



## QUANTUM CASCADE LASER USER'S MANUAL



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## DOCUMENT VERSION

This is Version 3.1.12 of the manual, published on April 24th, 2017, superseding version 3.1.11 of the manual, published on March 31st, 2017. The following modifications have been applied since the publication of version 3.0:

Date of publication	Version number	Changes
24/4/2017	3.1.12	Added Fig. 6.5 and updated Fig. 5.13
31/3/2017	3.1.11	Added some informations on packaging in §1 and updated Figs. 5.14 and 5.15
6/5/2016	3.1.10	Limited S-2 input voltage to 20V in table 5.4
17/3/2016	3.1.9	Added figs. 5.8 and 5.10
11/3/2016	3.1.8	Change of address
16/10/2015	3.1.7	Modified § 5.4 - removed TC-3 control comments
11/09/2015	3.1.6	Modified § 5.4 after software improvements
26/08/2015	3.1.5	Corrected fig. 5.9 and added information on high duty cycle operation
07/08/2015	3.1.4	Added § 5.4
14/05/2014	3.1.3	Clarified Menu navigation in § 5.1.1
29/04/2013	3.1.2	Updated table 5.2
07/03/2013	3.1.1	Added §C.1
28/01/2013	3.1.0	§ 1.3.2 was added and § 1.3.1 is deprecated. §3.3.7 and 3.3.8 have been added. §5.1 has been added. Various references to temperature controllers have been updated throughout the manual.
24/05/2012	3.0.1	§ 1.3.3, the LDD voltage is typically <b>below</b> the ratings, not <b>above</b> .

# Preface

This manual is a reference tool for personnel using ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment. Its purpose is to provide the customer with sufficient information to carry out normal installation and operating procedures. It is not intended to replace or supersede any local directive. Table 1 gives a summary of the content of each chapter.



**CAUTION:**

All personnel must read and understand this manual before attempting to operate ALPES LASERS QCLs or electronic device. Failure to follow safety instructions could result in death or serious injury.

Chapter	Content
1. Overview	General overview of ALPES LASERS QCLs and Starter Kit components.
2. Safety	Information for ensuring safety during the installation, operation and maintenance of ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment.
3. Installation	Prerequisites, guidelines and list of connections for the installation of ALPES LASERS equipment.
4. QCL operation	Principle of operation of QCLs, ALPES LASERS datasheet and QCL parameters.
5. Starter Kit Operation	Procedures for setting up the Starter Kit and operating a QCL.
6. Technical specifications	Technical specifications and drawings of ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment.
7. Maintenance	Procedures for exchanging a laser in the LLH housing and calibrating ALPES LASERS electronic equipment.
Appendices	Informations and procedures for advanced users.

Table 1.: Structure of the QCL User's Manual.

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## Typesetting conventions

- Table 2 gives a list of the acronyms used in this manual.
- A boxed item indicates a hardware setting on an electronic device.

Acronym	Official name	Other name
AR	Anti-Reflection coating	
DFB	Distributed FeedBack (laser)	
EPS	External power supply	laser driver
FP	Fabry-Perot (laser)	
LDD	Laser Diode Driver	QCL pulser switching unit
LLH	Laboratory Laser Housing	
NDR	Negative Differential Resistance	
NTC	Negative Thermal Coefficient	
NS	screwed laser submount	
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer	
QCL	Quantum Cascade Laser	
ST	clamped laser submount	
TCU	Temperature Control Unit	
TEC	ThermoElectric Cooler	Peltier cooler
TPG	TTL Pulse Generator	QCL pulser timing unit

Table 2.: Acronyms used in this manual.

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# 1. Overview

The following chapter gives a general overview ALPES LASERS lasers and equipment is given, as well as a brief introduction to the detection principle and fields of application of quantum cascade lasers (QCLs).

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## 1.1. ALPES LASERS products

ALPES LASERS manufactures two types of Quantum Cascade Lasers (QCLs): singlemode Distributed-Feedback (DFB) or multimode Fabry-Perot (FP), which can be operated in two modes: continuous wave (CW) or pulsed. ALPES LASERS lasers are available in different types of packaging, presented in section 1.2. ALPES LASERS developed dedicated electronics to control the temperature and current drive of its QCLs; see section 1.3 for details.

ALPES LASERS is constantly developing new QCLs and electronics to satisfy inquiries from its customers. Contact ALPES LASERS to find the best solution for your application.

### 1.1.1. QCL parameters and performance

All ALPES LASERS lasers are thoroughly tested and characterized. The results are reported in datasheets, which are readily available on ALPES LASERS website. Each QCL is delivered with its datasheet, containing data on singlemode and multimode emission, IV curves, emitted power, maximum operating current and operation temperature. See section 4.2 for details.

### 1.1.2. QCL geometry

Figure 1.1 shows an ALPES LASERS QCL growth and a laser chip mounted on an NS submount (see section 1.1.3). By convention, the vertical axis of the laser is parallel to the growth direction, as well as the beam polarization (i.e. electric field) and the NS submount screw holes axis. The emission axis is perpendicular to the growth direction and to the edges of the NS submount.

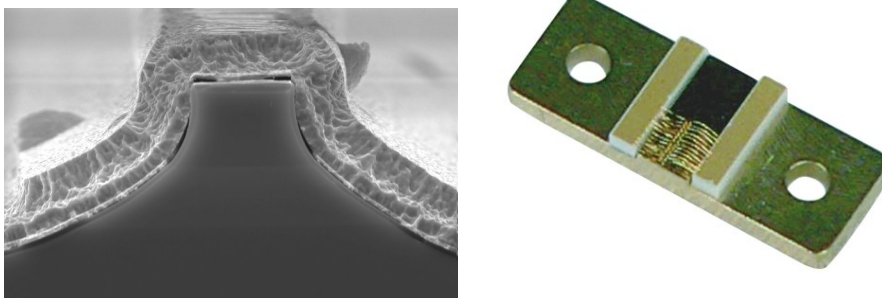


Figure 1.1.: ALPES LASERS QCL growth (left) and laser chip mounted on a submount (right).

The laser chip is soldered to a copper base and is bonded with gold bonds to two AlN ceramic pads, which are also mounted on the same copper base, as shown in

figure 1.2. The surface of the ceramic pads is covered with a gold layer and their sides have a whitish ceramic color. The golden surface must be positioned upwards. When looking into the LLH from the top, the pad left of the direction of emission is labeled DN for down, and the right pad UP for up. Only one pad is characterized, as specified in the datasheet. If only one pad is present, it is in the DN position by default.

### Polarity

By default, the laser has negative polarity: the cathode is connected to the ceramic pads and the anode is connected to the submount copper plate (see figure 1.2). The laser may be mounted junction down; this is clearly indicated on the laser box. In this case, the laser has positive polarity: the cathode is connected to the submount copper plate and the anode to the ceramic pads.

### 1.1.3. QCL mounting

ALPES LASERS QCLs can be mounted on two types of submounts:

- ST: clamped mounting
- NS: screwed mounting

The QCL submount can be integrated in a LLH, HHL or in any package designed by the customer. The QCL submount is mounted on a copper plate, which lies on a Peltier junction for heat dissipation, as shown in figure 1.2.

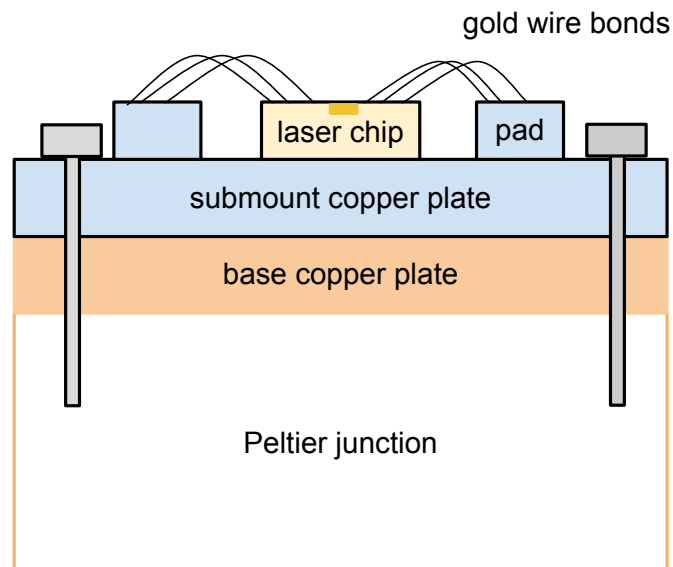


Figure 1.2.: ALPES LASERS QCL NS submount mounted in a HHL or LLH housing.

## 1.2. QCL housings and packages

ALPES LASERS QCLs can be delivered in 5 kinds of packages:

**Chip-on-Carrier (CoC)** A laser chip available on stock is mounted on either a NS or ST submount (see section 1.1.3) . These submounts can be integrated into a LLH or HHL housing, or can be sold separately, to be integrated in a piece of equipment manufactured by the customer.

**Laboratory Laser Housing (LLH)** The LLH is designed for research applications, and can be cooled down to  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  with water cooling. This is the most versatile housing unit available because LLH has an easy laser exchange and is compatible with the Starter Kit. All ALPES LASERS available in stock can be used in a LLH housing. See section 1.2.1 for details.

**High Heat Load (HHL)** The HHL housing is a sealed collimated housing with TEC for CW or pulsed lasers. The optional collimating lens is protected by a plane window, making it ideal for operating in aggressive environments. See section 1.2.2 for details.

**TO3** Pulsed lasers are available in TO3 cans, which are smaller and less power-intensive than the HHL packages. TO3 housings are sealed, include a TEC and are available with AR coated lenses for beam collimation or flat windows. Their small size and low dissipation (less than 4W in pulsed mode) make them ideal for integrating the QCL into a piece of equipment manufactured by the customer.

*Note:* most lasers listed on ALPES LASERS website cannot be mounted in a TO3 housing; address your inquiry directly to ALPES LASERS.

**Bare Chips** : untested laser chips

### 1.2.1. Laboratory Laser Housing (LLH)

The LLH consists of a housing unit that includes a TEC and encapsulates the QCL chip; it is designed to ease its installation and replacement. Its internal temperature is controlled by a Peltier junction and a PT-100 temperature sensor, and can reach temperatures of less than  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Heat should be dissipated using one of the setups described in section 3.1.2. The LLH temperature is controlled by the TC-3 (see section 5.1).

Housing	$I_{lim}$
$I_{max}$	5.0 A
$V_{max}$	15.8 V
$Q_{max}$	40 W
Clear Aperture	4 mm
Divergence	approx. $60^{\circ}$ x $40^{\circ}$

Table 1.1.: HHL housing Specifications (1-stage)



Figure 1.3.: LLH housing.

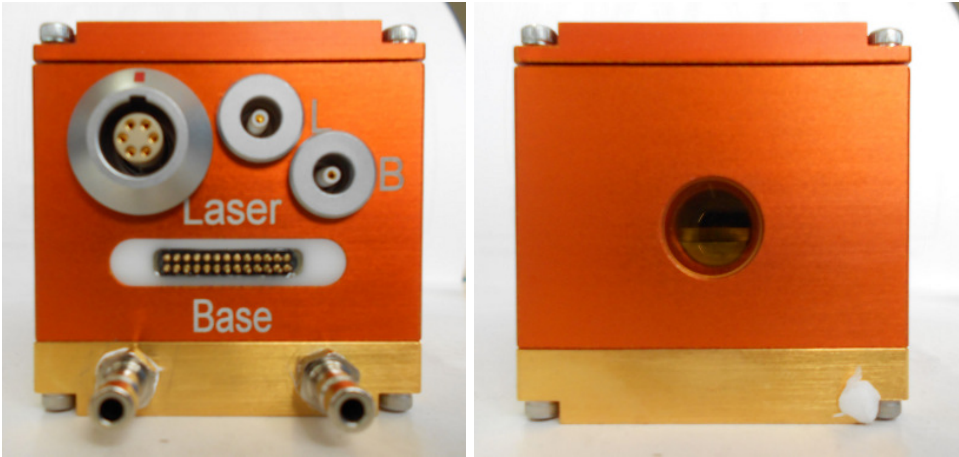


Figure 1.4.: LLH housing connection panel and window.



### 1.2.2. High Heat Load (HHL) Housing

The HHL housing is much smaller than the LLH and is completely sealed. The HHL contains a Peltier junction and a PT-100 or NTC temperature sensor (model 10K4CG), which can be controlled by the TC-3 (see section 5.1) or a local temperature control system. Heat dissipation is performed by thermal contact with its copper base; the heat dissipation capacity depends on the operation mode and environmental conditions. The IR beam is collimated through a chalcogenide glass lens and goes through an AR-coated ZnSe window.

Housing	$I_{lim}$
$I_{max}$	3.0 A
$V_{max}$	11 V
$Q_{max}$	10 W
Clear Aperture	4 mm
Divergence	< 6 mrad

Table 1.2.: HHL housing Specifications (1-stage). Some HHL housings contain different Peltier coolers that may require a lower current limit; this will be indicated clearly on the datasheet of the laser.

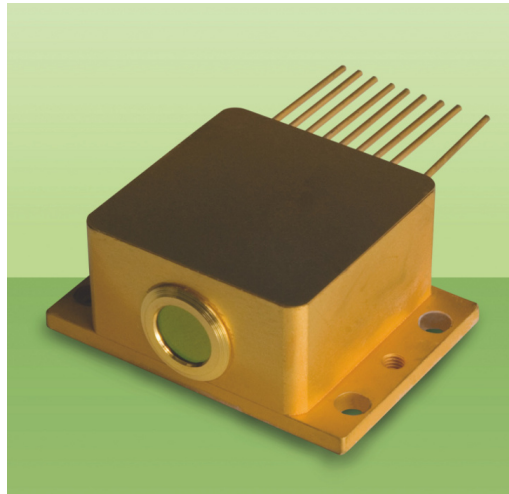


Figure 1.5.: HHL housing.

### 1.2.3. TO3 Housing

The TO3 housing is a hermetically sealed small-footprint housing designed to be integrated into commercial devices. It is available in two versions: the TO3-W has a divergent output through an AR coated window, and the TO3-L (shown in figure 1.6) has a collimated output. The TO3 contains a TEC and a NTC temperature sensor (model 10K4CG). The TEC power is limited compared to the TEC included in the HHL or LLH housing, therefore only pulsed lasers can be encapsulated in TO3 housings.

Housing	$I_{lim}$
$I_{max}$	3.0 A
$V_{max}$	2.85 V
$Q_{max}$	5.7 W
Clear Aperture	4 mm
Divergence	< 10 mrad

Table 1.3.: TO-3 Specifications



Figure 1.6.: TO3-L housing.

*Note:* QCLs mounted on an NS submount and controllers of the Starter Kit (see section 1.3) are not compatible with the TO3 housing, therefore encapsulation of a QCL in a TO3 housing is performed upon specific request only.

## 1.3. Starter kit

The purpose of the Starter Kit is to readily operate an ALPES LASERS QCL. The user must provide an external power supply; see section 3.1 for prerequisites and section 1.4 for recommended peripherals. The kit includes all the necessary cables for the LLH or HHL housing, electronic devices (TCU or TC-3, LDD and TPG for pulsed operation), power cables and connections for optional water cooling. The installation and connections of the Starter Kit components are described in chapter 3.

The photos in this chapter show the TCU temperature controller, but the Starter Kit is delivered with the fully compatible TC-3 controller starting in 2013.

### CW mode

The Starter Kit shown in figure 1.7 is meant to operate QCLs in CW mode. It consists of the following elements, which are described in dedicated subsections:

- Temperature Controller Unit (TCU), section 1.3.1 or TC-3 Temperature Controller, section 1.3.2.
- CIL and appropriate cable for laser driver and temperature controller, section 3.3



Figure 1.7.: Starter Kit for CW mode operation, shown with laser driver (not included in the Starter Kit).

*Note:* a CW QCL is very sensitive to electrical surges and instabilities as with any conventional bipolar laser diode (telecom NIR laser). It is necessary to use a good quality power supply; see section 1.4 for recommended peripherals.

