

Notes from TOW Teachers dinner, May 7, 2025
Notes by D. Behrend

Notes are in order of teacher remarks, as we went around the table. Relevant comments are indicated by rectangular brackets.

Individual Remarks =====

Chet Ruszczyk, Mark 6, R2DBE, VGOS signal chain:
I taught three different classes with some good interactions and good questions. There were several new people; the student class list was missing early on. Having a smaller load was good.

Chris Coughlin, Pre-checks and operations, Failure recovery:
I covered, together with Alex, the operations classes at Westford. We had good interactions with the students. There were a lot of first timers which resulted in fewer questions. For the Failure recovery class it was important to have Roger Hammargren to cover the DBBC3. With the small classroom, having 14 students at one time was a bit problematic.

Dhiman Mondal, Science Overview, Operations impact on analysis:
I had two lectures, both starting at 4 pm. I missed the one-on-one interaction. For the whole supply chain, we were missing analysis people.

Gönenç Moğol, VLBI Communications Center:
This was my first TOW and the first time teaching. I liked the VLBI Basics lecture; it set the stage for the upcoming program. My first class went very well, the second class was a little less smooth. The class length of 75 min is a little too long. The catering was very good.

Katie Pazamickas, Time and frequency:
I liked having so many new people. Peraton also had new employees. It was great to have Rick around. The content of the classes was good. This was my favorite TOW hotel; I appreciated the kitchen. A thank-you to Heidi for accommodating my husband Dexter.

Alex Burns, Pre-checks and operations, Failure recovery:
It was a pleasure to work with Chris on the operations classes. There were many new faces. It would be good to see more operators from the IVS stations. Many thanks to Heidi for all her work. Perhaps we can have again an excursion at a future TOW.

Alexander Neidhardt, FS operations, FS station code, System monitoring,
Discussion board:

The TOW was great again. The class strengths were inconsistent with a different number of students in each. The equipment shown was not necessarily what is used at many stations. Should we have more movies? The Discussion board was too quiet this time; it would be good to involve more folks without sliding into a "Complaining Session." There should be more analysis presented at TOW. There were many new people. The food was excellent.

Christian Plötz, Cryogenics:

I taught three installments of the Cryo class. There were many new folks. The group of people can be divided into two basic types: experts and newbies. Many thanks to Katie for providing a coldhead. I was hesitant to disassemble; for that a used coldhead would be better.

Heidi Johnson, local coordinator:

It was phantastic to have a mix of new and old hands. The caterer was great. The situation with the rented tent sucked. A new speaker system for Conf_D would be good.

Jungwhan Oh, Pointing and Amplitude Calibration:

This was my first TOW and my first time at Haystack. It was somewhat overwhelming to take over from Bob Campbell. I very much liked the cosy atmosphere of the classes.

Sara Hardin, Correlator feedback, Operations impact on analysis:

There were many questions in my classes. I would have preferred two installments rather than three for the Correlator feedback class. The correlator tag-team was down just to me [Phillip didn't get travel approval]. The lecture together with Dhiman was great. I really liked the hotel.

Marjolein Verkouter, VLBI Data Acquisition:

Many thanks to Heidi and Dirk. I was happy to see so many new people; this is important for the next generation. There is a need for more hands-on classes, perhaps similar to the revamped e-transfer class. E.g., for the FS classes typing in relevant commands could be more illustrative. Having a physical DBBC3 would be good. We were missing Chinese and Russian colleagues.

Yoon Kyun Choi, Data Transport:

This was my first time as a teacher and my third TOW. People seem to like the Haribo. It was great to meet people in person. As a correlator person it was good to interact with station folks. We included hands-on activities into our e-transfer class. For that, we [Jason, Yoon, and Marjolein] met in several Zoom meetings to get prepared.

Ganesh Rajagopalan, Phase Cal Basics, Advanced Pre-checks and Operations:

There were so many new people. I taught five classes overall. I have to fill the large shoes of Brian [Corey] and Ed [Himwich]. My classes

were mixed with new and old folks. Phase cal is a difficult concept to convey. The pcal connection from Conf_C was successful.

Pepe López Pérez, RFI:

Congratulations to the organizers. I very much like the atmosphere of the workshop. I taught the RFI class together with John Swoboda and Sam Thé. All three installments were full; RFI is an important topic. We can improve on the timing of the speakers [to avoid a run-over of the class].

Rick Hambly, Time and frequency:

I met up with Alex at Westford on Sunday. I would have preferred to have three installments of the Time class, but I understand why it was only two [Katie's pregnancy]. I enjoyed answering questions. I was approached outside of the classes for more information.

Sam Thé, RFI:

This was my first TOW and first time teaching. It was good to have Pepe and John as co-teachers. It was a great welcome to the VLBI community.

Dirk Behrend, Program coordination and general organization:

This time it was very challenging to organize the workshop. There were a lot of moving pieces. In the end, it came all together. The class assignments were not optimal, as there were last minute changes and probably an insufficient preparation time. I liked the venue for the icebreaker and the Teachers' Dinner (separate room). Kudos to Heidi.

Michael Lindqvist, Antenna Gain Calibration:

The IVS needs gain calibration, but it is not picking it up. The gain calibration class should be held at a telescope. [Chet: Perhaps this should be integrated into the PreOps class. Alex: This should work in 2027.] I agree, we can combine this with PreOps. Many thanks to Heidi.

Karine Le Bail, Discussion board:

The reason for me being here is a bit odd. I struggled to get feedback from the station managers regarding station events. So, I teamed up with

Alexander. It is always better to have data than the other way around. I received business cards from two station managers as contact for station information. [Heidi: Perhaps a global e-mail would help.] We may have a future class on station events.

Nancy Kotary, Photography:

I was the photographer of the workshop. I like photos of new people. It

was not easy to photograph hands-on activities. There needs to be more hands-on. Sorry for interrupting classes for taking photos.

Russ McWhirter, R2DBE:

I tried to attend more classes this time. I co-taught with Chet. Some of the classes were too big.

Pedro Elosegui, VLBI Basics:

Apologies that my lecture went over time. Thanks to Dirk. I did miss the

mechanical part of VLBI in the workshop program. There should be a class

on mechanical engineering/maintenance including thermal expansion and gravitational deformation. A person for such an antenna talk could be Chris Eckert.