Very Large Telescope

Paranal Science Operations

PIONIER Template Manual

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List of Abbreviations

AT Auxiliary Telescope
CS Constraint Set
ESO European Southern Observatory
LST Local Sidereal Time
MACAO Multi-Application Curvature wavefront sensor Adaptive Optics
OB Observation Block
OD Observation Description
OPC Observation Program Committee
OT Observation Toolkit
PIONIER Precision Integrated-Optics Near-infrared Imaging ExpeRiment
P2PP Phase-2 Proposal Preparation
SM Service Mode
STRAP System for Tip-tilt removal with Avalanche Photodiodes
TSF Template Signature File
USD User Support Department
UT Unit Telescope
VLT Very Large Telescope
VLTI Very Large Telescope Interferometer
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope

This document describes the templates for the PIONIER interferometric instrument. Like for all VLTI instruments, observations with PIONIER are carried out with observation blocks (OBs) grouped into concatenations. The OBs and concatenations must be prepared and submitted by the user during Phase-2 preparation with the P2PP tool. An OB consists of a set of information and several templates that describe the target acquisition and the observation sequence. For these templates, the user has to indicate the values of keywords (parameters). The OBs for science and calibrator stars are grouped into concatenations, i.e. sequences of OBs to be carried out one after the other.

This manual requires the user to already have an insight of PIONIER operation, as described in the “PIONIER User Manual”, that can be downloaded from:

http://www.eso.org/sci/facilities/paranal/instruments/pionier/manuals

For the installation of the P2PP tool, see:

http://www.eso.org/sci/observing/phase2/P2PP3.html

Note: the PIONIER-specific templates will be downloaded by the P2PP tool.

For service mode observations, it is important to read the PIONIER-specific service mode instructions given on the webpage:

http://www.eso.org/sci/observing/phase2/SMGuidelines.PIONIER.html

This page gives suggestions for OB edition with P2PP (name, constraint set), as well as the requirements for the “readme” file and for the finding charts.

1.2 Contact information

In case of questions or suggestions related to Phase-2 preparation, please contact the ESO User Support Department (usd-help@eso.org).

1.3 Period of validity of this manual

This manual only applies for observations with PIONIER in ESO Period 96, starting 1 October 2015 and ending 31 March 2016.

1.4 Glossary

- **Constraint Set (CS)**
  List of requirements for the conditions of the observation that is given inside an OB. OBs are only executed under this set of minimum conditions.

- **Observation Block (OB)**
  An Observation Block is the smallest schedulable entity for the VLT. It consists in a sequence of Templates. Usually, one Observation Block include one target acquisition and one or several templates for exposures.
• **Observation Description (OD)**
  A sequence of templates used to specify the observing sequences within one or more OBs.

• **Observation Toolkit (OT)**
  Tool used to create queues of OBs for later scheduling and possible execution (service mode).

• **Proposal Preparation and Submission (Phase-I)**
  The Phase-I begins right after the Call-for-Proposal (CfP) and ends at the deadline for CfP. During this period the potential users are invited to prepare and submit scientific proposals. For more information, see:
  
  http://www.eso.org/sci/observing/phase1.html

• **Phase-2 Proposal Preparation (P2PP)**
  Once proposals have been approved by the ESO Observation Program Commitee (OPC), users are notified and the Phase-2 begins. In this phase, users are requested to prepare their accepted proposals in the form of OBs, and to submit them by Internet (in case of service mode). The software tool used to build OBs is called the P2PP tool. It is distributed by ESO, and can be installed on the personal computer of the user. See:


• **Service Mode (SM)**
  In service mode (opposite of the “Visitor-Mode”), the observations are carried out by the ESO Paranal Science-Operation staff (PSO) alone. Observations can be done at any time during the period, depending on the CS given by the user. OBs are put into a queue schedule in OT which later send OBs to the instrument.

• **Template**
  A template is a sequence of operations to be executed by the instrument. The observation software of an instrument dispatches commands written in templates not only to instrument modules that control its motors and the detector, but also to the telescopes and VLTI sub-systems.

• **Template signature file (TSF)**
  File which contains template input parameters.

• **Visitor Mode (VM)**
  The classic observation mode. The user is on-site to supervise his/her program execution.