### Pulsed mode

The Starter Kit shown in figure 1.8 is meant to operate QCLs in pulsed mode. It consists of the following elements, which are described in dedicated subsections:

- Temperature Controller Unit (TCU), section 1.3.1 or TC-3 Temperature Controller, section 1.3.2.
- A S-2 pulser, section 1.3.5, or a kit consisting of a Laser Diode Driver (LDD), section 1.3.3, a CPL cable and a TTL pulse generator (TPG), section 1.3.4
- All necessary cables for the appropriate laser driver and temperature controller, section 3.3

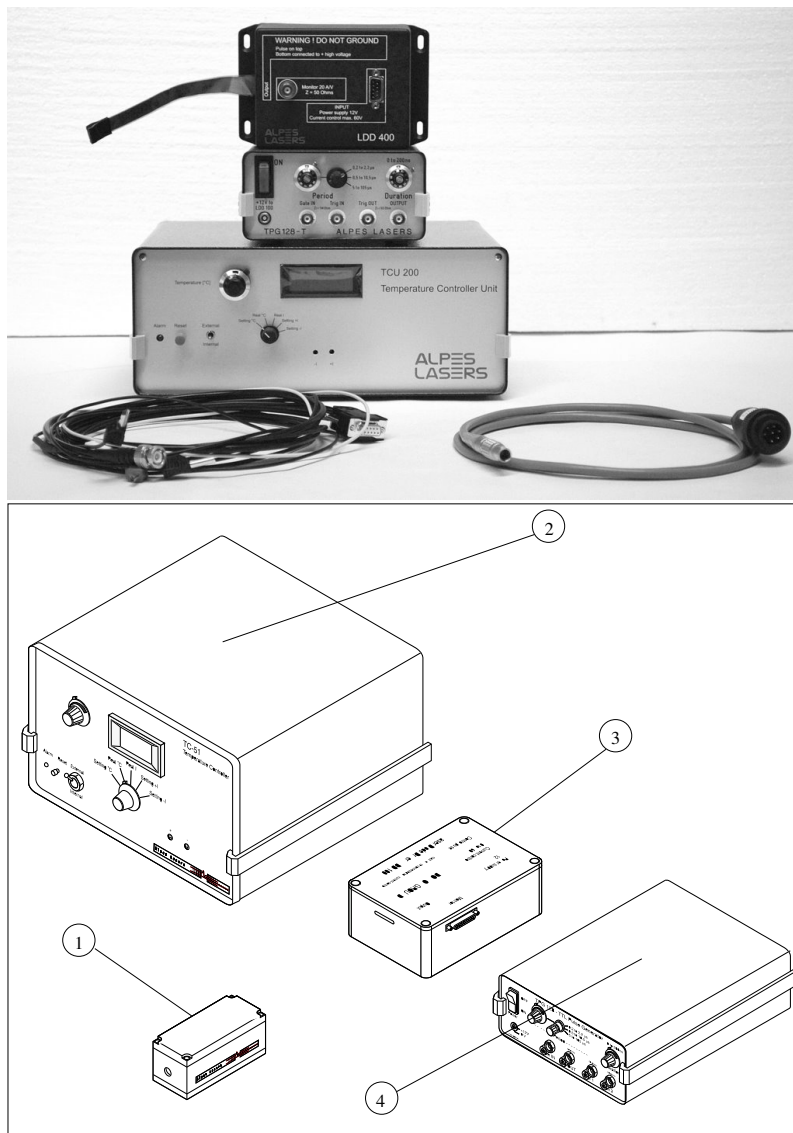


Figure 1.8.: Starter Kit TCU (2), LDD (3) and TPG (4) for operation in pulsed mode.

### 1.3.1. Temperature Controller (TCU)

**CAUTION:**

The TCU unit was sold from 1998 until 2012. It was sold in two different models, TCU151 and TCU200, with identical functionalities and controls. It was superseded starting in 2013 with the TC-3 unit described in § 1.3.2.

The purpose of the TCU is to control the laser temperature inside the LLH or HHL housing. It powers the Peltier junction and reads the temperature from the PT100 sensor coupled to the laser chip (see section 1.2.1). The TCU internal parameters are set in factory according to its use with a LLH or HHL housing. It maintains a preset temperature using the front panel knobs (internal mode) or from a user supplied voltage (external mode). It also provides an output for real temperature monitoring. The TCU interlock system protects the laser from overheating; see section 5.2 for TCU operation procedures.



Figure 1.9.: TCU front panel.

### 1.3.2. Temperature Controller (TC-3)

The TC-3 purpose is to control the laser temperature inside the LLH or HHL housing. It powers the Peltier junction and reads the temperature from the PT100 sensor coupled to the laser chip (see section 1.2.1). The TC-3 software is set at the factory to work with your instrument if it was bought as a Kit. The parameters can easily be modified by the client to work with a different housing.

A Quick Start procedure for the TC-3 is shown in 5.1 and a complete manual dedicated to the TC-3 is available separately.



Figure 1.10.: TC-3 controller.

### 1.3.3. Laser Diode Driver (LDD)



#### CAUTION:

The LDD and TPG units are legacy units that are being phased out as of 2015 in favour of the S-2 QCL Pulser described in § 1.3.5.

The Laser Diode Driver shown in figure 1.11 is a switching unit that creates current pulses to drive the laser. The LDD is controlled by a TPG (see section 1.3.4) and powered by an external power supply. It is equipped with a Bias-T for electrical wavelength tuning (see section B.3 for details).



Figure 1.11.: Laser Diode Driver (LDD).

#### Voltage rating and operating temperature

The LDD is based on dedicated power MOSFETS with compliance with up to 30A and 60V. During operation, the temperature of the case should not exceed 60°C. The LDD electronic card lies on a copper plate and no other means of active cooling is provided. In normal conditions, those temperatures are not reached as the laser operating current and voltage are of typically less than 2 A and 15 V, well below the LDD ratings.

#### Laser pulse parameters measurement

Estimated values of the laser pulse parameters (peak voltage, supply voltage, duty cycle, frequency) can be measured through the BNC *monitor* connector with 20A/V shown in figure 1.11. The data provided by the measuring unit is useful for monitoring and surveillance, and to give a rough estimate of current parameters.

*Note:* the exact measurement of short strong pulses with diodes and averaging circuitry is non-trivial, therefore accurate time and voltage measurements should be performed directly on the LLH or HHL housing through the `laser` and `base` connectors.



### 1.3.4. TTL Pulse Generator (TPG)

The TPG shown in figure 1.12 is designed to power and control the LDD (see section 1.3.3) by generating TTL pulses on  $50\Omega$ . The pulse duration can be set from 0 to 200 ns and the interval between pulses from 200 ns to  $105\ \mu\text{s}$ . See section 5.3 for operation instructions.



Figure 1.12.: TTL Pulse Generator (TPG).

### 1.3.5. S-2 QCL Pulsar

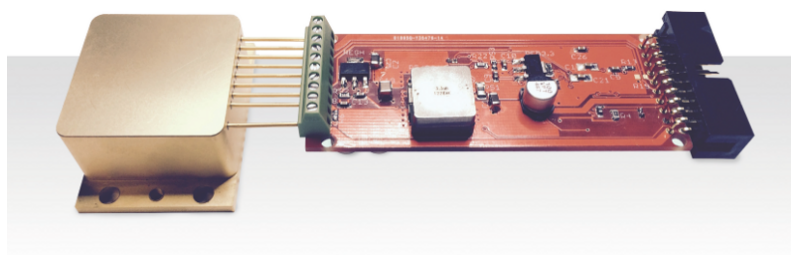


Figure 1.13.: S-2 OEM configuration with HHL.

The S-2 QCL pulser is an integrated device that integrates the functionality of the TPG and LDD devices in a smaller OEM package that can be controlled by software through a USB cable or by TTL signal. See section 5.4 for operation instructions.

## 1.4. Peripherals

The following devices are recommended as peripherals for operating ALPES LASERS lasers.

**CW laser driver** : precision laser diode current source such as

- ILX LIGHTWAVE LDX-3232 High Compliance Quantum Cascade Laser Diode Driver  
(<http://www.ilxlightwave.com/propgs/laser-diode-driver-3232.html>)

*Note:* cables compatible with the LLH or HHL housing can be provided by ALPES LASERS.

- KEITHLEY Model 2420 High-Current SourceMeter w/ Measurements up to 60V and 3A, 60W Power Output  
(<http://www.keithley.com/products/dcac/currentvoltage/highcurrent/?mn=2420>)

**Powermeter** To measure the laser output power, semiconductor powermeters such as those from OPHIR can be used ([www.ophiropt.com](http://www.ophiropt.com)).

**Spectrometer** Low resolution measurements can be done with monochromators such as a TRIAX320 from JOBIN YVON (<http://www.jobinyvon.com>), special measurements (high resolution and CW) with a spectrometer such as the NICOLET 800 and 860 FTIR ([www.nicolet.com](http://www.nicolet.com)), or BRUKER INSTRUMENTS ([www.bruker.com](http://www.bruker.com)).

**Fast detectors** For time-critical measurements, detectors from VIGO SYSTEM SA ([www.vigo.com.pl](http://www.vigo.com.pl)).

**Monitoring** For monitoring laser emission, simple pyroelectric detectors can be used, such as the LGTP101 by MEMTEK ([memtek.lgcit.com](http://memtek.lgcit.com)).

**Beam collimation** Due to the large divergence of the beam, it is recommended to use fast optics ( $f/1 \dots f/0.8$ ) to collect most of the emitted light, like lens system aspheres from JANOS (<http://www.janostech.com>) or Optical solutions (<http://www.opticalsolutionsinc.com>).

## 1.5. Fields of applications

### 1.5.1. IR

The ALPES LASERS QCLs address the need for gas sensing and spectroscopy applications in the wavelength region from 3 to 15 $\mu\text{m}$ ; most chemical compounds have their fundamental vibrational modes in the mid-infrared. More specifically, the high transparency of the atmosphere in two so-called atmospheric windows at approximately 3-5 $\mu\text{m}$  and 8-12 $\mu\text{m}$  allows remote sensing and detection. The long wavelength reduces Rayleigh scattering from dust and rain drops dramatically, allowing applications such as radars, ranging, anti-collision systems, covert telecommunications, etc. As an example, Rayleigh scattering decreases by a factor  $10^4$  for wavelengths ranging from 1 $\mu\text{m}$  to 10 $\mu\text{m}$ . Examples of applications are:

- Industrial process monitoring: contamination in semiconductor fabrication lines, food processing, brewing, combustion diagnostics. Life sciences and medical applications
- Medical diagnostics, biological contaminants.
- Law enforcement  
Drug or explosive detection.
- Military: chemical/biological agents detection, counter measures, covert telecommunications.

## 1.5.2. THz

Terahertz radiation is safe and non-ionizing. It bridges the gap between the mid-infrared and microwaves. It can penetrate most non-conductive materials and can be used in a wide range of applications:

- Water content mapping
- Tissue density mapping
- Metal detection
- Spectral identification

Terahertz QCLs operate in the range from 1 to 6 THz. Coherent polarized THz radiation is generated by means of direct stimulated optical transitions of electrons within the conduction band of a semiconductor heterostructure. THz lasers need cryogenic cooling but at temperatures higher than 77K (boiling point of liquid nitrogen), making their operation non-prohibitive in terms of cooling equipment.

ALPES LASERS THz QCLs are available as CoC or readily mounted in a variable temperature cryostat. ALPES LASERS offers three types of cryogenic system solutions:

- LN<sub>2</sub> dewar
- cryostat
- standalone

Contact ALPES LASERS for more details.

*Note:* THz QCLs are not pre-tested; contact ALPES LASERS to discuss the requirements for a specific application.

## 2. Safety

ALPES LASERS electronic equipment operates at high voltages and includes a LASER that may cause serious injury if not handled properly. The guidelines in this document follow as closely as possible the IEC 60825-1 International Standard for safety of laser products.

**IMPORTANT:**

This document provides general safety instructions. Site specific safety regulations on electricity and lasers must be followed if they supersede the recommendations in this manual.

When working with the Starter Kit, some potential hazards include environmental, electrical or radiation due to LASER; they are explained in more detail in sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3. The access to potentially dangerous operations is not controlled and is left to the supervision of the owner.

**IMPORTANT:**

Any personnel working directly or in the surroundings of ALPES LASERS equipment must read carefully and understand the safety issues discussed in this chapter.

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## 2.1. General safety considerations

If any of the following conditions exist, or are suspected, do not use the instrument until safe operation can be verified by trained service personnel:

- Visible damage
- Severe transport stress
- Prolonged storage under adverse conditions
- Failure to perform intended measurements or functions

If necessary, return the instrument to ALPES LASERS for service or repair to ensure that safety features are maintained.

## 2.2. Notation

The use of DANGER, WARNING and CAUTION notation in this manual is in compliance with the SEMI standard S-13-0298<sup>1</sup>; their definition is given below. They may also be used to alert against unsafe practices.



### DANGER:

Indicates an **immediate** hazardous situation, which, if not avoided, may result in death or serious injury.



### WARNING:

Indicates a **potentially** hazardous situation, which, if not avoided, may result in death or serious injury.



### CAUTION:

Indicates a potentially hazardous situation, which, if not avoided, may result in minor or moderate injury or property damage.

The use of IMPORTANT and *Note* notations is defined below.

### IMPORTANT:

Contains instructions or practices associated with maintenance and operation of the Starter Kit. Highlights specific actions or steps to be followed in order to avoid defeating equipment functionality or cause product damage.

*Note*: contains instructions or practices associated with maintaining the Starter Kit. Clarifies issues needing the reader's attention.

<sup>1</sup>SEMI S13-0298: *Safety Guidelines for Operation and Maintenance Manuals Used with Semiconductor Manufacturing Equipment*, Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International (Mountainview, CA) 1998

### 2.2.1. Symbols and labels

The danger and warning symbols used in this manual are shown in table 2.1.

	general danger		electrical hazard
	LASER radiation hazard		safety eyewear mandatory

Table 2.1.: Safety symbols most commonly used in the ALPES LASERS user’s manual.



## 2.3. Health hazard

There are three main sources of hazard associated with the Starter Kit:

- LASER radiation, detailed in section 2.3.1;
- electrical, detailed in section 2.3.2;
- environmental, detailed in section 2.3.3.

### 2.3.1. LASER radiation hazard

The eyes and skin are the body parts the most likely to be injured. Warnings for tasks that may potentially adversely affect the health of the operator of a QCL are shown below.



**WARNING:**  
Never insert shiny objects in the LASER beam path: stray reflections can be extremely hazardous to eyes and skin.

### 2.3.2. Electrical hazard

Work on live electrical circuits must be performed using all appropriate precautions and site specific procedures. Those tasks must be performed by qualified service personnel familiar with the wiring schematics of ALPES LASERS electronic equipment **only**; electrical cabinets shall *not* be accessed during normal operation nor during maintenance tasks.



**DANGER:**  
Contact with the AC line can cause death or serious injury: ramp down power from all the equipment before attempting any maintenance procedure.

### 2.3.3. Environmental hazard

Always consult the material manufacturer's Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), paying close attention to dust and combustion by-products.

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# 3. Installation

This chapter presents the general workflow between delivery and operation of ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment:

**IMPORTANT:**

The facility must fulfill all prerequisites listed in section 3.1, all utilities must be duly prepared in a suitable location. The location of ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment must comply to the environmental conditions listed in section 3.1.1.

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### 3.1. Prerequisites

This section describes the environmental conditions in which ALPES LASERS QCLs and other electronic equipment should be stored, handled and the prerequisites for its operation. The items listed in table 3.1 must be provided by the customer for ALPES LASERS QCLs and electronic equipment to be operated. It is highly advisable to have the *recommended equipment* available.

Prerequisites	
external power supply for LDD	stabilized DC power supply
	possibility of ramping the voltage up or down
	0 to 35 V
	up to 1A DC (minimum)
	ripple-free (less than 1%)
CW laser driver	current rating: laser operation current x duty cycle + 15%
	driver dedicated to CW lasers
	current control up to 4 A
	voltage rating up to 20 V
LLH water cooling (optional)	0.25 L/min at 10 to 20°C (tap water)
	4 mm flex cable
LDD (when not provided by AL)	pulse current of up to 10A
	voltage up to 12 V
	maximum rise/fall time of 10ns (to prevent detrimental heating)
tools	set of allen keys
	flat screwdriver
recommended equipment	oscilloscope
	powermeter (or other means of detector)
	multimeter

Table 3.1.: Prerequisites for the operation of the ALPES LASERS QCLs and Starter Kit.

