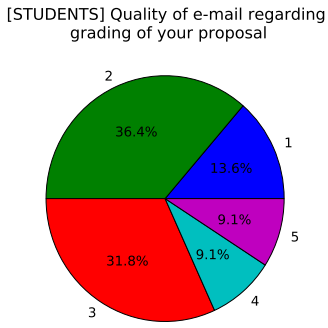
[OTHER] Quality of e-mail regarding grading of your proposal [Replies: 127]

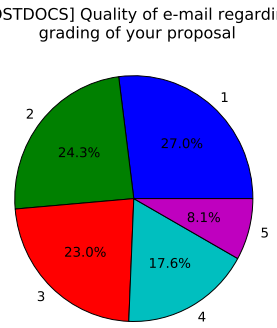


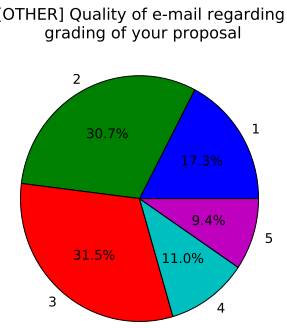












[ALL] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 219]

[EA] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 45]

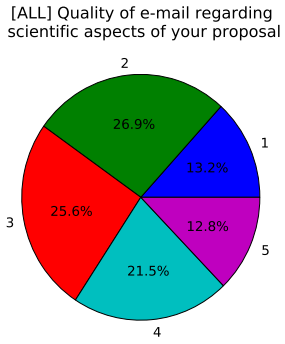
[EU] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 97]

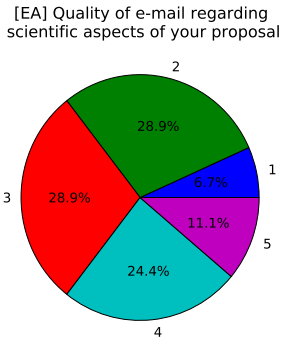
[NA] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 77]

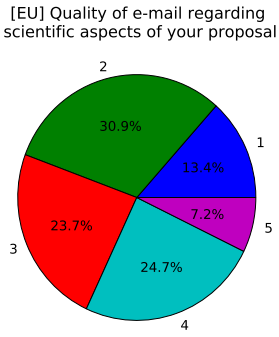
[STUDENTS] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 21]

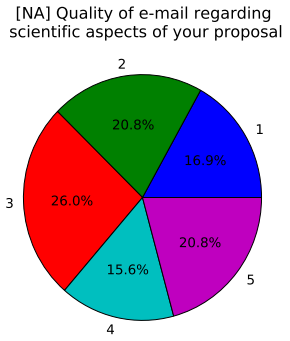
[POSTDOCS] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 73]

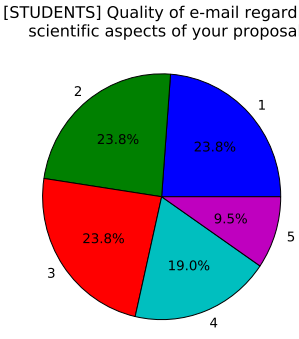
[OTHER] Quality of e-mail regarding scientific aspects of your proposal [Replies: 125]

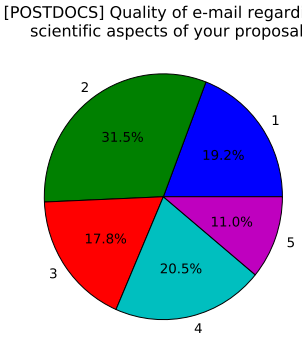


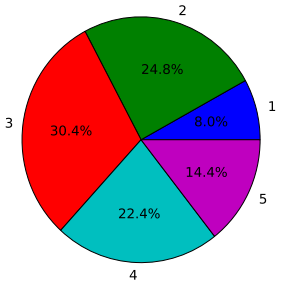












[ALL] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 169]

[EA] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 33]

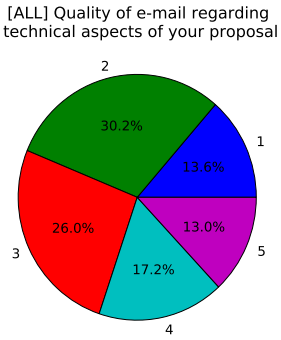
[EU] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 77]

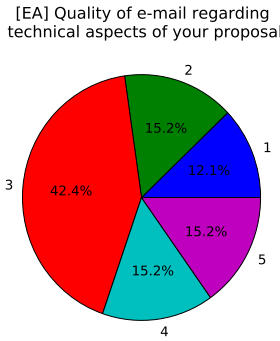
[NA] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 59]