### 1.5 Modifications for P96

With the VLTI upgrade project, during which PIONIER was moved inside the VLTI laboratory and after which PIONIER will be offered in service mode, the observing templates were re-written completely. Thus, OBs from previous observing periods are no longer valid.
2 PIONIER TEMPLATES

2.1 Observing modes

As indicated in the “PIONIER User Manual” and webpages, the following instrumental setup will be offered for P96:

- The fringes can either be dispersed (GRISM) or undispersed (FREE)

Hence, the number of templates for P96 is small:

1. Preset, acquisition and fringe search
2. Fringe track observation, either as a science or calibrator target
3. Detector dark exposure
4. Beam combiner kappa-matrix exposures

Each OB must have all four of these templates, in exactly this order, but the kappa-matrix should actually be executed only on the brightest target of a concatenation.

The OBs have to be combined into concatenations. Two options exist for concatenations to be observed with PIONIER: Either three OBs of the structure calibrator-science-calibrator or five OBs of the structure calibrator-science-calibrator-science-calibrator. The execution time policy adopted by ESO for observations with PIONIER is that for the CAL-SCI-CAL concatenation 30 min execution time are charged, and for the CAL-SCI-CAL-SCI-CAL concatenation 45 min.

The further instrumental parameters, which cover basically the detector setup, depend on the sky conditions and will be adapted by the operator at the time of observations. Except for targets brighter than $m_H = 1$ mag we guarantee that these parameters are not changed during the execution of a concatenation. Since for brighter targets suitable calibrators are often not available, cross-calibration with different detector gains has been tested and does not diminish the accuracy as given in the instrument description on the webpages.

Thus, the number of keywords to be set by the user is very limited.

2.2 The acquisition template

According to P2PP rules, the first template in an OB must be an acquisition template. In the case of PIONIER, the name of this template is: PIONIER\_acq.

The sequence of this template starts by a “preset”: the target coordinates ($\alpha, \delta$) are sent to the telescopes and the delay lines, so they can slew to the position corresponding to the target coordinate at preset time. Once the telescopes are tracking and coudé-guiding, the target should be seen in IRIS. To ensure beam interference, the images from both beams must be overlapped. This is done by centering them on the beam reference pixels on IRIS that are determined at the beginning of every night.

It is possible to have, as a guide star at the coudé foci, an object different from the science target. The requirements are:

- The guide star must be brighter than $V = 17$ (MACAO is used for coudé guiding) on the UTs, $V = 13.5$ on the ATs (STRAP is used for coudé guiding).
• The guide star must be within a radius of 1 arcmin from the science target. If the visible magnitude of the guide star is between 12 and 13.5 (AT case), or between 15 and 17 (UT case), and if the distance between the target and the guide star is larger than 45 arcsec, a warning concerning possibly decreased guiding accuracy will be issued.

The template parameters for the guide star must be set by the user with P2PP (see Sect. 2.6.1).

2.3 The observation template

This template is the second in any PIONIER OB description for P96. The observation template records interferograms by scanning. Depending on whether the target is a science or calibrator object, the template PIONIER\_obs\_science or PIONIER\_obs\_calibrator must be used. In terms of observational procedure, both templates are identical, but the recorded data is handled differently in the archive and for data reduction.

2.4 The dark template

This template, PIONIER\_gen\_cal\_dark, is the third in any PIONIER OB description for P96. It closes all shutters and records a number of dark exposures. The only keyword, SEQ.DOIT, must be set to “T” in all cases, i.e. a dark exposure must not be skipped.

2.5 The kappa matrix template

This template, PIONIER\_gen\_cal\_kappa, is the fourth in any PIONIER OB description for P96. It sequentially opens the shutters for each beam and records a number of exposures to determine the light splitting ratios between each of the four input beams into the 24 output beams.

Note that in service mode, the only keyword, SEQ.DOIT, must be set to “T” in only one OB of a concatenation, and “F” in all others. The purpose to nevertheless have a template in all OBs is to enable the operator to take an additional kappa matrix if desirable.