#### 3.1.1. Environmental conditions

The following guidelines are standard for all ALPES LASERS products:

- Indoor use only
- Ordinary Protection: This product is NOT protected against the harmful exposure to moisture.
- Maximum Relative Humidity: <80% RH, non-condensing
- Operating temperature range of 0°C to 40°C
- Storage and transportation temperature of -40°C to 70°C

## Storage

All ALPES LASERS lasers are delivered in a hermetic waterproof storage box, shown in figure 3.1, in which the laser chip is held with pins. This box should always be used when storing the laser out of its housing. The laser chip is soldered to the pads using In soldering, which melts at 120°C, therefore the storage temperature should not exceed 80°C.

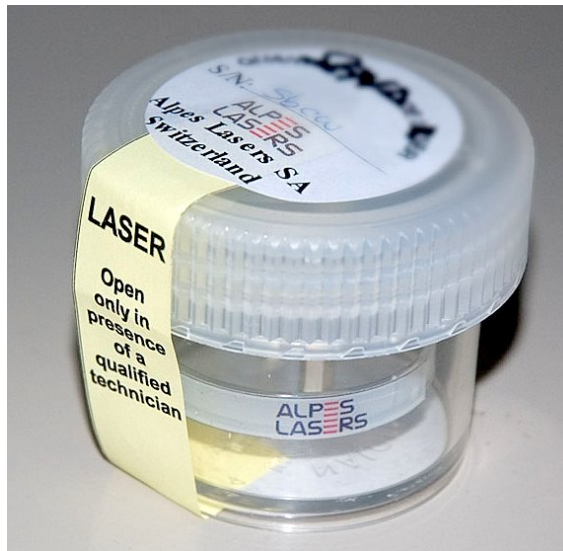


Figure 3.1.: ALPES LASERS QCL storage box.

QCLs can be stored at ambient temperature (10 to 30°C) in normal atmosphere. Humidity should not exceed 80%, and condensation is to be avoided. The laser must be operated in a dry atmosphere below 50% relative humidity. If possible, it should be completely dried using a desiccant material or by flushing with N<sub>2</sub>.

**CAUTION:**

Even when packed, ALPES LASERS equipment should not be exposed to rain, snow or direct sunlight. Extreme temperature changes must be avoided.

### 3.1.2. Cooling

The laser's performance is highly dependent on its operating temperature, it is therefore necessary to cool down the laser accordingly. The following setups can be used:

- for LLH only: closed loop cooling system with chiller
- for LLH only: tap water, Swagelok fitting to the tap, 4 mm tubing
- good mechanical contact between the LLH or HHL housing or QCL submount and the heat sink, such as an optical table
- heat sink and fan



**CAUTION:**  
Overheating the laser chip may result in permanent damage.

## 3.2. Receiving procedure

Upon delivery of the Starter Kit, the following procedure must be performed:

1. check that all of the components are included in the shipment. By default, the QCL is included in its housing<sup>1</sup>; the remainder consists of different sets of components depending on the housing and operation mode of the laser.

**IMPORTANT:**

The customer must control the incoming deliveries and inform ALPES LASERS about incomplete shipments or defective goods within 30 days of delivery.

2. before unpacking the Starter Kit components, make sure that all environmental conditions and prerequisites are fulfilled (see sections 3.1.1 and 3.1).
3. for LLH only: mount the laser submount into the LLH housing following the procedure presented in section 7.1.3.
4. check that the temperature controller voltage setting is appropriate. For the TC-3, the procedure to change the fuse is outlined in the TC-3 manual. For the TCU, follow the following procedure: the fuse holder (6) on the rear panel shown in figure 3.2 should be set to 100-120V and 60 Hz for North America, 220-240 V and 50 Hz in Europe. If not, set the appropriate AC voltage by setting the fuse holder in the proper position:
  - a) Pull out the fuse holder (3) from the socket (2)
  - b) check that the fuse holder is in the proper position to get the appropriate voltage. The arrow on the fuse holder (3) should correspond to the mark on the socket (2).
  - c) Insert the fuse holder (3) into the socket (2).

---

<sup>1</sup>Replacement lasers are delivered in their storage box.

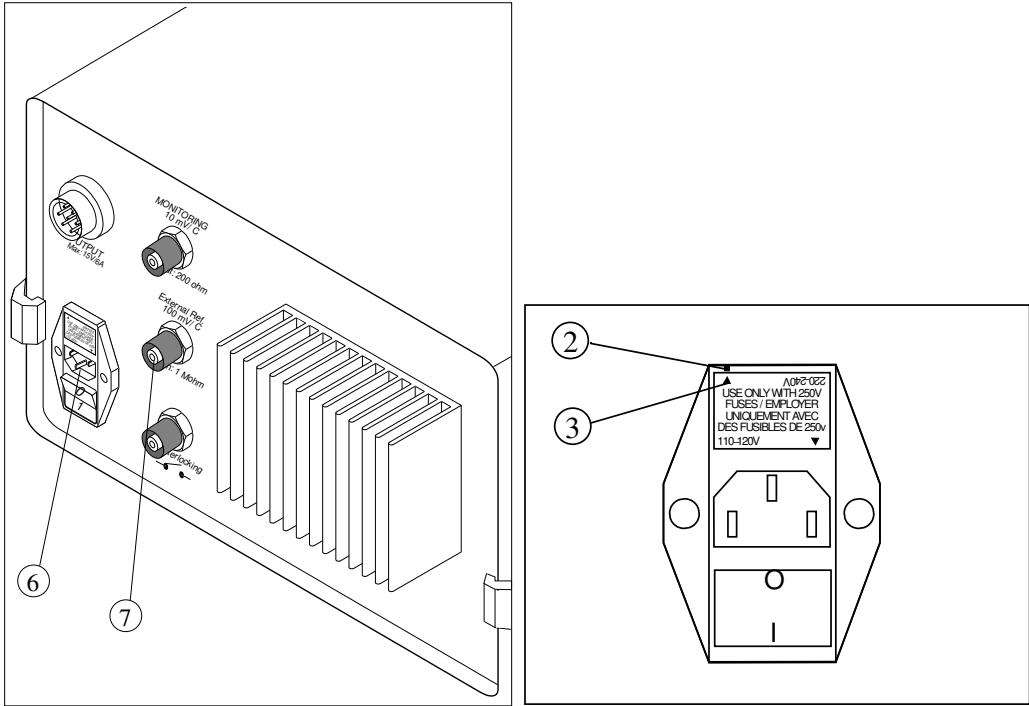


Figure 3.2.: TCU installation: rear panel (left), fuse holder (right).



### 3.3. Connections

Table 3.2 lists the cables and use of all connections for the Starter Kit including the LLH or HHL housing operated in pulsed or CW mode. Refer to figure 3.3 for cable identification.

from	to	cable	use	ref
TCU	LLH	CTL	temperature control and measurement	7
TCU	HHL	CTLm	temperature control and measurement	
TCU	mains	standard power cable	240 VAC power supply	
external power supply	mains	standard power cable	240 VAC power supply	
TC-3	LLH	TC-LLH-1	temperature control and measurement	
TC-3	HHL	TC-HHL-2	temperature control and measurement	
TC-3	mains	standard power cable	240 VAC power supply	
<i>pulsed mode</i>				
TPG	external power supply	CPL red/black banana cables	240 VAC power supply	8
external control circuit	LDD	CPL yellow/black banana cables	bias-T	8
TPG	LDD	CPL Lemo 00	12 VDC on center wire, power supply for LDD	1
TPG	LDD	BNC	timing signal	2
LDD	LLH	LBI	low impedance line for laser current control	
LDD	HHL	LBI via CTLm or TC-HHL-2	low impedance line for laser current control	
<i>CW mode</i>				
ILX driver	LLH	CIL	current for laser control	
ILX driver	HHL	CIL via CTLm or TC-HHL-2	power supply and low impedance line for laser current control	
ILX driver	mains	standard power cable	240 VAC power supply	

Table 3.2.: Starter Kit connections. The "ref" column refers to cable numbering in figure 3.3.

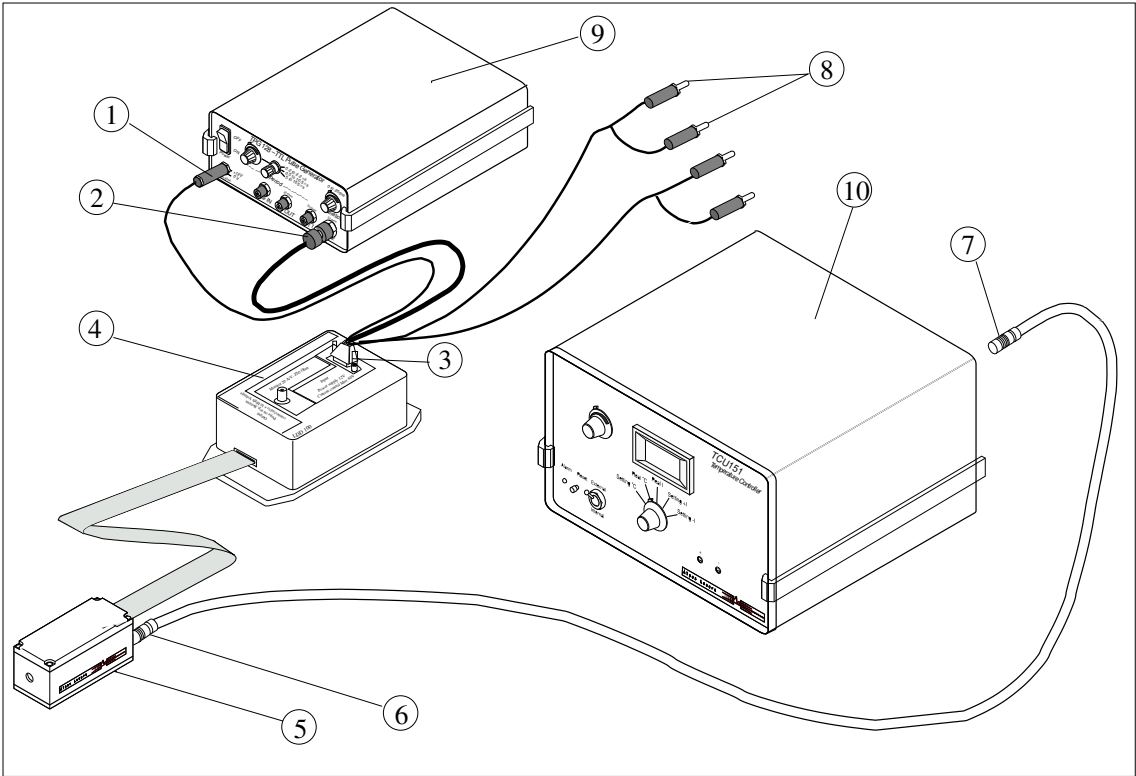


Figure 3.3.: Starter Kit cables.

### 3.3.1. LLH

The LLH front and rear panels shown in figure 3.4 consist of the following items:

- anti-reflective (3.5 to 12  $\mu\text{m}$ ) ZnSe coated laser beam window (1)
- CTL cable connector (2) for Peltier junction and PT-100 sensor
- connector for LBI or CIL cable (3)
- cooling water flow fittings (4) for 4 mm flexible cables
- monitoring `base` connector (5) and `laser` connector (6) for direct voltage measurement on the laser. The cables are not supplied by ALPES LASERS as it is a non-standard measurement.

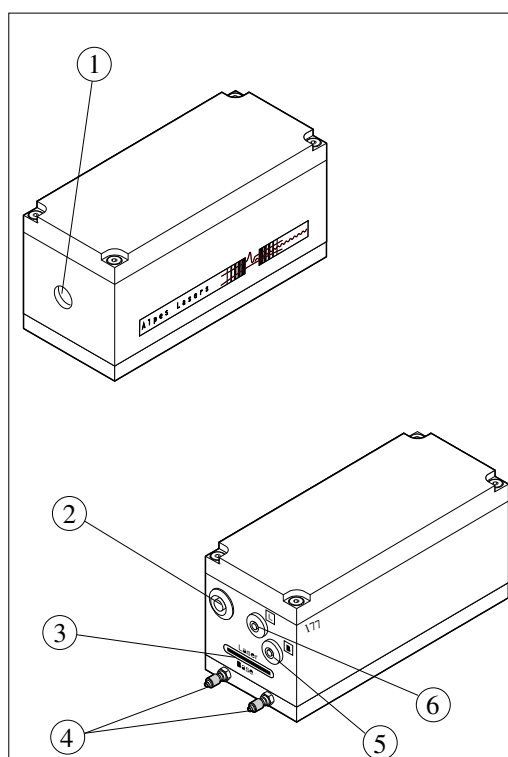


Figure 3.4.: LLH

**IMPORTANT:**

The low impedance line and laser chip are floating and connected to the `laser` connector and have negative polarity; the `base` connector must have positive polarity.

### 3.3.2. HHL

The HHL housing and CTLM cable shown in figure 3.5 must be connected according to the numbering of the CTLM connector pins (from 1 to 10) and the HHL connector pins description provided in section 3.3.6. If you use a TC-3 temperature controller, you should use the TC-HHL cable instead, with an identical connector on the HHL side.

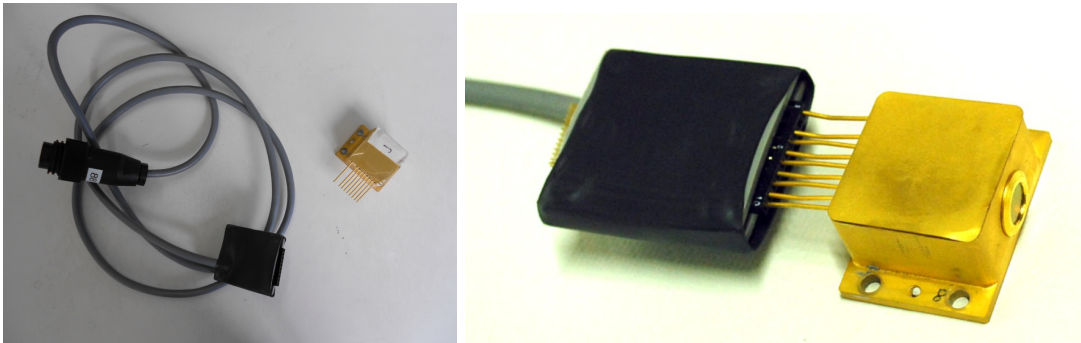


Figure 3.5.: HHL housing and CTLM cable.

### 3.3.3. TO3

Figure 3.6 shows the TO3 housing connector; the pinout is detailed in table 3.3. TO3-L and TO3-W housing have identical pinouts. The polarity of the laser connection is specified on the laser datasheet.

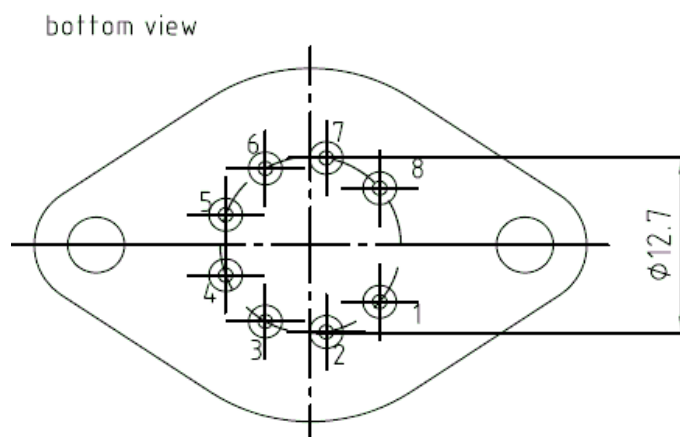


Figure 3.6.: TO3 housing connector.

Pin nb	Purpose
1	TEC +
2	Thermistor
3	Thermistor
4	laser bondpad
5	laser substrate
6	Not connected
7	Not connected
8	TEC -

Table 3.3.: TO3 housing pinout.

*Note:* ALPES LASERS does not produce cables for TO3 housings.

### 3.3.4. LDD

Figure 3.7 show the LDD connectors. The low-impedance line LBI has a locating pin to avoid false connection on the LLH laser housing and on LDD. The LBI has to be connected with "NEG" up unless specifically told to connect with "POS" up.