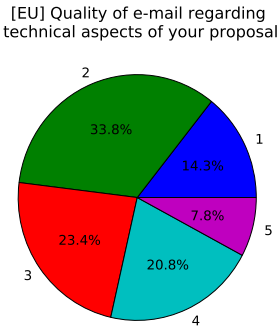
[STUDENTS] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 17]

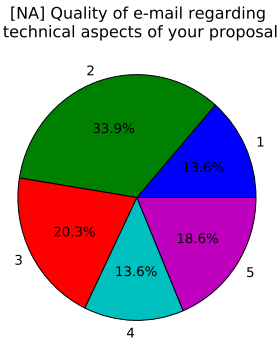
[POSTDOCS] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 58]

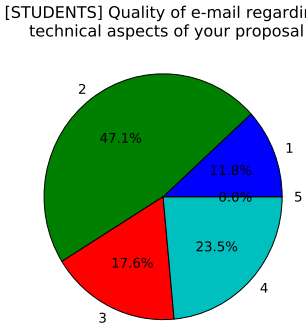
[OTHER] Quality of e-mail regarding technical aspects of your proposal [Replies: 94]

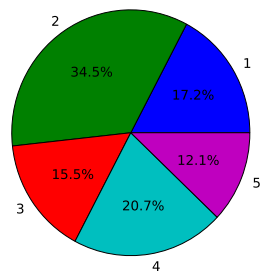


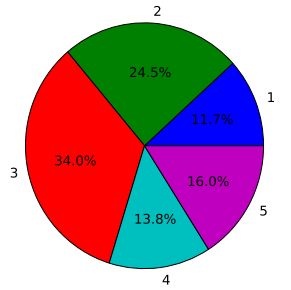












8.6 Comments regarding consensus report

6. The TAC was very conservative and sticking to old ideas. You do not build a multi-billion new facility to do obvious boring science

7. Too vague, although I am not sure if that was only my case. I was suggested to wait for a more complete configuration, and that's it. In my proposal I showed that the setup offered during Early Science was already enough to reach my Science Goals. I saw no reason to wait for a better configuration at that moment. The consensus report of my proposal did not provide further explanations.

25. My PI proposal only received a very short sentence with little information. Other proposals got real comments.

34. 4

35. I understand the pressure in number of proposals to be reviewed by the committee. But, the weaknesses point raised by the committee was wrong and not well justified!

39. report was only 2 lines long and did not address any scientific point.

47. I understand the comments given about my proposal, and have no large complaints about that. However I noticed there were obvious contradictions in the abstracts of the accepted proposals. For instance, there were two accepted proposals to look at disks around massive forming stars - one mentions that the only Keplerian disk observed around a massive star is IRAS20126+4104 (PI Cesaroni), while another (PI Garay) mentions: "In particular, we may provide the first evidence of a Keplerian signature (inner parts rotating faster than the outer parts) in a disk associated with a massive forming star." This shows firstly that the teams who received the time were not experts in their field, as they were not aware of important findings within them, and secondly, that the TAC did not check for consistency during the proposal acceptance process. It also suggests that there were not enough experts for a given field looking over relevant proposals.

60. I realize that due to the large number of submissions giving feedback was difficult, but a one line answer saying a proposal is good but not giving time is not very useful for future improvement.

66. Didn't give any useful scientific feedback. Just said it wasn't feasible.

71. by saying "other proposals for the same galaxies were stronger", the feedback suggested that each galaxy can only be observed once; pointing out weaknesses of my proposal would have been helpful.

82. I'll just identify myself: Hugo Messias. No problem with that. I felt that the first comments we got were not of much help on how to improve it to cycle1. By requesting a reevaluation (and I do thank everyone involved for the effort of relooking into the proposal), although I still got a negative answer, the comments indeed show where the proposal was the weakest. The grades I present in this section, relate to my first impression of the first comments we got. The second set of comments I (almost) totally acknowledge. All the best! Keep on the good work.

98. Comments were limited and gave no sense as to why the project was rated the way it was (this is true both on my PI project as well as on the several other projects on which I was Co-I).

119. The comments were rather short.

120. The comments for my proposal were very weak. They are not helpful if I want to submit another proposal in the future as I don't know what I did wrong

132. Since ALMA proposals are very competitive, detailed comments and assessments are essential.

134. The comments were not all that useful, but no less so than a large proposal review.

140. Based on the comments I was forwarded it is clear that the proposal received only a brief glance. You need more reviewers. Alternately, find reviewers who are willing to take the time.

