

COO Informational Note
P200 Secondary Instruments
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One of the strengths of the Hale 5m (P200) telescope is the support of multiple instruments at multiple telescope foci. Often this capability is used to allow imaging at prime focus (e.g. with LFC or WIRC), with a quick changeover to spectroscopy at Cassegrain focus (e.g. with DBSP or TripleSpec) – all within a single night. Further, the East-Arm Echelle (EAE) provides an additional option – particularly for target of opportunity observations. Over the years many P200 science programs have profited from these important capabilities.

However it is important to recognize that instrument setups do not come without a cost – both in terms of Palomar labor expenses, and in wear on the instruments (not to mention their maintainers). Thus we are motivated to limit multiple instrument setups to cases where it well-motivated by the scientific goals of the program. So several semesters ago we re-instituted a nuance to the P200 secondary instrument policy requiring science justification (and assessment) for their use at the proposal phase. Quoting from the 2010A call for proposals:

"Observers using the 200-inch telescope may request instruments to be installed simultaneously at the prime focus, Cassegrain focus and/or the east-arm focus (East Arm Echelle only). On the Cover Sheet, select the principal instrument to be used from the drop-down lists on the Observing Time Preferences table and specify the secondary instrument(s) in the space provided under Additional Information. **Secondary instruments should be requested only if they are integral to the program and if there is a very high probability that they will be used during the observing run. The use of a secondary instrument must be fully justified in the proposal discussion.**" [Emphasis added]

We have heard concerns that the availability of secondary instruments has been arbitrarily curtailed in recent semesters. We assure all that this is not our intent with this policy: as secondary instrument requests do impact observatory operations, we want to make sure these impacts are traceable to assessments made in the Time Allocation process. We have also heard comments that P200 users were unaware of this aspect of the secondary instrument policy, so in semester 2010A we will work with observers to support secondary instrument usage on a best-effort basis (usually when the requests meshes with the existing setup on the telescope, and/or when there are minimal instrument setup impacts). But for and in semester 2010B and onward P200 users should be advised that secondary instrument requests received outside the proposal process must be justified based on information not available during the proposal process, and can only be supported on a best-effort basis based on the existing instrument configuration.