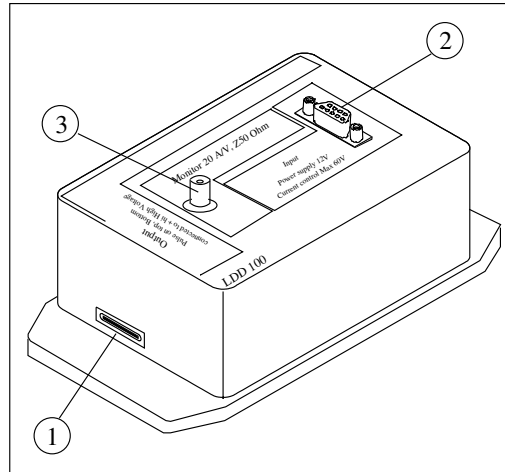


Figure 3.7.: LDD low impedance connector for LBI cable (1), drive cable connector for CPL cable (2) and monitoring BNC connector (3).

**IMPORTANT:**  
The connection between the LDD and LLH or HHL must be floating and should not be grounded. Do not twist the LBI cable.

### 3.3.5. CTL cable

The TCU controls the temperature of the LLH with a Peltier junction and monitors the temperature with a PT100 through the CTL cable. The Peltier connector shown in figure 3.8 carries 6 pins, described in table 3.4. Pin 1 is circled, and a half-moon engraving runs from pin 1 to pin 6. A fixed current is supplied to pin 3 and 6. The resistance of the PT100 varies as a function of temperature and the temperature measurement is given by the voltage between pin 4 and 5.

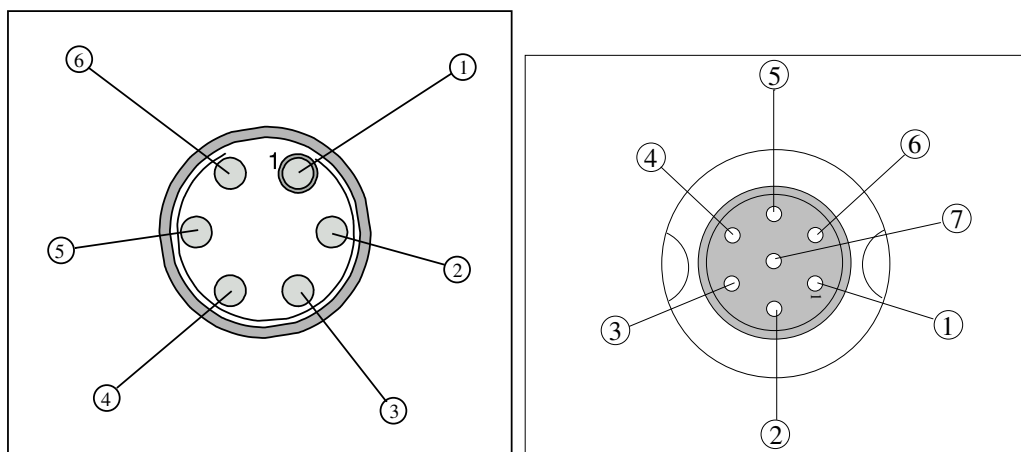


Figure 3.8.: Peltier junction and PT100 cable connectors on LLH (left) and TCU (right).

pin nb	name	purpose
1	1	+power supply for Peltier element
2	2	-power supply for Peltier element
3	3	+I PT100
4	4	+signal PT100
5	5	-signal PT100
6	6	-I PT100
7	GND	ground

Table 3.4.: CTL cable connector pinout.

### 3.3.6. CTLm cable

The CTLm cable connects the HHL on one side, and splits into two connectors on the other side: one for the TCU, the other for the laser driver. The TCU controls the temperature of the HHL with a Peltier junction and monitors the temperature with a PT100 temperature sensor. The TCU side of the CTLm cable is the same as the CTL cable, as described in section 3.3.5. The laser driver connector is compatible with the CIL cable for CW mode operation, or the LBI cable for pulsed mode operation. The HHL side of the CTLm cable contains the female connections described in table 3.5.

pin nb	purpose
1	-power supply for Peltier element
2	(no corresponding pin)
3	(not connected)
4	+power supply for laser
5	-signal PT100
6	+signal PT100
7	-power supply for laser
8	(not connected)
9	(not connected)
10	+power supply for Peltier element

Table 3.5.: CTLm cable HHL connector pinout.

The CTLm male connector for the laser driver has the same function as the LLH `laser` and `base` connector. It consists of two rows of pins; in one row, all pins are connected, and correspond to the `laser` connector (negative polarity), in the other row, two pins are removed, and correspond to the `base` connector (positive polarity).



### 3.3.7. TC-LLH cable

The TC-3 controls the temperature of the LLH with a Peltier junction and monitors the temperature with a PT100 through the TC-LLH cable. The Peltier connector is identical to the connector shown in the left side of Fig. 3.8. The controller connector is a DB-15 connector described in Table 3.6. The Fans, ID and Remote Sensor pins are not used by the ALPES LASERS products.

Pin number	Description
1, 2 & 9	TE (+)
3, 4 & 10	TE (-)
5 & 6	Ground
7	Sensor +
8	Sensor -
11	Fan +
12	Fan -
13	ID
14	Remote Sensor+
15	Remote Sensor -

Table 3.6.: TC-LLH cable connector pinout.

### 3.3.8. TC-HHL cable

The TC-3 controls the temperature of the HHL with a Peltier junction and monitors the temperature with a PT100 or NTC sensor through the TC-HHL cable. The Peltier connector is identical to the connector shown in the left side of Fig. 3.8. The controller connector is a DB-15 connector as described in Table 3.6. The Fans, ID and Remote Sensor pins are not used by the ALPES LASERS products.

### 3.3.9. CPL cable

The CPL cable shown in figure 3.9 connects the LDD to the TPG and external power supply, using a DE-9 connector on the LDD side, yellow/black banana connectors for Bias-T operation, Lemo 00 for LDD power supply, BNC for LDD timing signal and red/black banana connectors for TPG power supply

The LDD side consists of a D-sub-9 connector that is composed of 9 pins as shown in figure 3.10 and described in table 3.7.

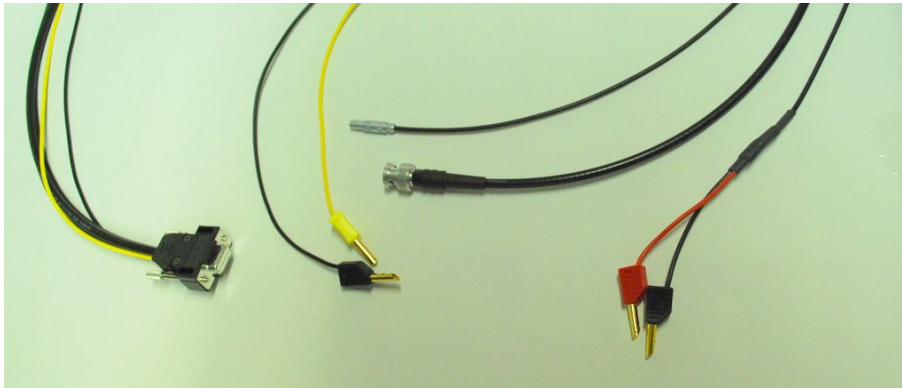


Figure 3.9.: CPL cable.

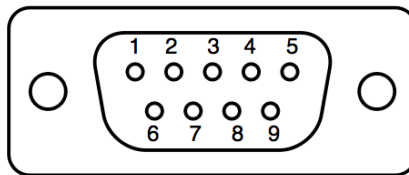


Figure 3.10.: DE-9 connector pinout numbering.

pin nb	purpose
1	+ external power supply (red banana cable)
2	center of LEMO connector (+12 V)
3	(not connected)
4	center of BNC connector
5	+ yellow banana cable
6	- external power supply (black banana cable, associated with red banana cable)
7	LEMO ground (chassis)
8	BNC ground (chassis)
9	- black banana cable (associated with yellow banana cable)

Table 3.7.: CPL cable connector pinout.

### 3.3.10. CIL cable

The CIL cable connects the LLH housing to the ILX LDX-3232 CW laser driver. On the LLH end, the connector consists of two rows of pin slots. All slots of one row are connected together, resulting in two terminals. In order to insure the correct polarity, some slots are filled with solder, which should match broken pins on the LLH connector.

The ILX side of the CIL cable consists of a D-sub-9 connector, shown in figure 3.10 and described in table 3.8.

pin nb	purpose
1	shorted with pin 2
2	shorted with pin 1
3	(not connected)
4	LLH connector (negative polarity)
5	LLH connector (negative polarity)
6	(not connected)
7	(not connected)
8	LLH connector (positive polarity)
9	LLH connector (positive polarity)

Table 3.8.: CIL cable connector pinout.

### 3.3.11. Connection procedure

The procedure to connect the Starter Kit components depends on the laser housing and operation mode. Refer to figure 3.3 for cable identification.

#### In all cases

To prevent any damage to the Starter Kit components, make sure the TPG, TCU, TC-3 and the external power supply are all turned off.



**CAUTION:**

Make sure that the connectors polarity is correct: the laser's ground must be floating for both its anode and cathode. Inverting the connector's polarity may result in permanent damage to the laser.

#### CW mode operation

- LLH housing in CW mode:
  1. connect the LLH to the TC-3 using the TC-LLH cable (or TCU and CTL respectively)
  2. connect the ILX to the LLH using the CIL cable
  3. if available, connect the cooling water tubing to the corresponding connectors of the LLH

*Note:* if no water cooling is being used, carefully monitor the LLH module case temperature. Air cooling and heat dissipation must be provided.



**CAUTION:**

If the LLH module case exceeds a temperature of 60°C, permanent damage to the laser chip may occur.

- HHL housing in CW mode:
  1. connect the HHL to the TC-3 using the TC-HHL cable (or TCU and CTLm respectively)
  2. connect the ILX to the HHL using the CIL cable through the previous cable

### Pulsed mode operation

*Note:* This section describes the procedure to be used using a Starter Kit based on the combination of the TPG pulser and LDD driver. If you use a S-2 QCL Pulser, refer instead to § 5.4.

1. connect the CPL cable to the LDD
2. connect the LDD to the TPG:
  - a) using the CPL Lemo 00 +12VDC cable for power supply of the LDD
  - b) using the CPL BNC cable into the **Out1** and **Out2** output

**IMPORTANT:**  
The LDD ground must be floating.

3. connect the LDD to the external power supply using the CPL red and black banana cables
  4. if no bias-T external circuit is to be used, shortcut the signal (yellow) and ground (black) banana cables by connecting them together. See section B.3 for details on bias-T control
- LLH housing in pulsed mode:
    1. connect the LLH to the TC-3 using the TC-LLH cable (or TCU and CTL respectively)
    2. connect the LLH to the LDD using the low impedance line LBI
    3. if available, connect the cooling water tubing to the corresponding connectors of the LLH

*Note:* if no water cooling is being used, carefully monitor the LLH module case temperature. Air cooling and heat dissipation must be provided.



**CAUTION:**  
If the LLH module case exceeds a temperature of 60°C, permanent damage to the laser chip may occur.

- HHL housing in pulsed mode:
  1. connect the HHL to the TC-3 using the TC-HHL cable (or TCU and CTLM respectively)
  2. connect the HHL to the LDD using the low impedance line LBI via the previous cable

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# 4. QCL Operation

In this chapter, the general operation principle of a QCL is presented, and its main characteristics are illustrated using actual plots included in the datasheet provided with each ALPES LASERS QCL upon delivery.

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## 4.1. Principle of operation

Quantum Cascade Lasers (QCLs) are unipolar lasers emitting in the mid-infrared from 4 to 20 microns. The laser is a ridge of InGaAs and AlInAs grown on InP providing gain and a Fabry-Pérot cavity in order to build up the laser oscillations. ALPES LASERS produces QCLs of two types:

- Distributed Feedback (DFB) QCL: a grating is etched over the active region to force the operation of the laser at very specific wavelength given by the grating periodicity.
- Fabry-Pérot (FP) QCLs are capable of producing higher powers, but are typically multi-mode. They emit in a broad range of wavelengths and can cover more than 10% of the central emitting wavelength. FP QCLs are well suited for applications such as liquid spectroscopy and high power emitting sources, for which broadband emission is acceptable, and when no signal purity is required.
  - Broadgain QCLs consist in FP lasers designed for maximum width of the gain profile. They can be used as broad spectrum illuminators for spectroscopy or imaging. Combined with an anti-reflection coating, they are suitable for use in an external cavity to obtain a tunable laser with a wide tuning range.
  - THz FP QCLs can reach wavelengths of 70 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$  but must be operated under cryogenic conditions; contact ALPES LASERS for more details.



## 4.2. ALPES LASERS datasheet

The datasheet provided with each ALPES LASERS QCL upon contains the data obtained from standardized quality control tests performed at ALPES LASERS production site. The tests are performed on the QCL installed in a test-bench LLH housing operated at a temperature ranging from  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  up to their maximal operating temperature (up to  $+50^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). If the QCL is then encapsulated in a different type of housing, the tests are repeated and a new datasheet is provided to the user. The measured parameters are used for controlling and comparing laser chips; performance evaluation and starting points for operation parameters are readily available on ALPES LASERS website. Those parameters can be extrapolated for a specific application, or broader tests can be performed at ALPES LASERS on demand.

**IMPORTANT:**

The operating parameters are specified in the datasheet provided with each laser upon delivery; any operation outside the specified range must be agreed with ALPES LASERS or may result in the loss of warranty.

In the following sections, examples of plots shown in the datasheets are presented, in order to help the user in operating ALPES LASERS QCLs in a safe and efficient manner.

## 4.3. QCL spectra

A QCL is characterized by its emission frequency (spectral domain), wavelength or wavenumber (spatial domain); all three are equivalent. The following table gives typical values for ALPES LASERS QCLs.

wavelength ( $\lambda$ )	frequency ( $f$ )	wavenumber ( $\nu$ )
4 - 20 $\mu\text{m}$	15 - 75 THz	500 - 2500 $\text{cm}^{-1}$
4000 - 20 000 nm		

### 4.3.1. Temperature and current tuning

QCL emission can be precisely tuned with temperature (slow tuning) or current (quick tuning), but the later is in fact just apparent, as it results from the increase of temperature of the active region<sup>1</sup>.

#### DFB QCL

Figure 4.1 shows the temperature and current tuning on a DFB laser operated in CW and pulsed modes. The wavelength increases (or the wavenumber decreases) by a factor varying between  $7 \cdot 10^{-5}$  and  $9 \cdot 10^{-5}$  for a temperature increase of 1 degree. For example, the total tuning for a  $2000 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  QCL operating over a range of  $-30$  to  $+30^\circ\text{C}$  will vary between  $8.4$  and  $10.8 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , depending on the laser.

#### FP QCL

The spectrum of a FP laser of figure 4.2 shows an interference structure caused by the Fabry-Perot effect of the reflections at both ends of the laser chip, superimposed on a wide gain envelope. A temperature change will modify both these structures: the FP spectrum evolution is driven by the length of the laser cavity, which can vary, and the gain envelope evolves in unpredictable ways due to mode competition. The ALPES LASERS datasheet provides spectra taken at regular temperature intervals; additional requests on the spectral shape should be discussed with ALPES LASERS.

Figure 4.3 shows the spectrum of broadgain lasers.

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<sup>1</sup>The temperature changes the apparent optical length of the grating, tuning the waveguide refraction index.