2.6 User keywords

In the following tables, we give for each template the keywords that have to be set by the user with the P2PP tool.
### 2.6.1 PIONIER\_acq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unit, format, possible values</th>
<th>Default value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.GSSOURCE</td>
<td>Type of coudé guiding</td>
<td>SCIENCE: no off-target guiding, other COU.. keywords ignored SETUPFILE: off-target guiding, guide star used</td>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.ALPHA</td>
<td>Right ascension of coudé guide star</td>
<td>HH:MM:SS.SS (e.g.: 22:54:30.53 for 22 h 54 m 30.53 s)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.DELTA</td>
<td>Declination of coudé guide star</td>
<td>DD:MM:SS.SS (e.g.: -16:22:45.91 for -16° 22’ 45.91”)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.MAG</td>
<td>Visual magnitude of either the target or its coudé guide star (if the target is too faint for coudé guiding)</td>
<td>m\textsubscript{V}</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.PMA</td>
<td>Right ascension proper motion of coudé guide star</td>
<td>arcsec/year</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.PMD</td>
<td>Declination proper motion of coudé guide star</td>
<td>arcsec/year</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.EPOCH</td>
<td>Epoch of coordinates and proper motion of coudé guide star</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL.COU.EQUINOX</td>
<td>Equinox of coordinate system in which coudé guide star coordinates are given</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS.IAS.HMAG</td>
<td>Magnitude in H-band (1.6 (\mu)m) of the target</td>
<td>m\textsubscript{H}</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS DISP. NAME</td>
<td>Dispersive element</td>
<td>FREE or GRISM</td>
<td>GRISM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:

- If you are not using an off-axis coudé target, you MUST enter as value of TEL.COU.MAG the visual magnitude of your target. The minimum allowed magnitude (i.e. maximum flux) is -1.0 with the UTs and -1.7 with the ATs.

- If the target or the off-axis guide star is a variable star, the magnitude of the star when it is at its maximum of brightness (i.e., the minimum magnitude) should be given for TEL.COU.MAG, this to prevent the photodiodes of the coudé detectors from being overilluminated for having set up an underestimated neutral density. Also, a comment should be added in the OB, specifying the magnitude interval of the star.

- If no off-axis guiding is used (TEL.COU.GSSSOURCE=SCIENCE) values for TEL.COU.ALPHA and TEL.COU.DELTA can be left at zero.

2.6.2 PIONIER_obs_science and PIONIER_obs_calibrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unit, format, possible values</th>
<th>Default value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEQ.NEXPO</td>
<td>Number of fringe track exposures</td>
<td>integer value, 1 to 100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

- The choice of template implicitly sets the DPR.CATG keyword to either SCIENCE or CALIB.

- 5 fringe tracks are the mandatory value for SEQ.NEXPO for service mode observations. The value can be modified only in visitor mode.

2.6.3 PIONIER_gen_cal_dark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unit, format, possible values</th>
<th>Default value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEQ.DOIT</td>
<td>Determines whether the dark is taken</td>
<td>T/F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The dark exposure is mandatory for all observations, i.e. the value must always be set to “T”.

2.6.4 PIONIER_gen_cal_kappa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unit, format, possible values</th>
<th>Default value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEQ.DOIT</td>
<td>Determines whether the kappa matrix is taken</td>
<td>T/F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

- Only one kappa matrix per concatenation must be set to “T”, all others must be “F”.

2.6.5 Observation description

As mentioned in Sect. 2, possibles ODs are limited to two options, depending on whether the target is a science or calibrator object. Any OD begins with the acquisition template PIONIER_acq, then one execution of either PIONIER_obs_science or PIONIER_obs_calibrator, which is followed by PIONIER_gen_cal_dark and PIONIER_gen_cal_kappa.

2.7 Constraints on the concatenation level

- A concatenation for PIONIER can have three or five OBs. The first OB in a concatenation must have the PIONIER_obs_calibrator template, the following must alternate between PIONIER_obs_science and PIONIER_obs_calibrator templates, i.e. concatenations are either CAL-SCI-CAL or CAL-SCI-CAL-SCI-CAL.

- The CAL targets can be different objects, e.g. to encircle the SCI target, but the SCI targets in the CAL-SCI-CAL-SCI-CAL concatenation must be identical.

- The LST windows of the calibrator OBs must extend to 15 minutes before and after the LST windows of the science OB(s).

- Only one kappa matrix template per concatenation can have the SEQ.DOIT keyword set to “T” (for “TRUE”). This should usually be done on the brightest target of the concatenation.