151. Rediculous comments about the sample of targets. Reviwers did not spend any time reading proposal - probably triaged.

153. A lot better than Herschel..!

162. Based on the final time allocations, it seemed the TAC chose not to do surveys this time. The comments had suggested that there were other similar proposals that would get more science bang for the buck - yet such proposals were not in the final allocations, either.

166. The most of the TAC reports for the proposals I was on were completely useless, some to the point of obnoxious given the amount of time we spent on each proposal. The reports were short - often 1-2 sentences, and basically said "your science sucks" with no suggestions for improvement. While I do understand that the TAC is swamped for Cycle 0 and cannot give detailed reports, a more honest answer of "we are way oversubscribed" would've been more helpful than the useless comments we got.

168. Although I know there are too many proposals, I'd like to receive more detailed reports from ALL of the referees, like those from NRAO proposals.

176. Report just stated like "Science is interesting. Nice short time request makes it worth considering for Cycle 0." But, failed. How could I get the lessons and learn from this commnet?

182. Comments were too general and did not provide much information about how to improve it. No technical information was provided, and I believe the technical assessments were not considered.

184. I would be more useful to get full reports from referees, not just a "consensus", that lacks information on specific weaknesses of the proposal. Not just "hand waving" to reject a proposal. I really had no useful feedback on how to improve the proposal.

212. The initial feedback was generic and inconsistent, probably due to the fact that my proposal was triaged by a "pre-TAC" that only skimmed my proposal and never discussed by the real TAC. I complained and received mildly more informative feedback ("another group with more expertise got time"), but much of the feedback still demonstrated that the proposal was not read in detail.

215. I understand there were too many different projects, but the response was far too short, and as a PI it was not easy to actually find the weakness of the proposals.

217. I never received one!

235. rejected proposal was similar to one rated very highly at another mm interferometer, and to a very similar project (by another team) accepted by alma. seems a bit inconsistent.

236. It is useful to know where the cutoff is.

295. There was an emphasis on imaging in the rejection, where the proposal argued to measure physical quantities (ie brightness temperature)

298. The TAC was terrible and missed the point of the proposal alluding to items that were not in the proposal at all. The TAC argued against long standing norms in the subfield seemingly for the sake of tossing out a proposal.. this might sound like someone who has just eaten sour grapes but I assure you - the TAC's comments were completely unreasonable and irrational.

299. A few sentences do not provide enough feedback. How about providing raw comments from the reviewers ?

300. The report seemed like the ones who wrote it did not know much about the science. Also a comment like "This proposal is more suitable for a future, more complete ALMA configuration" is totally ridiculous, as this was true for most (if not all) projects.

308. My experience these days is that the feedback from the TAC reveals more about the (lack of) knowledge of the TAC than on the proposal itself. The comments also often reveal that the TAC is very conservative. I

appreciate that the TAC is working hard and doing the best it can, but I (and others) would actually just prefer a ranking in quartiles without comments. No system is perfect; the comments are not helping to make it better.

355. Comments were vague and basically amounted to "more justification needed" even though the page limits are quite strict.

357. There were hardly any negative comments about the scientific merit, but my ranking was in the middle 40-70%. There were very little useful comments about the proposal's weaknesses, so I really don't know how to improve it next time.

359. It was very brief, and did not give the impression that the proposal was carefully reviewed and seriously considered (although that may very well have been the case, it was not reflected in the report).

363. Proposal feedback did not match the very poor rating received. The main criticism of the proposal was incorrect and the other minor criticisms were insufficient to justify the poor rating.

367. The report said the sensitivity estimates were wrong, but didn't say how. Since I used the black box sensitivity calculator, I don't see how this is possible. More feedback as to how they were wrong would have been useful.

381. It was certainly better than what is typical for many other TACs. At least I am confident that my proposal was understood.

389. I think the most honest comment would have read something like "We found nothing wrong with your proposal but liked others better" since it was basically a lottery to select just 10%. The report was rather vague and reflected the biases of the evaluators which only wanted disk proposals in. This was ridiculous for cycle 0, when disks should not have been the top priority given the ALMA resolution and sensitivity. I think the science assessment of cycle 0 proposals completely ignored the actual technical capabilities of ALMA in relation to cycle I and cycle II, thus the selected programs are not optimal as a showcase for early science ALMA.