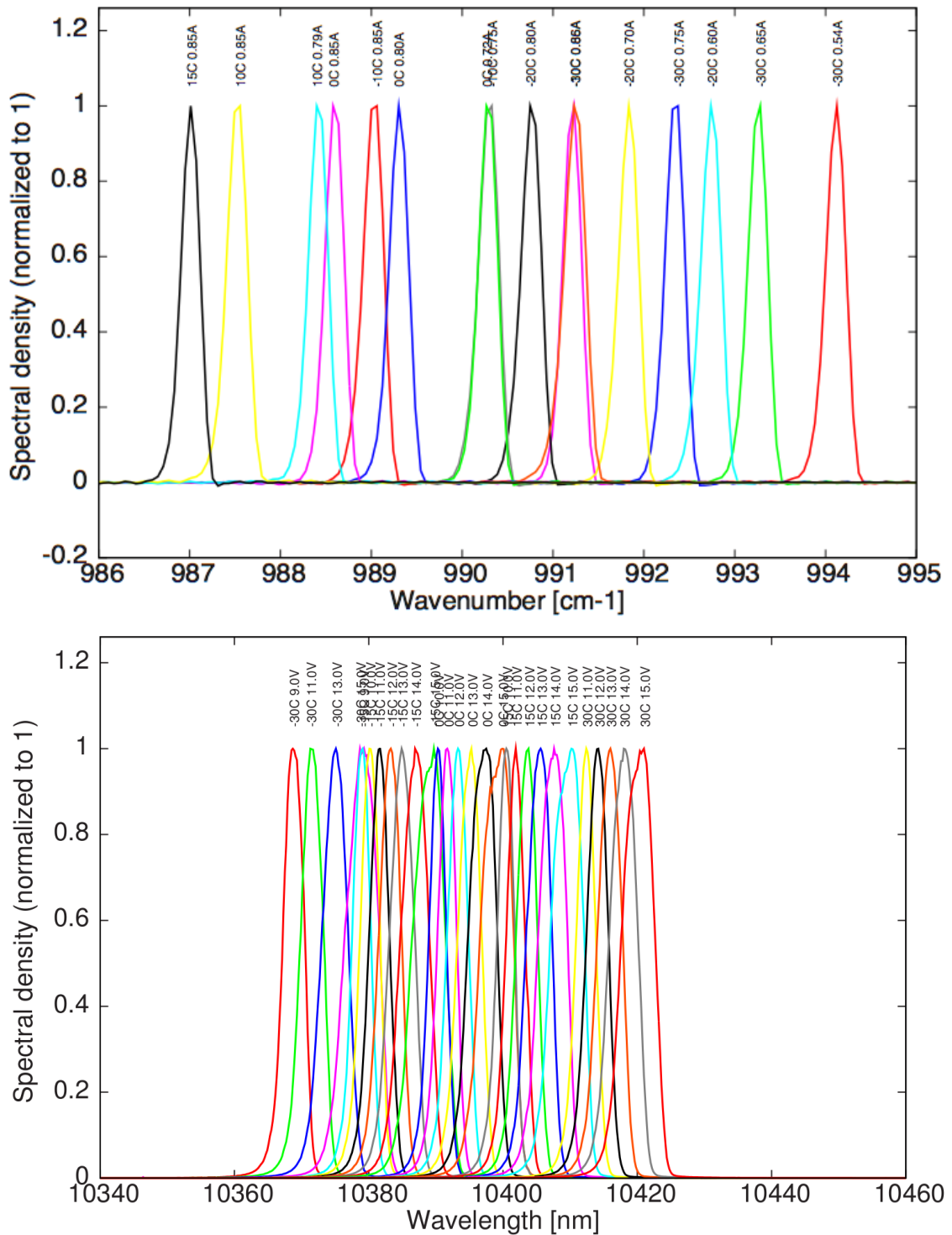


Figure 4.1.: Spectra of a DFB laser operated in CW mode (top) and pulsed mode (bottom) with different currents and temperatures.

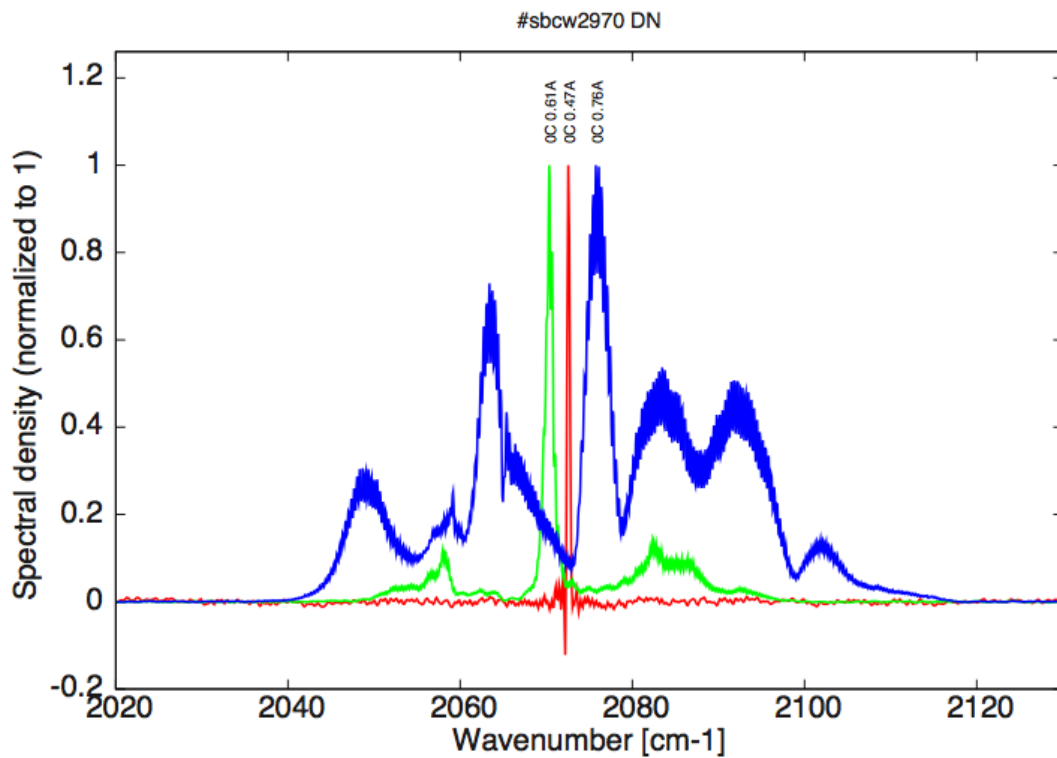


Figure 4.2.: Spectra of a FP laser operated in CW mode at fixed temperature and different currents.

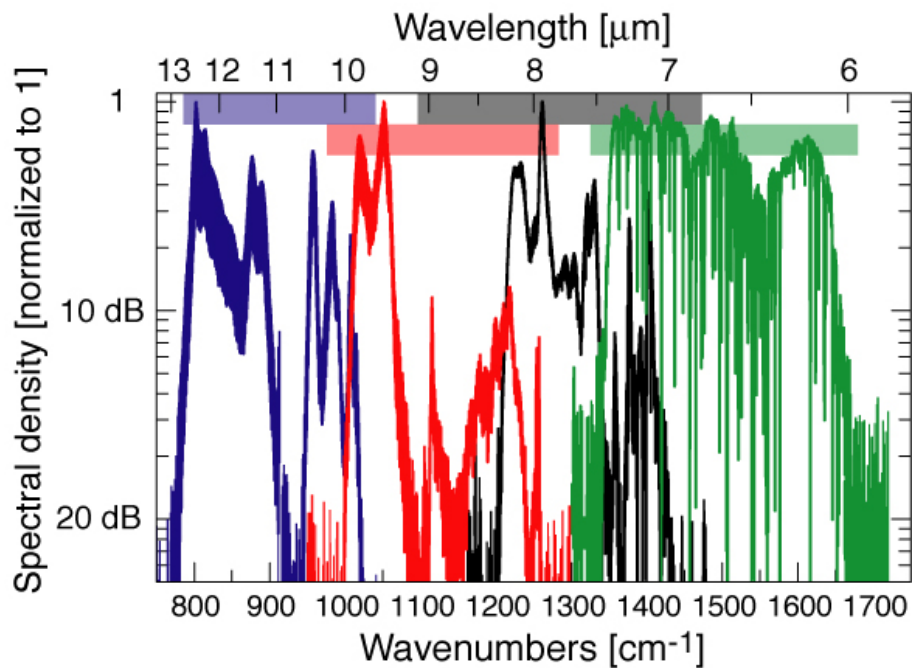


Figure 4.3.: Spectra of four different broadgain lasers.

### 4.3.2. Linewidth of pulsed single-mode DFB QCLs

The linewidth of DFB QCLs operated in pulsed mode depend on the pulse length and is affected by chirping. Chirping occurs because of thermal variations of the laser.

- Fine linewidths are obtained with short pulses (25 to 50 ns). ALPES LASERS QCLs are tested using pulse length of 25 to 50 ns, showing a linewidth  $< 0.2 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .
- Very fine linewidth ( $< 0.1 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is obtained with pulses of 10 ns, which can be produced by dedicated equipment only.
- Longer pulses ( $> 50 \text{ ns}$ ) induce chirping and produce a broader linewidth when detected with a slow detector.

ALPES LASERS standard tests verify that DFB QCLs are singlemode, i.e. have a linewidth that does not exceeding  $0.2 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  with pulses of 50 ns.

*Note:* ALPES LASERS QCLs are characterized with a pulse length of 50 ns, but some QCLs may withstand pulse lengths up to 400 ns.

**IMPORTANT:**

The maximum pulse length an ALPES LASERS DFB QCL operated in pulsed mode can withstand is of typically 200 ns. Requirements for operation with pulses longer than 50 ns must be specified before purchasing a laser.

**IMPORTANT:**

The operating parameters are specified in the datasheet provided with each laser upon delivery; any operation outside the specified range must be agreed with ALPES LASERS or may result in the loss of warranty.

### 4.3.3. Linewidth of CW single-mode DFB QCLs

DFB QCLs operated in CW mode reach thermal equilibrium with pulse length of 10 ms and longer. In this case, transient behavior affects only the beginning of the pulse, and can be neglected. The linewidth is therefore limited by thermal noise and electronic noise produced by the driver. Very long pulses ( $> 100 \text{ ms}$ ) will behave in a CW manner, and shorter pulses will exhibit chirping as pulsed lasers do, and may induce multi-mode behavior.

**IMPORTANT:**

ALPES LASERS QCLs operated in CW mode are guaranteed to be single mode if operated with long pulses (> 10 ms) only.

#### 4.3.4. Bandwidth of multi-mode FP QCLs

In the case of FP QCLs, the bandwidth is defined as the wavelength range in which 99% of the power is emitted. It depends on the driving current and is not affected by the operating temperature. ALPES LASERS QCLs operated in CW mode can withstand any pulse length.

#### 4.4. I-V curve and emitted power

Figures 4.4 show the IV curves of DFB and FP lasers operated in CW at different temperatures. On the same graph the emitted power is plotted as a function of operation current, showing the current threshold for each temperature. For example, the DFB laser operated in CW mode (figure 4.4 ) has a threshold of 0.6 A at 20°C. It can be seen that cooling the QCL during operation enhances its performance as the threshold current decreases and output power increases.



**CAUTION:**

Do not operate the laser with a temperature and current above the values specified in the ALPES LASERS datasheet. Permanent damage may result.

Figure 4.5 can be used to illustrate the temperature and current tuning of a DFB QCL operated in pulsed mode:

- the power increases from 3 to 6 mW using a peak current of 4 A and varying the temperature from -30 to 30°C.
- for a temperature of 0°C, the power increases from 0 to 5.5 mW by increasing the peak current from 2 to 5 A.

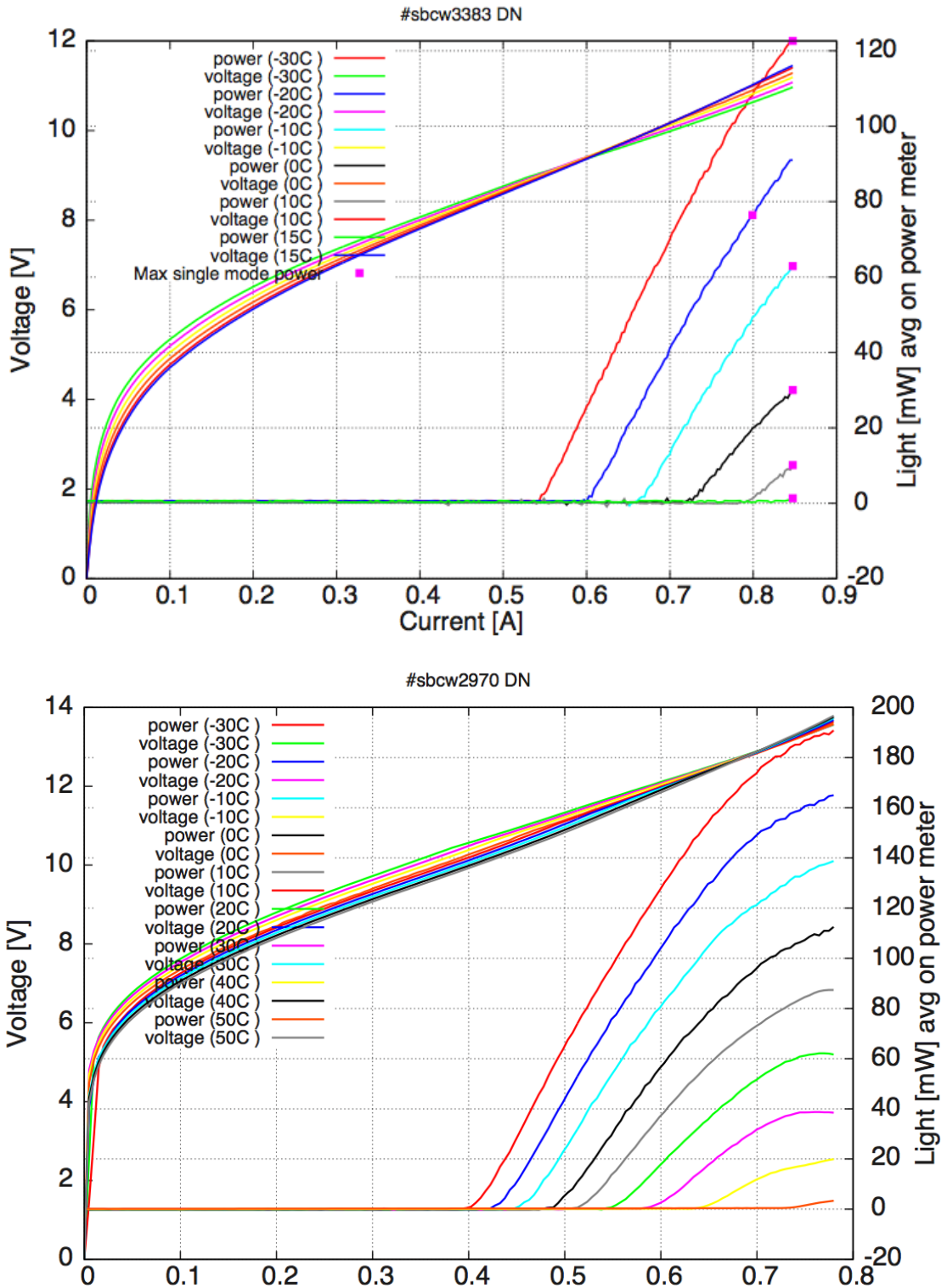


Figure 4.4.: IV curves of DFB laser (top) and FP laser (bottom) operated in CW mode at different temperatures.

### 4.4.1. Maximum operating current

All QCLs have a maximum operating current above which a Negative Differential Resistance (NDR) appears and may destroy the laser. As an example, figure 4.5 shows the IV curve and emitted power of a DFB QCL operated in pulsed mode: the green squares indicate the maximum current for monomode operation, 4.7 A from -30 to 30°C in the present case.



**CAUTION:**

The maximum operating current of each ALPES LASERS QCL is indicated in the IV and emitted power plots caption of the datasheet. Do not operate the laser with a current above those values; permanent damage may result.

