

Policy on Processing Requests to Design Non-Standard Plates

Objective

To define a process that allows for non-standard plates to be designed, fabricated, and integrated into the SDSS observing program in a way that does not compromise normal operations or the achievement of Survey goals.

Definition of Non-Standard Plates

Non-standard plates are defined as spectroscopic plates designed for special observing operations or engineering tests that are necessary to achieve the goals of the Northern and Southern Surveys, or other special programs, as defined in the ARC Principles of Operation for the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (PoO).

Article 3.1.3 of the PoO allows for the use of non-standard plates for science activities necessary to support survey planning, calibrations, target selection, etc.; and to obtain spectra of a limited number of targets of high scientific importance, as recommended to the Project Scientist by the Working Groups.

Process

This process applies only to requests for a small number of plates (<20). Requests for large numbers of plates, or plates to be drilled at a shop other than at the University of Washington must be arranged with the Head of Survey Coordination on a case-by-case basis.

1. All requests for non-standard plates must be submitted to the SDSS Project Scientist for review and approval. Each request must include a justification for why the special plate is required and a brief description of special observing instructions or needs.
2. Unapproved requests may be appealed to the SDSS Director.
3. Once approved, the plate design shall conform to the standard plate geometry and must use the standard SDSS plate and tile sequence numbering scheme. The requestor shall contact the Head of Survey Coordination at least one month prior to a drilling run. The drill file schedule is posted on the SDSS website (www.sdss.org), under Survey Ops, Survey Management.
4. The Head of Survey Coordination will make plate/tile ID assignments and notify the plate production operation that special plates will be processed. A special numbering sequence will likely be assigned to the plate to distinguish it from standard spectroscopic plates.
5. Each plate will be logged and tracked in the SDSS plate database (INVENTORY). A one-word description of the plate program (or purpose) shall be provided for tracking the plate in the database. For example, the photo-Z plates are called "photoz".
6. The full set of files associated with standard plug plates shall be provided to the Head of Survey Coordination at least ten working days prior to the drill file deadline. If the drill files are not delivered by the deadline, they may not be included in the next drilling run.

7. If the drill files are not delivered in the appropriate format, they will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the requester to understand format requirements.
8. The Head of Survey Coordination will be responsible for ensuring that the drill files are forwarded to the UW shop along with the standard set of drill files for that drill run.
9. The requester shall provide special observing/ plugging instructions to the Head of Observing Systems and the Lead Observer at least one month prior to the desired observing period. The request shall also provide special observing needs and instructions to the Head of Survey Coordination so they may be included in the SDSS Monthly Observing Plan. The schedule and requirements for observing the special plate will be coordinated by the Head of Survey Coordination, the Lead Observer, and the requester.
10. Instructions for when the plate will be plugged and observed will be given to the SDSS plugging technicians by the SDSS observers, following standard operating procedures. The instructions will be in accordance with the approved Monthly Observing Plan.