403. The consensus report contained almost no information. Its extreme brevity (alone) insured that we could learn nothing from it. Moreover, the few sentences we did receive were too general to be meaningful. Weaknesses of the proposal were not identified, such that the proposal evaluation provided no guidance regarding how to write more successful proposals in the future.

409. Comments were vague, ambiguous, and contradictory. Apparently, the proposals were read superficially by the referees (probably because of lack of time due to the large number of proposals to review), and the actual reasons for the assigned ratings were not given in the report.

415. The report from the review committee was useless. It was three sentences long, and one of them was repeated from my abstract. It offered no real information on how to improve the proposal. The proposal was not poorly rated, so it would have been good to know where it could be improved. Very disappointed in this.

418. The science comments were so wrong I actually wondered if they were for a different proposal.

419. The panel misread the proposal and believed that I asked for much more time that I was requesting.

424. I know this is just the nature of the game since Cycle 0 was so over-subscribed and observations really had to have some quick-hit science value, but I felt that programs that actually had samples to observe were instantly down-graded. I tried to argue we could use science verification data for control sample purposes, but this seemed to backfire and was claimed to be a weakness.

426. My proposal was reviewed positively and received an allocation in the top priority group. But the feedback was clearly from non-experts (and perhaps very inexperienced radio observers), and was not useful in any practical sense.

427. I am not pleased with the ridiculous reports on our proposals. The referee(s) completely misunderstood our theoretical models (we presented the results of radiation hydrodynamic simulations *including self-gravity*, but the referee wrongly commented that the release of gravitational energy must be considered, totally missing the point) and made poor judgements. I strongly claim that the proposals must be reviewed more carefully by fair and clever referees.

437. The reviewers should learn that HCN cannot be observed in the optical.

8.7 Comments regarding avoidance of technical problems

89. Could be improved a lot just by having the Technical Assessment reading the technical justification in the proposal !!!

119. I don't think there is a way to perform sensitivity simulations at elevations different than at transit - or at least I have not found it

165. My proposal was considered unfeasible by the review panel based on their own assumptions about the observations. It was resubmitted and still not well justified for a low grade.

202. Although we described the technical feasibility, it was not believed. The proposal selection process looks healthful, but conservative. Such a situation should be expected and noticed by the workshop organizers or the call for proposal.

367. I'm not sure. Our numbers were double checked by a Co-I who is an expert. I think the feedback was severely lacking. If there was a problem, it should have been explained in detail so that it can be fixed in the future.

418. Some terms in the tim estimator and documentation turned out to be used in two ways with different meaning, e.g. 'bandwidth' = width of the channels as 'bandwidth' in time estimator but also 'bandwidth' that one receives during an observation.

I got caught out by that badly enough that it turned out my proposal took far longer than I thought.

Should have clarified with helpdesk but thought the advice from a co-I who works for ALMA was enough.

8.8 Comments regarding proposal review process

12. The proposal rating and the resulting observing priority were not easy to find in the e-mail as they are hidden in a lot of text and located in the same section. guess this could be improved.

25. Lack of information on TAC reaction.

29. Results from the TAC (PI, title) should be more publicly advertised via newsletter and through the web. This is important for transparency of the process.

47. The grading of the proposal was not very transparent.

There were no mention of whether specific technical issues factored into the grading of the proposal.

A more structured grading system might be more beneficial, so that PIs know which areas they need to improve. The feedback was also very short.

48. The email was so long and confusing that when I go to the end of it was not sure whether I got time or not. I also do not understand why some other people in lower percentage bands, overall and in their region, were allocated time and I did not. It was not explained anywhere that lower science grade proposals could have preferential scheduling in other regions.

82. [see previous comment box]

89. Clear to understand, although wrong.

98. My project was not found to have technical problems. However, 3 of the other projects I was on or helped gather information for after the fact were judged technically infeasible, and the responses given were unclear in the reasoning (and indeed in nearly all cases the judgement of technical infeasibility was later found to be wrong...but too late to do anything about).

106. The way the email was formatted it was difficult to see the overall score at a glance.

119. It's a little frustrating that the comments are so short

125. My proposal was ranked in the bottom tier, but I could not figure out why.

132. There appears to be a lot of political aspect in the proposal evaluation.

134. The results letters were extremely confusing. They should be simplified by putting the result near the top of the letter (I mainly want to know if I got time or not!). Also, please put the proposal title in the letter. I was a co-I on several proposals, and I could not remember which proposal number corresponded to which proposal.