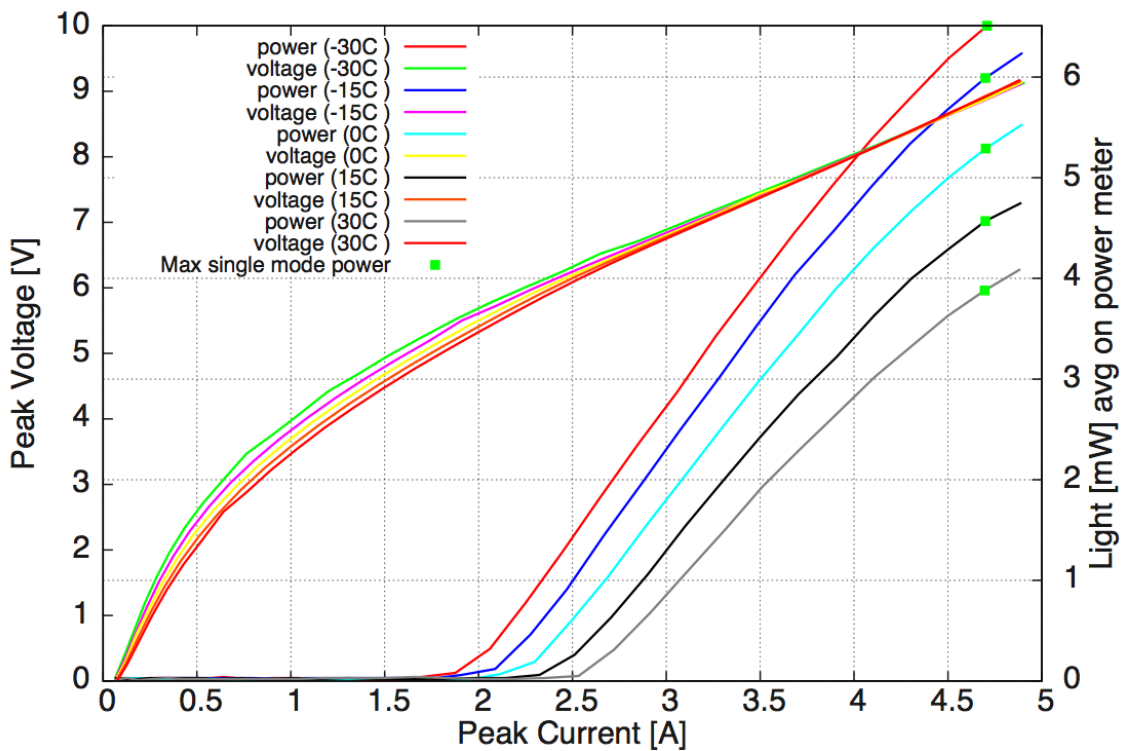


Figure 4.5.: IV curves of a DFB QCL operated in pulsed mode at different temperatures.



#### 4.4.2. Maximum LDD voltage

Figure 4.6 shows the pulse peak current and emitted power as a function of the voltage fed to the LDD. When the LDD is used to operate a laser in pulsed mode, the QCL operating current is controlled by the LDD, which is itself controlled by changing its operating voltage. The maximum LDD voltage is indicated by green squares on the emitted power curves; in this particular case, the voltage must not exceed 15 VDC.

However, when a pulsed laser is controlled by a S-2 driver the LDD voltage is not a pertinent measurement and should be ignored.



#### CAUTION:

The maximum operating LDD voltage is indicated in the ALPES LASERS datasheet. Do not operate the LDD with a voltage above those values; permanent damage may result.

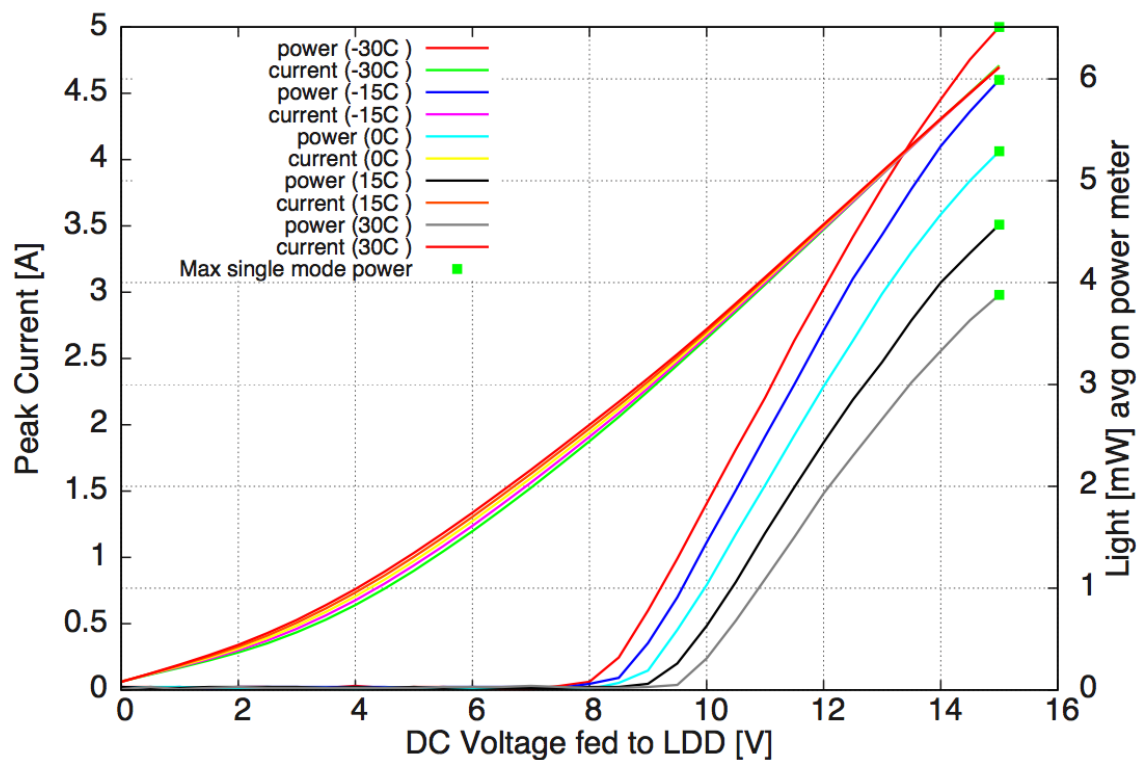


Figure 4.6.: Peak voltage and averaged emitted power as a function of LDD voltage of a DFB QCL operated in pulsed mode at different temperatures.

### 4.4.3. Other DFB QCL plots

The plots displayed in figure 4.7 show the emitted power and LDD voltage as a function of frequency, temperature and operating current. These curves help when setting up the operation parameters of a DFB QCL.

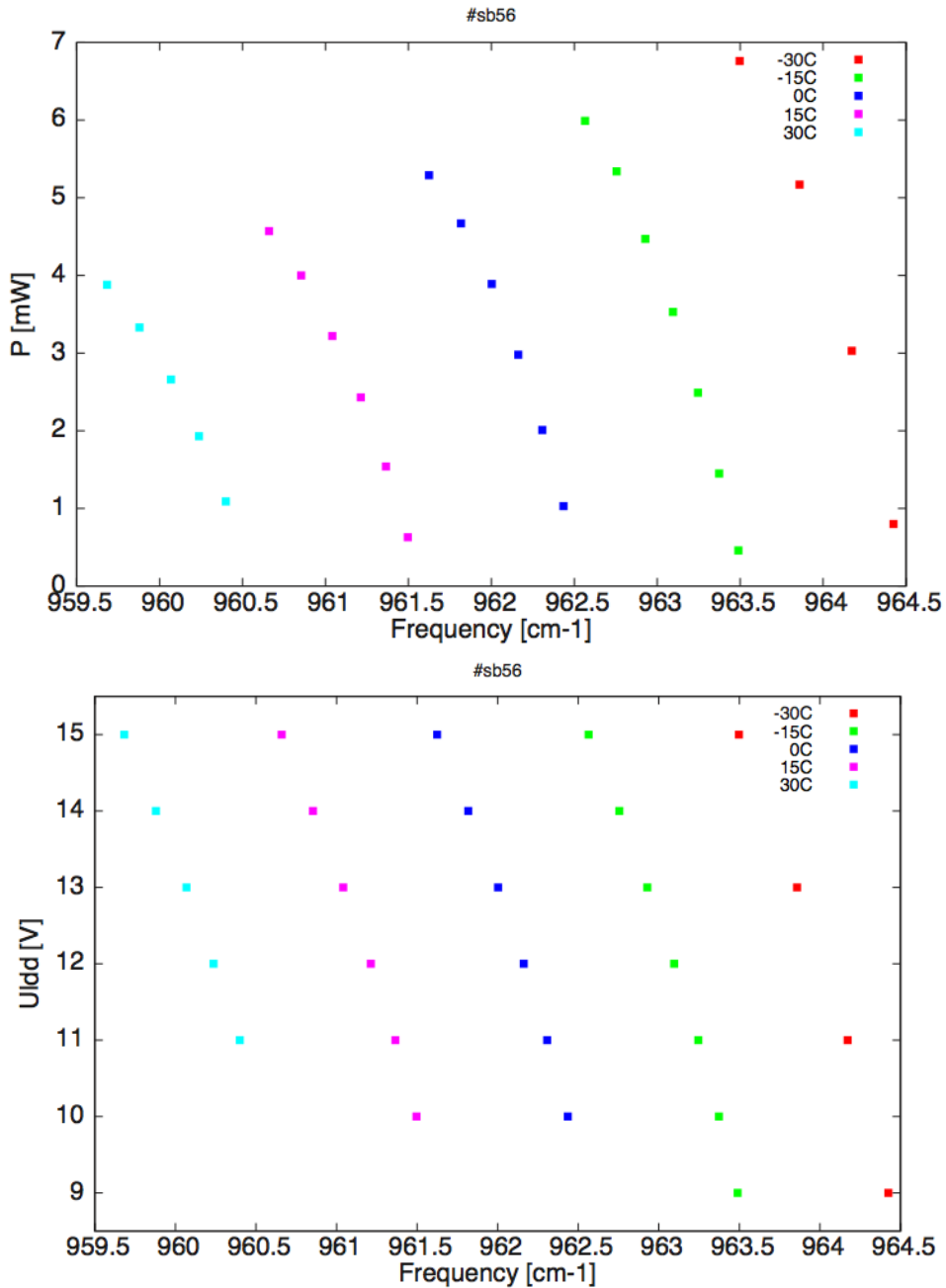


Figure 4.7.: Emittted power (top) and LDD voltage (bottom) as a function of frequency for a DFB laser operated in pulsed mode at different temperatures.

## 4.5. Beam Properties

### Divergence

Figure 4.8 shows a typical ALPES LASERS QCL beam profile. Unipolar lasers consist of tightly confined waveguides; for this reason, the beam diffracts strongly at the output facet and has a full divergence angle of about 60 degrees perpendicular to the layer (vertical angle) and 40 degrees parallel to the layers (horizontal angle). A  $f/1$  optics will typically collect about 70% of the emitted output power. Note that the collected output power will decrease with the square of the  $f$ -number of the collection optics.

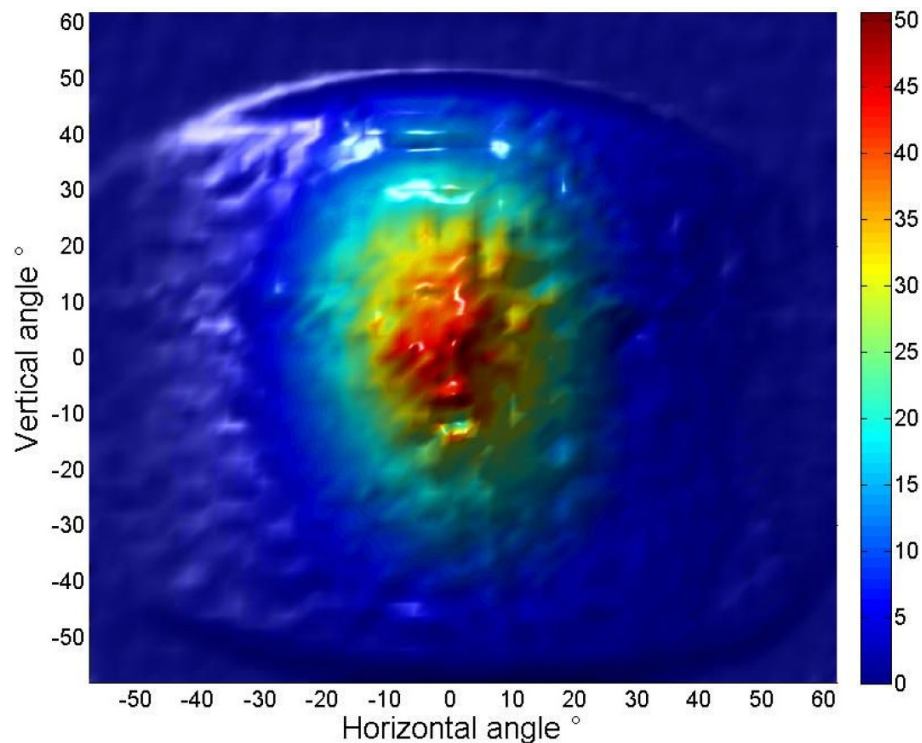


Figure 4.8.: QCL beam profile.

### Polarization

Because the intersubband transition exhibits a quantum mechanical selection rule, the emission from a unipolar laser is always polarized linearly with the electric field perpendicular to the layers (and the copper submount).

### Mode

ALPES LASERS QCLs are designed to have a single spatial mode, typically the Gaussian TEM<sub>00</sub> mode. A mode measurement can be performed by ALPES LASERS on demand for a specific application.

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# 5. Starter Kit Operation

In this chapter are presented the operation instructions for the different components of the Starter Kit and the procedures to be followed for starting up and operating an ALPES LASERS laser.

**IMPORTANT:**  
The operating parameters are listed in the datasheet provided with each laser; any operation outside the specified range must be agreed with ALPES LASERS or may result in the loss of warranty.

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## 5.1. Temperature Controller TC-3

The TC-3 has its own complete manual. This section outlines a quick start-up and instructions for use with the ALPES LASERS housings. A more complete manual is available on the ALPES LASERS website:

<http://www.alpeslasers.ch/?a=142,144>

### 5.1.1. Quick Start Procedure

After unpacking the unit, ensure that the voltage selection on the Input Power Connector (IPC) on the back of the unit is set to the correct voltage. This is critical because incorrect voltages can damage the unit. The TC-3 is typically shipped in the 120V configuration from the factory, but may be set to your local voltage. Make no assumptions and change the voltage as needed.

Once the voltage selection has been completed, plug the AC cord into the unit and into the wall outlet. Turn on the power switch located on the IPC, and the unit will power up. It will then display the model information and firmware version number.

The front panel is shown in figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1.: TC-3 front panel.

Press the MENU button to enter the menu and turn the knob to the right until the  $I_{lim}$  setting is displayed. Press the knob to edit the setting and adjust the limit as appropriate to your Peltier (refer to Table 5.1). Press the knob again to save the value.

Housing	$I_{lim}$
HHL (single stage)	3.0 A
HHL (double stage)	2.5 A
LLH	5.0 A

Table 5.1.: Current limits settings

Make the same adjustments to the high and low temperature limits (T-High Lim and T-Low Lim), as appropriate for your application. These values should not exceed those stated in the datasheets of the laser used.

Next you will need to adjust the constants to reflect the values for your temperature sensor as shown in table 5.2. These values ensure the correct behaviour of the system. They are found in the Sensor sub-menu for the sensor type and in the Gain menu for the *PID*. You can navigate to these menus using the knob. Press the knob to enter the sub-menu.

Housing	Sensor Type	Coefficients
HHL (NTC)	NTC 10K4CG	Adjust manually the PID values to: P = 0.01 I = 0.0001 D = 0
HHL (pt100)	pt100	Adjust manually the PID values to: P = 0.01 I = 0.001 D = 0
LLH	pt100	Set the <i>Gain Setting</i> to 300

Table 5.2.: Sensor characteristics

Once you have made all your adjustments, press the MENU button to exit the menu (in the future, if you are only changing one value, you do not need to press the knob — pressing the MENU button while changing a value will save the value and exit).

Next, connect the cable between your housing and the Output connector of the TC-3. We recommend using our cables as they have been designed to work well with the TC-3. If using your own cables, ensure they have been properly wired according to the pin-out of the TECSource and your fixture.

Adjust the set point to a temperature close to room temperature (typically +15°C) and press the Output button. The output will turn on and you will see the voltage and current begin driving the fixture to the set point you have chosen. Depending on the thermal size of your fixture, it may take up to several minutes to reach the set point.

If you notice the temperature is oscillating around the set point and not stabilizing, you may need to adjust the Gain setting in the menu. If the temperature is quickly jumping up and down, the Gain will typically need to be reduced. If the temperature is slowly moving up and down, try a higher Gain. You may need to experiment with several gain settings to find the ideal value. For even finer control, you can set the Gain to PID and directly set the PID control values.