161. The e-mails could be structured better to see the information easier (some of which was buried in "generic" text).

162. The grading aspect was odd. On all of the proposals I was on, the two percentages quoted (where the proposal ranked in the total submission, and where it ranked in the regional division) were always the same, which seemed surprising.

166. I think the scores were a big vague. An actual ranking would've been more helpful. Also - the difference between our region and the overall grade was not clear.

171. The email I received was a little hard to read, specially when it comes to knowing the place your proposal belongs to. Also in the documentation for proposal review it was said that they would be graded with a letter depending on the strength of the proposal. Never saw that in practice.

187. From the feedback of the review process it was clear that the proposal was not taken seriously nor was the proposal reviewed completely. The comments were not relevant. Since proposal writing requires a great deal of time on the part of the proposer, the review process should be organised to reflect this. The triage process should not take place unless proposals are properly reviewed. The system must be prepared to undertake the review process more thoroughly.

212. Word is that the proposals were initially graded by a "pre-TAC" panel. The whole idea of a potential "pre-TAC" triaging 30-40% of the proposals, without the actual TAC members knowledge, is ridiculous and disgraceful, if true. This is a bad precedent to set and is not inline with the policies of other major observatories.

217. I never received any feedback on my proposal. I assume it was not given time but I have no idea of how it did in the evaluation process.

227. Proposals were accurately triaged so I agreed with the allocations that received time and those that didn't. Feedback was incredibly sparse without much indication as to improvements.

308. See above comment on TAC comments

346. rating should be more immediate to find, not 3 quarter through a somewhat legthy email

357. Needs to be much more informative, especially regarding technical feasibility. I know that some projects that were not technically feasible were accepted, and it's frustrating to know that time is being wasted on such things.

373. The grade of the proposal, and whether the proposal has been granted time or not, should be stated more clearly and at the beginning of the email.

389. The email was actually quite clear, however the information regarding my proposal(s) was buried within general statements. Thus, I had to read them very carefully. It should have been simpler.

408. Maybe, any referees are not expert for radio astronomy. Any comments are miss-understanding of general science.

ALMA is an advantage of high-angular resolution, to resolve the compact source. But, referee makes a comment about the possibility of resolve-out. If it is correct, ALMA will be not necessary for all astronomers! ALMA can realize the high sensitivity observations. We carefully estimate the observation time, but referees did not mention it!

427. I strongly request that some of the reviewers must be theorists in order to make fair judgements. I feel most of the accepted proposals seem to be conservative, but I believe some challenging observations should be performed even in Early Science phase to show the excellent performance of ALMA.

Chapter 9

Comments on survey or suggestions for improvement

4. I found the support structure of ARC "nodes" to be excellent. In future please have surveys questions that include aspects about the nodes.

18. The proposal evaluation was very negative. The comments were nonsense, based on feeling of the referees rather than clear scientific statements. Probably there were conflicts... VERY UNPROFESSIONAL!!!

19. the absolute news blackout on informing PIs of progress on their projects is not a good idea. it makes ALMA look insular, rather than working in partnership with the user community.

20. I am not happy about the referee's committee. It is "surprising" that more than 60% of the persons forming these committees get observing time in the ALMA cycle 0. The inputs received from the committees do not help for next proposals. Clearly, that procedure did not fairly worked.

26. My expertise with the ARC nodes was not very positive. As being a non-expert in interferometry, I was hoping to find someone who could check if I did the intensity calculations correctly. I.e. I could provide them with the expected intensity in function of the distance from the central target. However, even after a 3-hour taking discussion with one person from the ARC-node, I was not 100% convinced that we had the number right. It seems as if sub-mm expertise is well covered in the ARC-nodes, but interferometric expertise is somewhat lacking.

34. Proposal grading in the email should be in a separate line for better visibility (as the band information was presented)

74. I strongly suggest that the final reports sent to the PIs contain better information on the reasons why a proposal is accepted/rejected. One of mine came back with a very low ranking but the comments stated that the proposal was "scientifically sound and worth observing". Such comments do not help anybody and seem very peculiar since the outcome was completely different...

80. The proposing team, of which I was the PI, received a vague comment from one of the technical reviewers saying that "some of us should feel bad about the rejection of the proposal". We asked for explanations but none was given.

82. In my opinion, the community needs a bit more tutorial activity, so keep encouraging it among the ARC nodes. Nevertheless, thank you all for the effort of making ALMA so user friendly. All the best!