Finally, adjust the set point downwards or upwards to the desired set point. It is good practice to adjust the set point in intervals of 5°C and wait for the actual temperature to stabilize before changing the set point again, as the HHL and TO3 housing age prematurely with large temperature swings. The LLH is less sensitive and can withstand

large temperature swings. The recommended temperature change rates are given in table 5.3. Using the settings of table 5.2 ensures these rates are respected.

Housing	Maximum temperature change rate
HHL	0.2°C/s
TO-3	0.2°C/s
LLH	1.0°C/s

Table 5.3.: Recommended temperature change rates



**CAUTION:**

The TC-3 contains a feature known as AutoTune. Usage of this feature is **NOT RECOMMENDED** with the housings of Alpes Lasers. Using AutoTune risks damaging or reducing the lifetime of the Peltier elements.



## 5.2. Temperature Controller Unit (TCU)

The TCU front and rear panels are shown in figure 5.2 and described below.

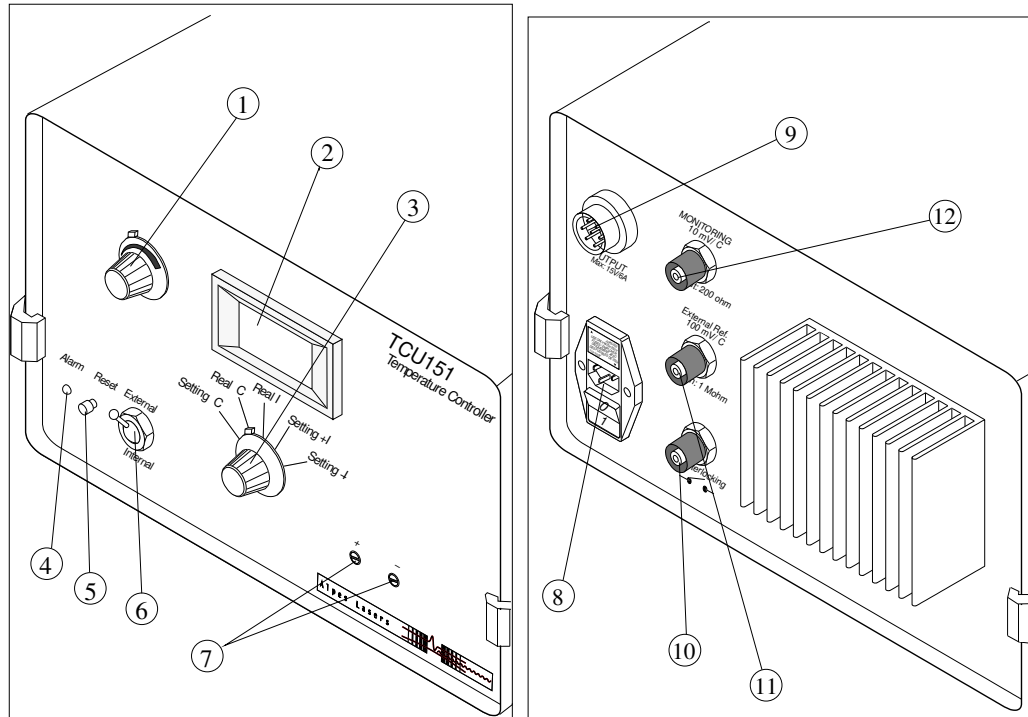


Figure 5.2.: TCU front (left) and rear (right) panels.

### Command description

- (1) Set Temperature 5 turns knob: Allows to set the internal temperature reference.
- (2) LCD 3 digits display: Used to display either the actual sensor or reference temperature/current.
- (3) Switch to select which temperature or current signals to display.
- (4) Alarm display LED.
- (5) Alarm reset switch.
- (6) Toggle switch to select a function:
  - Set °C** targeted temperature setting
  - Real °C** actual temperature measurement in °C
  - Real I** actual current in TEC given in A
  - Set +I** highest current allowed
  - Set -I** lowest current allowed
- (7) Setting Current adjustment knobs. allow to modify the highest and lowest allowed currents, which are set in factory to 5A for the LLH and 2A for the HHL.
- (8) Power ON/OFF fuse combined main switch.
- (9) To LLH: AMPHENOL connector for LLH or LLH temperature control.
- (10) Interlock BNC connector (see section 5.2.3).
- (11) External reference BNC connector.
- (12) Monitoring: BNC connector, see section 5.2.2 for details.

*Note:* the temperature settings and readings may have an offset of typically 0.1°C.

### 5.2.1. TCU startup

1. make sure the laser power supply is disconnected (see section 3.3 for connections)
2. turn on the TCU
3. set the desired temperature:
  - a) select `Setting °C` using the switch (3) shown in figure 5.2 to display the desired temperature
  - b) turn the knob (5) to set the temperature to the desired value
  - c) select `Real °C` using the switch (3) to display the actual temperature
4. allow the laser temperature to reach the temperature setting



**CAUTION:**  
Do not operate the laser at a temperature above the values specified in the ALPES LASERS datasheet. Permanent damage may result.

5. reconnect the laser power supply

### 5.2.2. Internal/external mode

In `internal` mode, the temperature setting is controlled using the temperature knob of the TCU front panel. In `external` mode, the temperature setting, monitoring and interlock are controlled by an external control system using the BNC connections on the rear panel. In that case:

1. set the switch (5) to `external`
2. provide a  $\pm 6.5V$  power supply to the `External Ref` BNC connector, using 100 mV/°C
3. read out the temperature through the `Monitoring` BNC connector, providing 10 mV/°C.

### 5.2.3. TCU interlock

The built-in TCU interlock is activated when a fault occurs within the TCU controller, e.g. prompt temperature rise. The interlock is by default an NC (Normally Close) relay contact and may be reset by pressing the reset button (3) shown in figure 5.3.

*Note:* it is also possible to set the Interlock as a NO (Normally Open) contact.

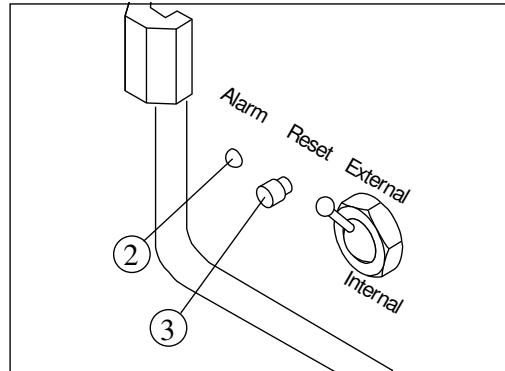


Figure 5.3.: TCU interlock.

#### Recovery procedure

This procedure must be followed in order to recover the temperature controller from an interlock event.

1. Turn off the QCL following procedure 5.5.2.
2. Identify the fault which activated the interlock and fix it.
3. Wait until the temperature is lower than the maximum allowed.
4. Press the RESET button (3) on the TCU rear panel (see figure 5.3).

The interlock is reset and the red LED alarm (2) should be off.

## 5.3. TTL Pulse Generator (TPG)

The front and rear panels of the TPG are shown in figure 1.12; a detailed view of the front panel is shown below in figure 5.4.

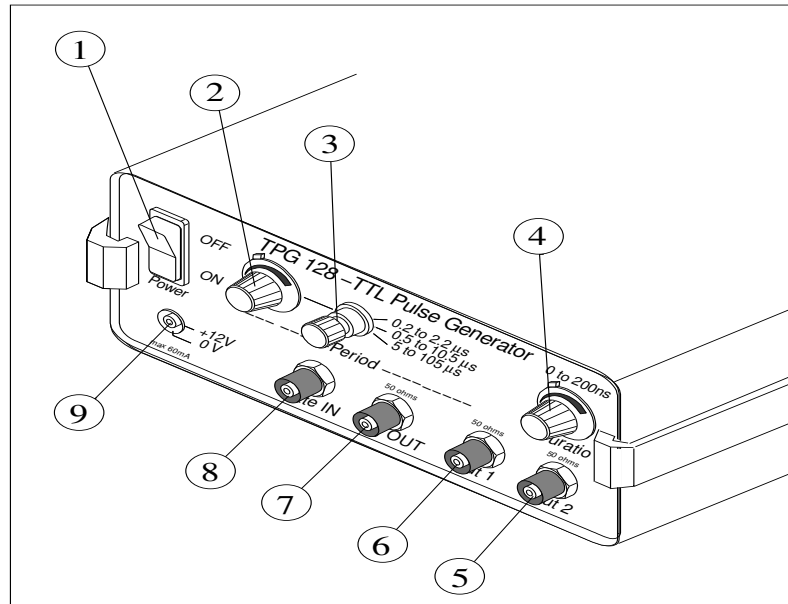


Figure 5.4.: TPG front panel.

### Command description

The pulse duration can be set from 0 to 200ns and the interval between pulses from 200ns to 105  $\mu$ s in 3 ranges; using the (2), (3) and (4) knobs shown in figure 5.4.

*Note:* the parameters should be adjusted using a scope following procedure 5.3.2.

- (1) Power ON/OFF switch
- (2) Pulse period fine potentiometer (10 turns)
- (3) Pulse period range switch (3 positions)
- (4) Pulse duration potentiometer (10 turns)
- (5) BNC 50 $\Omega$  TTL Output
- (6) BNC 50 $\Omega$  TTL Trig OUT
- (7) BNC 50 $\Omega$  TTL Trig IN
- (8) BNC 50 $\Omega$  TTL Gate IN
- (9) CPL cable Lemo 00 12VDC output connector

### 5.3.1. Internal and external modes

The TPG can be operated in internal or external mode; the mode is selected with a switch on the rear panel of the TPG, as shown in figure 1.12. The input and output signals are provided or generated through the four BNC connectors shown in figure 5.4:

- In **internal mode**, a periodic signal is generated through the **Output** BNC connector. The **Trig OUT** BNC connector provides a 200 ns pulse for monitoring purpose or lock-in operation.
- In **external mode**, a signal is provided to the TPG through the **Gate IN** or **Trig IN** BNC connectors; in both cases the trigger precedes the output pulse by about 100ns.
  - the output generated with the **Gate IN** is a train of pulses corresponding to intANDext signals, as shown in figure 5.5.
  - the output generated with the **Trig IN** is a single pulse for a rising signal, as shown in figure 5.6.

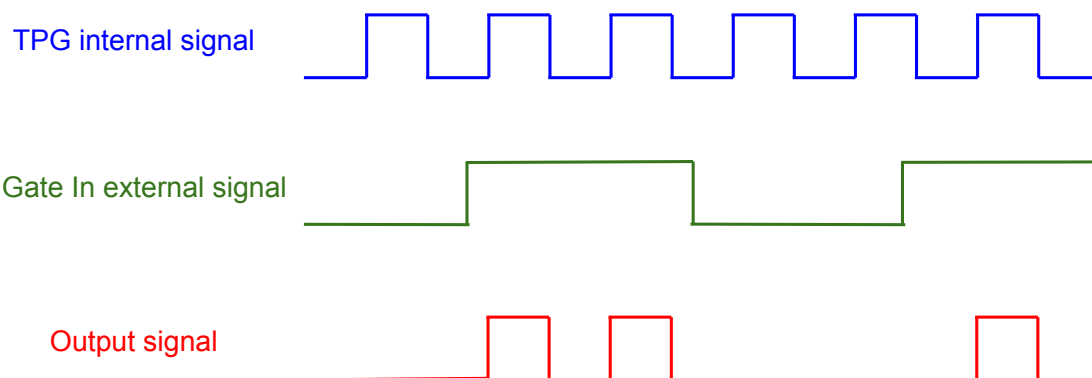


Figure 5.5.: TPG **Gate IN** external mode signal.

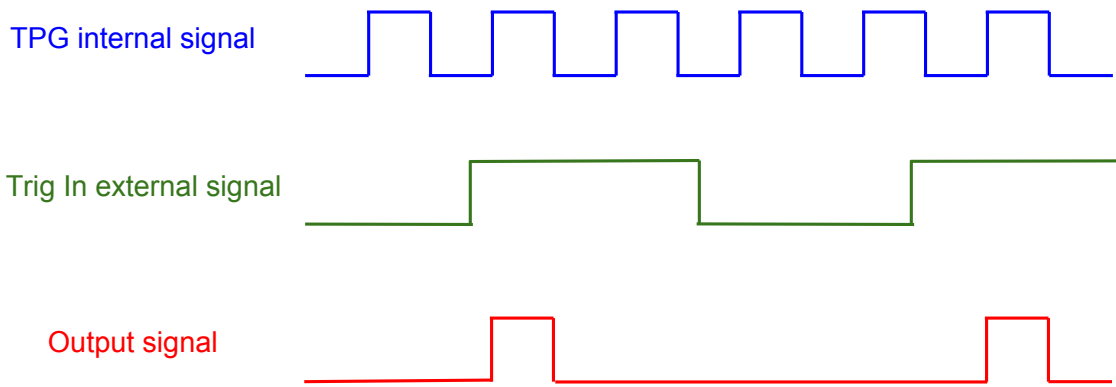


Figure 5.6.: TPG `Trig IN` external mode signal.

### 5.3.2. Setting the pulse parameters

1. remove the TPG from the Starter Kit and connect it to the mains independently
2. set the TPG mode to internal
3. connect the TPG to a scope using the Output BNC cable: a 5V TTL signal should be displayed
4. set the pulse parameters as specified in the datasheet (see section 4.2):
  - a) set the pulse duration to 50 ns using the 0-200 ns knob (4)
  - b) set the pulse period to 2.5  $\mu$ s using the period knob (2) and toggle switch (3)
5. once the testing conditions are retrieved, set the pulse parameters as desired, but within a reasonable range of the parameters specified in the datasheet.  
*Note:* the pulse duration should be kept long enough to not distort the TTL signal.
6. lock the knobs (2) and (4)
7. turn off the TPG and disconnect it from the mains

**IMPORTANT:**

The operating parameters are specified in the datasheet provided with each laser; any operation outside the specified range must be agreed with ALPES LASERS or may result in the loss of warranty.



### 5.3.3. Maximum duty cycle

The TPG is capable of operating with pulses as long as 200 ns; however for short periods (high duty cycle) the following limitations apply:

T=400ns: ..... t max = 200ns

T=300ns: ..... t max = 200ns

T=250ns: ..... t max = 150ns

T=200ns: ..... t max = 100ns

where  $T$  is the period and  $t_{max}$  is maximum pulse length.



**CAUTION:**

The laser shall only be operated under conditions as specified in the datasheet or by ALPES LASERS directly: all other operation may result in the destruction of the laser and loss of warranty.

While the TPG alone is capable of exceeding a duty cycle of 50% in some conditions, the maximum duty cycle of the pulser system is of 50%; a fuse protects the TPG from operating at larger cycles when under load. If larger cycles are needed, the LDD must be powered by an external 12V power supply. In order to operate a laser with a duty cycle higher than specified, its average output power must be monitored and must comply to the following guidelines:

- Do *not* increase the duty cycle further when the power saturates, but rather reduce it.
- It is advisable to increase the duty cycle by reducing the pulse period rather than increasing the pulse length. Increasing the pulse length is more likely to damage the laser because it increases the short time heat load on the laser while reducing the pulse period increases the average heat load.
- The exact percentage of maximum duty cycle depends on the laser

## 5.4. S-2 Pulser (S-2)

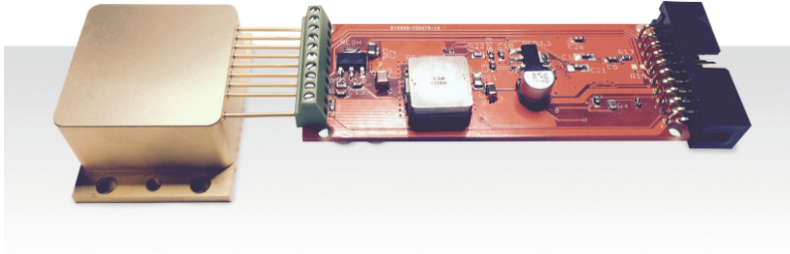


Figure 5.7.: S-2 OEM configuration with HHL.



Figure 5.8.: S-2 pulser in eloxed aluminium box.

The S-2 pulser provides short electrical pulses to the laser. It connects directly to the laser in an HHL housing with pins as shown in table 3.5; an adapter cable is available for the LLH housing.