98. It seems pretty clear that the proposal review process needs A LOT of improvement. The lack of expertise on the review panels in some fields (read: planetary astronomy at a minimum) is simply unacceptable for such an important observatory. Individual review comments were often single lines that didn't contain any information, or were plain wrong, and were inconsistent and arbitrary when looked at in a broader context (e.g. for similar proposals the comments were not consistent).

118. For what it's worth, I was able to conclude that Cycle 0 didn't have the capabilities I needed so I didn't submit.

134. I was fortunate to get observing time, but now that my script is in, I am getting no information when or if my project has been run, and if so, when I will get the data. There needs to be more communication on the project status.

180. Grade that we received was inconsistent with that mentioned in the Call for Proposal, causing confusion!

184. Just do a sensible and informative assessment of proposals, and you should be fine. Something similar to the NRAO or ATNF proposal evaluation, which I think are fair. Your first attempt at this did not make much sense. And I am not arguing because my proposal was rejected. The problem is that I got no information on what was really missing from my proposal and I have no way to improve it in the future. So, I got the impression that the process was somewhat arbitrary.

191. Many of the CoIs/PIs where NEVER notified re: the disposition of their proposal, and a list of accepted proposal is difficult if not impossible to find. This seems to violate many NSF-related requirements of facilities that are partly supported by US federal dollars.

192. n/a

196. I think that under the circumstances (pressure of time, partial and partially verified ALMA operations, complex system pushing the state of the art on many fronts, etc.) the whole ALMA team and the EU-Nordic ARC in particular performed magnificently!

203. The popup keyboard in this questionnaire is very annoying! Sorry...

215. It would be good to have a better description of the weakness and issues regarding the submitted proposals.

217. Everything about the process was great till submission. However, not getting any feedback obviously is a problem. It appears that you meant to send something but the system broke down somewhere.

219. I appriciate for the efforts of the ALMA team. I would encourage the team to observe variable sources, and accept TOO observations. Thank you.

222. Since my proposal was ranked as "filler", I understood that there was no high priority to contact me about the Phase2, as mentioned in the email. However, now, two months later, I still haven't been contacted officially about my programme. I assume that fillers will not be executed at all, but it would be nice to get notified about this.

246. Please make the software compatible with all common operating systems used for the past 5 years.

286. 1. ALMA needs proposal template for the science justification. 2. Printing of the cover page in ALMAOT was not working in some Linux machines.

298. Allow PIs / co-Is to access data faster. No need to wait to process it to a science-ready fits file till the pipeline is ready. Allow users to see not only the list of observed sources / targets but also the spectral set up / array configuration so different observations can be requested.

299. Documentation for the phase II (i.e., observing script generation/verification) is surprisingly lacking.

305. I was much involved in the project to allow myself to give any more comment. I answered only for completeness.

308. Overall, a very successful proposal call and evaluation. The entire ARC staff is to be congratulated

332. Junk CASA and start from scratch with something designed along google-apple lines – simple, elegant and easy to use.

334. The people form the ARC UK node were very useful, it was just a shame we did not get the time.

357. Need to expand much more on the proposal summary regarding scientific merit. It's not clear how my proposal could be improved based on the report. There should be a separate technical feasibility report sent out as well.

363. I realise that when proposal pressure is so high, one has to reject most of the proposals, but to do so by‘ "fabricating" problems with the science case is not helpful to proposers. A rejection on statistical grounds would be preferable!

370. i am looking forward to the results.

403. I understand that cycle 0 of a new instrument is a learning experience for all involved. I hope that my criticisms will be interpreted as constructive. They are intended to be.

409. This survey should be sent earlier. I already forgot some details of problems encountered during the proposal submission process (June 2011) and my answers have not been very precise in this respect.

419. You obviously need more panel members!

432. I was a co-I of a successful proposal and the experience of the team with the proposal submission process and related infos was satisfactory.

439. the allocation basis was too political rather than scientific.

Appendix A

ALMA user satisfaction survey

A.1 About you

1. Please indicate the ARC to which you are associated

1.a. EA 1.b. EU 1.c. NA

2. Please rate your expertise in radio and/or submm observations? (1: Expert ... to 5: Absolute beginner)

2.a. 1 2.b. 2 2.c. 3 2.d. 4 2.e. 5

3. Please rate your expertise in radio and/or submm interferometer observations? (1: Expert ... to 5: Absolute beginner; Absolute beginner means that you have never reduced interferometric data)

3.a. 1 3.b. 2 3.c. 3 3.d. 4 3.e. 5

4. Are you a student?

4.a. Y 4.b. N

5. Are you a postdoc?

5.a. Y 5.b. N

A.2 Science Portal

1. Did you find the Science Portal user friendly? (1: Yes, absolutely... 5: Not at all)

1.a. 1 1.b. 2 1.c. 3 1.d. 4 1.e. 5

2. Could you find all the information needed for preparation/submission of your proposal?

2.a. Y 2.b. N

3. Did you encounter any problems with registration?

3.a. Y 3.b. N

3.1. Were the problems resolved within a short (hours) timeframe?

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

3.1.a. Y 3.1.b. N

4. Please enter any additional comments regarding this section here (Text box)

A.3 Helpdesk

1. Did you consult the knowledgebase articles available at the helpdesk?

1.a. Y 1.b. N

1.1. Please rate the value/quality of the knowledge base articles (1: Very good... 5: Very poor)

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

1.1.a. 1 1.1.b. 2 1.1.c. 3 1.1.d. 4 1.1.e. 5

2. Did you request help via the helpdesk?

2.a. Y 2.b. N

2.1. Was your problem solved?

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

2.1.a. Y 2.1.b. N

2.2. Please evaluate the helpdesk performance (quality of replies and time for replies) (1: Very good... 5: Very bad)

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at question 2 in this section)

2.2.a. 1 2.2.b. 2 2.2.c. 3 2.2.d. 4 2.2.e. 5

3. Did you find the helpdesk easy to use? (1: Very easy... 5: Very difficult)

3.a. 1 3.b. 2 3.c. 3 3.d. 4 3.e. 5

4. Please enter any additional comments regarding this section here (Text box)

A.4 Call for proposals

1. Did the call for proposals include all the necessary information?

1.a. Y 1.b. N

1.2. Please specify which information was missing (Text box)

(Only answer this question if answer was 'No' at previous question)

2. Please enter any additional comments regarding this section here (Text box)

A.5 Proposal preparation

1. Did you encounter any difficulties during the proposal preparation?

1.a. Y 1.b. N

1.1. Were the problems related to:

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

1.1.a. Observing Tool (OT)? (Please specify the problem you encountered) (Text box)

1.1.b. ALMA Sensitivity Calculator (ASC)? (Please specify the problem you encountered) (Text box)

1.1.c. ALMA Web-based Simulator (OST)? (Please specify the problem you encountered) (Text box)

1.1.d. ALMA CASA simulator (simdata)? (Please specify the problem you encountered) (Text box)

1.1.e. lacking documentation? (Please specify which documentation was missing) (Text box)

1.1.f. erroneous documentation?

1.1.1. Please mark which document contained errors

(Only answer this question if answer was "erroneous documentation" at previous question)

1.1.1.a. ALMA Technical Handbook

1.1.1.b. ALMA Cycle 0 Proposer's Guide

1.1.1.c. Early Science Primer

1.1.1.d. OT User Manual

1.1.1.e. OT Reference Manual

1.1.1.f. OT Phase I Quickstart

1.1.1.g. Sensitivity Calculator Guide

1.1.1.h. ALMA Observation Support Tool (OST) documentation

1.1.1.i. Other (Please specify which document contained errors) (Text box)

2. Did you attend any of the ALMA Community Days offered by the ARC or the ARC nodes?

2.a. Y 2.b. N

2.1. Did you find the workshop useful? (1: Very useful... 5: Not useful at all)

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

2.1.a. 1 2.1.b. 2 2.1.c. 3 2.1.d. 4 2.1.e. 5

2.2. How could the event be improved? (Text box)

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at question 2 in this section.)

3. Please enter any additional comments regarding this section here (Text box)

A.6 Proposal submission and review process

1. Did you submit an ALMA proposal?

1.a. Y 1.b. N

1.1. Were you the PI?

(Only answer this question if answer was "Yes" at previous question)

1.1.a. Y 1.1.b. N

(Only answer all the following questions in this section if answer was "Yes" at two previous questions)

1.1.1. Was the proposal submission smooth? (1: Very smooth... 5: I encountered many difficulties)

1.1.1.a. 1 1.1.1.b. 2 1.1.1.c. 3 1.1.1.d. 4 1.1.1.e. 5

1.1.2. Please specify if you encountered any of the following problems during submission:

1.1.2.a. Not able to send a new submission 1.1.2.b. Not able to send a re-submission 1.1.2.c. Not able to search your projects in the archive 1.1.2.d. Other (Please specify which problem you encountered; Text box)

1.2. Please enter any additional comments regarding proposal submission here (Text box)

1.3. Were the comments on the scientific aspects of your proposal helpful? (1: Very helpful... 5: Not helpful at all)

1.3.a. 1 1.3.b. 2 1.3.c. 3 1.3.d. 4 1.3.e. 5

1.4. Please evaluate the following statements regarding the consensus report on your proposal (Please choose the appropriate response for each item)

1.4.1. How well did the consensus report identify weaknesses/strengths of the proposal (1:Very good/useful... 5: Not good/useful at all)

1.4.1.a. 1 1.4.1.b. 2 1.4.1.c. 3 1.4.1.d. 4 1.4.1.e. 5

1.4.2. How useful was the feedback on any shortcomings in the proposal (1:Very good/useful... 5: Not good/useful at all)

1.4.2.a. 1 1.4.2.b. 2 1.4.2.c. 3 1.4.2.d. 4 1.4.2.e. 5

1.5. Please include any comments that you have with respect to the consensus report here (Text box)

1.6. Was your proposal judged technically unfeasible?

1.6.a. Y 1.6.b. N

1.6.1. In your consideration, how could your proposal have avoided the technical problems?

1.6.1.1. Better documentation describing ALMA's Cycle0 capabilities (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.6.1.1.a. 1 1.6.1.1.b. 2 1.6.1.1.c. 3 1.6.1.1.d. 4 1.6.1.1.e. 5

1.6.1.2. More time spent by proposal team studying Cycle0 capabilities and performance expectations (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.6.1.2.a. 1 1.6.1.2.b. 2 1.6.1.2.c. 3 1.6.1.2.d. 4 1.6.1.2.e. 5

1.6.1.3. Generation of simulations by the proposal team (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.6.1.3.a. 1 1.6.1.3.b. 2 1.6.1.3.c. 3 1.6.1.3.d. 4 1.6.1.3.e. 5

1.6.1.4. Use of the helpdesk and knowledgebase to investigate questions about technical feasibility (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.6.1.4.a. 1 1.6.1.4.b. 2 1.6.1.4.c. 3 1.6.1.4.d. 4 1.6.1.4.e. 5

1.6.1.5. The project was not very feasible for Cycle0 and should have awaited later ALMA observing cycles (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.6.1.5.a. 1 1.6.1.5.b. 2 1.6.1.5.c. 3 1.6.1.5.d. 4 1.6.1.5.e. 5

1.6.2. Please add here any additional comments regarding avoidance of technical problems in proposals (e.g. which documentation could be improved)

1.7. Did you find the e-mail reporting the review results clear and informative regarding:

1.7.1. grading of your proposal? (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.7.1.a. 1 1.7.1.b. 2 1.7.1.c. 3 1.7.1.d. 4 1.7.1.e. 5

1.7.2. scientific merit? (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.7.2.a. 1 1.7.2.b. 2 1.7.2.c. 3 1.7.2.d. 4 1.7.2.e. 5

1.7.3. technical issues? (1: Totally agree... 5: Totally disagree)

1.7.3.a. 1 1.7.3.b. 2 1.7.3.c. 3 1.7.3.d. 4 1.7.3.e. 5

2. Please enter any additional comments regarding the proposal review process here (Text box)

A.7 Final comments

1. Please enter here any additional comments on issues not discussed in the survey or suggestions for improvement (Text box)

Appendix B

Acronym List

ACA: Atacama Compact Array
ALMA: Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array
ARC: ALMA Regional Centre
ASC: ALMA Sensitivity Calculator
EA: East Asia
EU: Europe
HD: Helpdesk
IF: Intermediate Frequency
JAO: Joint ALMA Observatory
LO: Local Oscillator
KB: Knowledgebase
NA: North America
OST: Observation Support Tool
OT: Observing Tool
PI: Principal Investigator
SB: Scheduling Block
SP: Science Portal
TAC: Time Allocation Committee
ToO: Target of Opportunity

The Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), an international astronomy facility, is a partnership of Europe, North America and East Asia in cooperation with the Republic of Chile. ALMA is funded in Europe by the European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (ESO), in North America by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) in cooperation with the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) and the National Science Council of Taiwan (NSC) and in East Asia by the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) of Japan in cooperation with the Academia Sinica (AS) in Taiwan. ALMA construction and operations are led on behalf of Europe by ESO, on behalf of North America by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), which is managed by Associated Universities, Inc. (AUI) and on behalf of East Asia by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ). The Joint ALMA Observatory (JAO) provides the unified leadership and management of the construction, commissioning and operation of ALMA.