The S-2 is designed so that the electrical connections necessary for the laser temperature control pass unaltered through the pulser. The S-2 pulser is available in a variety of configurations:

- The S-2 pulser can be shipped as a bare circuit as shown in Fig. 5.7 (see full drawing in Fig. 6.5 ) for integration, or integrated in a 75 mm×42.75 mm×22 mm eloxed aluminium box for laboratory usage.
- The STC-3 cable is available to connect the back of the driver to the TC-3 controller. This cable is split with three ends: a DB 15 connector contains the temperature controls, an RS232 cable contains the computer communication signals, and finally a coupling socket is used for power transmission. The STC-3 cable pins and configuration are shown in fig. 5.11. It should be noted that the STC-3 cable does not give access to all the S-2 functionalities. An RS-232 to USB converter, which might be needed for connecting the board to a computer without hardware RS-232 port, is also available with drivers for Windows, Mac

OS and Linux. Also the S-2 pulser is available in OEM configuration without any cables; in this case the driver can be controlled directly from the pins shown in fig. 5.9 and table 5.4.

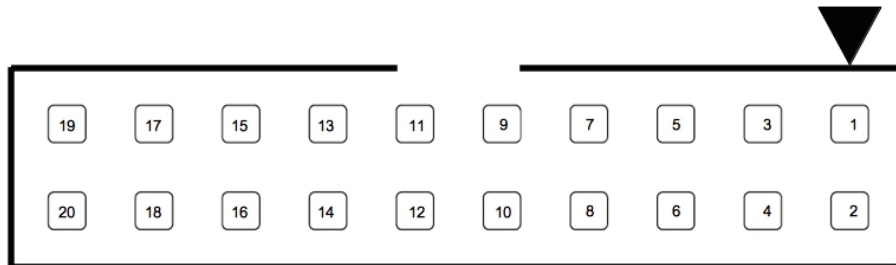


Figure 5.9.: S-2 back pin-out. The position of pin 1 is marked by a triangle on the top of the connector.

1.	TEC Input (+)	11.	Temperature Sensor (+)
2.	RS232 Rx	12.	Interlock (short with pin 14 to enable laser <sup>1</sup> )
3.	Ground	13.	Power Supply Input , 9-20 V
4.	RS232 Tx	14.	Interlock
5.	Ground	15.	Not Connected
6.	LASER ON Output, TTL (3.3 V)	16.	Power Down Input, TTL
7.	Ground	17.	Not connected
8.	Sync Output, TTL (3.3 V)	18.	Not Connected
9.	Temperature Sensor (-)	19.	TEC Input (-)
10.	External Modulation Input, TTL	20.	Not Connected

Table 5.4.: S-2 back pin-out.

The back-end connections pins are shown in figure 5.9 and table 5.4 while the wiring scheme can be seen in figure 5.10

The board can be controlled via the provided computer software. The pulse sequence can be either generated by the board itself, or can be provided by external TTL pulse generator.

**IMPORTANT:**

The values to be considered when driving a laser with a S-2 driver are the *Peak Voltage* and the *Peak Current* values on the laser datasheet. The values  $U_{LDD}$  and *DC Voltage fed to LDD* are not to be considered.

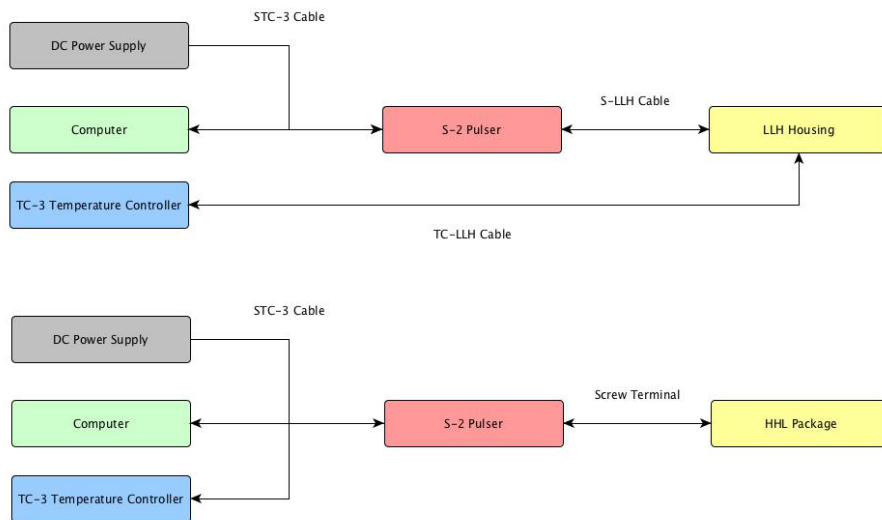


Figure 5.10.: Wiring scheme for S-2 pulser with HHL or LLH housing.

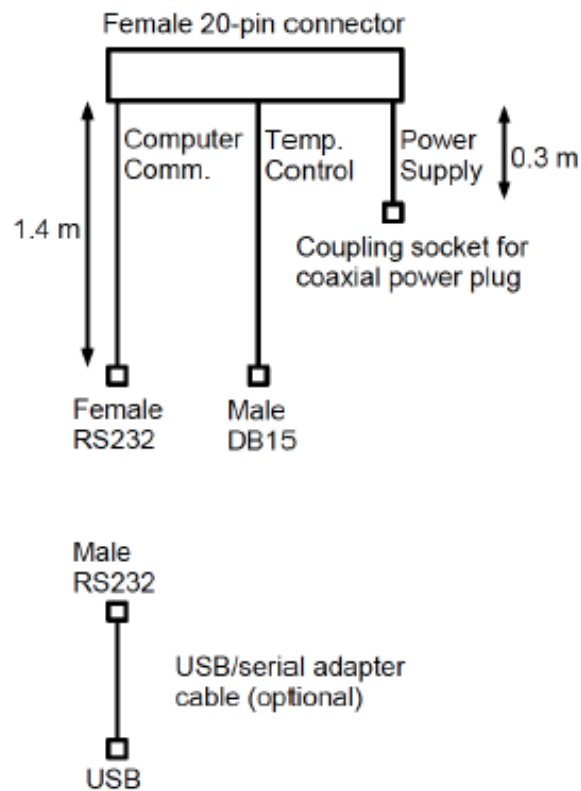
### 5.4.1. Internal Control

Pins 2 and 4 provide an RS-232 serial interface to the pulser (see Fig. 5.9). The RS-232 connector of the STC-3 cable connects to the serial port of a computer (Mac, Windows, or Linux).

To connect to the driver, open the S-2 graphical user interface. A dialog similar to that shown in figure 5.12 will appear. From this control dialog box, pulse length, repetition period and pulse amplitude can be set. Pulse length and repetition period can be adjusted in 20 ns increments. When the pulse width is set to a value larger than the repetition period, the current will be on continuously. To change the settings, type the new values and click **Apply**. The pulse width of the **Sync Out** TTL signal can also be set in 20 ns increments. To save the current settings permanently in the driver, click **Store**. Whenever the board is power cycled, the last settings, which were stored before power down, are used at power up. In particular, if the **Enable Pulses** check box is selected when parameters are stored, the board will start generating pulses at power up. The pulses will be triggered on the pulser's internal clock whenever it is powered on, even once it has been disconnected from the computer.

The S-2 driver can generate a maximum peak current of 8 A and a maximum average current of 2.5 A. The maximum peak current as function of duty cycle and pulse repetition rate is shown in Fig. 5.13. The maximum allowed peak current for the current duty cycle and repetition rate is displayed in the graphical user interface. If this value is exceeded during operation, the driver will shut down its output. In addition, the graphical user interface also offers the possibility to set a peak current limit to protect the laser chip. The driver will also shut down its output if the measured current

<sup>1</sup>By default, the jumper J5 is installed on the board to enable the output. Remove the jumper to use external interlock.



#### Temperature control: Male DB15 connector

1	TEC +	9	
2		10	
3	TEC -	11	
4		12	
5	Ground	13	
6	Ground	14	
7	Temperature sensor +	15	
8	Temperature sensor -		

#### Computer communication: Female RS232 connector

1		6	
2	Rx	7	
3	Tx	8	
4		9	
5	GND		

#### Power supply: Coupling socket for 2.1 mm 5.5 mm coaxial power plug

Tip	Power supply +	Sleeve	GND
-----	----------------	--------	-----

Figure 5.11.: STC-3 cable.

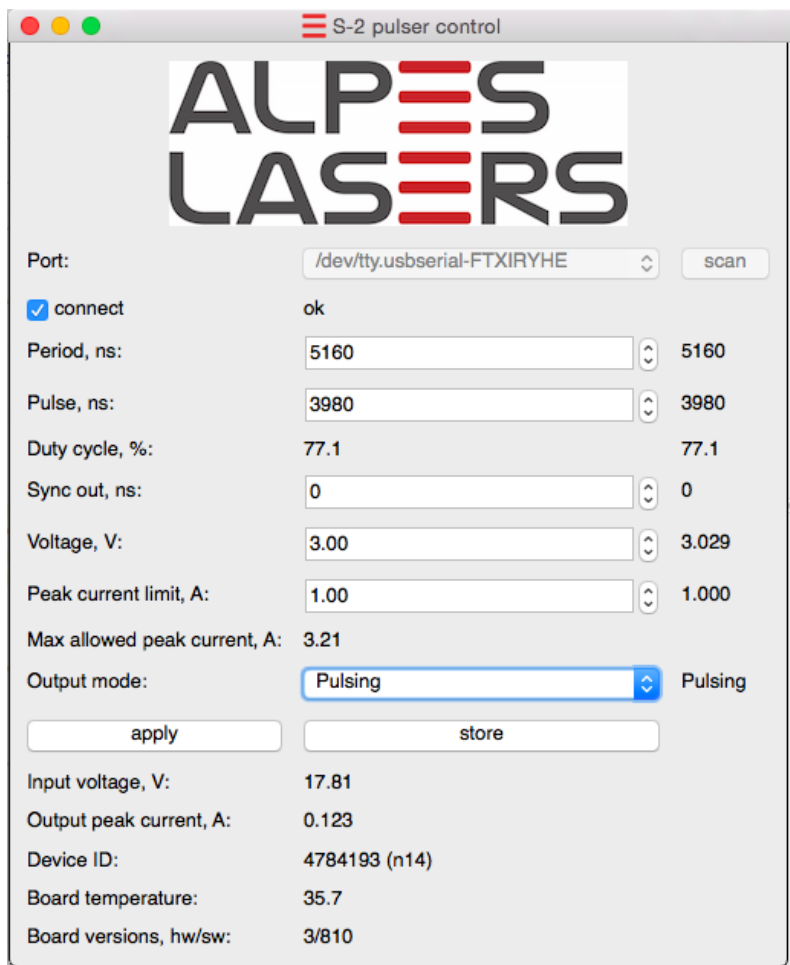


Figure 5.12.: Dialog Box for internal control.

exceeds this value during operation.

*Note:* The current measurement provided in the graphical user interface is for indicative purposes only. It only gives meaningful results for pulse width  $>200$  ns and above the minimum measurable value, which can be as high as 0.15 A in some conditions.

*Note:* The S-2 is designed for pulsed operation. While its range of operation can be extended to a continuous-wave mode of operation, the stability of the driver in this mode is not considered suitable for spectroscopy.

### Direct Software Commands

It is also possible to create more complex pulse shapes, including ramps, by controlling the pulser through the serial port. Figs. 5.14 and 5.15 show all possible commands accepted by the pulser arranged in an example code.

Alpes Lasers offers these commands for convenience only. Software support will not be provided after delivery.

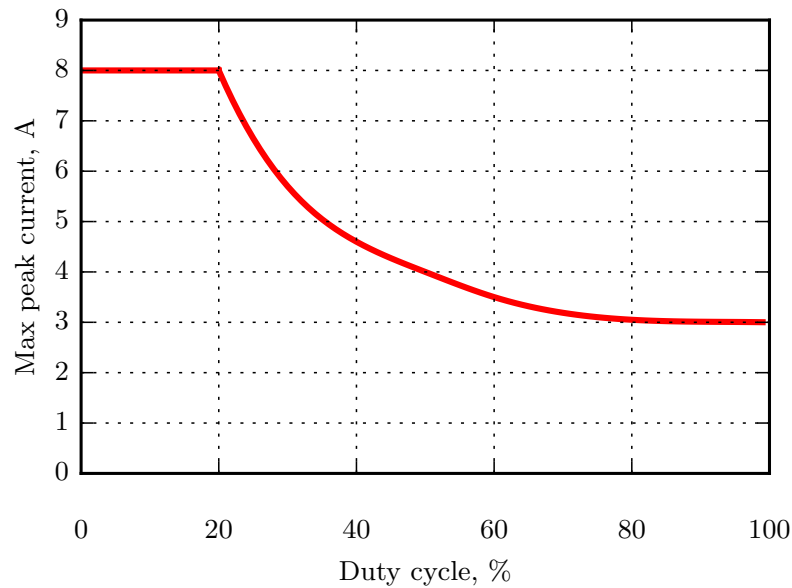


Figure 5.13.: Maximum peak current as function of duty cycle.

### External Control

In external control, the pulses are triggered using the External Modulation Input signal. A TTL signal must be delivered between pins 10 and a ground pin of the S-2. TTL generators are not supplied by Alpes Lasers.

To use the external control, the pulse amplitude needs to be set using the provided software, and 'external pulsing' mode has to be selected. Pulses will be emitted only when the TTL signal on the External Modulation Input is in 'high' state. The pulse length will be the same as the signal length, with a minimum pulse length set by the rise/fall time which depends on the package and laser that can vary between 5 and 15 ns. When the External Modulation Input is off or disconnected, no output will be seen.

*Note:* Overcurrent protection is not active when using external modulation.



#### WARNING:

Internal pulses must be disabled during external control and vice-versa. Enabling internal and external pulses simultaneously might result in damages to the laser and the pulser.

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include "s2_interface.h"
#if defined(_WIN32_) || defined(__CYGWIN__)
#define SERIAL_PORT "COM6"
#else
#define SERIAL_PORT "/dev/ttyUSB0"
#endif

int main()
{
    S2_settings s2_settings;
    S2_info s2_info;
    serial_t *s;
    int ret;

    s = serial_open(SERIAL_PORT);
    if(s==NULL)
    {
        printf("warning: can not open test port: %s\n", SERIAL_PORT);
        return 1;
    }
    s2_serial_setup(s, S2_BAUD);

    printf("0: compatibility test: %d\n", s2_check_API_compatible(s));
    s2_query_info(s, &s2_info);
    printf("%d %d\n", S2_API_VERSION, s2_info.API_version);

    puts("1: querying current S2 settings...");
    ret = s2_query_settings(s, &s2_settings);
    if(!ret) {
        //for example: read voltage
        printf("Current output voltage setting: %f\n", s2_settings.output_voltage_set);
        printf("Current prescalers: %d, %d\n", s2_settings.pulse_period_prescaler, s2_settings.pulse_width_prescaler);
        puts("done.\n");
    }
    else
        printf("error %d\n", ret);

    puts("2: sending S2 settings...");
    init_s2_settings(&s2_settings);
    ret = s2_set_settings(s, &s2_settings, true);
    if(!ret)
        puts("done.\n");
    else
        printf("error %d\n", ret);

    puts("3: querying S2 info...");
    ret = s2_query_info(s, &s2_info);
    if(!ret) {
        //for example: read device ID
        printf("Device ID: %d\n", s2_info.device_id);
        printf("HW/SW: %d/%d\n", s2_info.hw_version, s2_info.sw_version);
        printf("Output voltage: %fV\n", s2_info.output_voltage_measured);
        printf("Output current: %fA\n", s2_info.output_current_measured);
        printf("Status: %d\n", s2_info.status);
        puts("done.\n");
    }
    else
        printf("error %d\n", ret);

    usleep(100000);
    serial_close(s);

    return 0;
}
```

Figure 5.14.: C Software Controls for S-2 pulsers.



```
#!/usr/bin/env python3

from s2_py import serial_open, serial_close, s2_serial_setup, s2_query_info, \
    s2_set_settings, s2_query_settings, S2_info, S2_settings, \
    S2_PULSING_INTERNAL, S2_BAUD, NULL
import logging
from logging import info, error
logging.getLogger().setLevel(logging.INFO)
from s2_local_settings import s2_port_name

s2port = serial_open(s2_port_name.encode('utf-8'))
if s2port == NULL:
    error('can not connect to S2')
    exit(1)
s2_serial_setup(s2port, S2_BAUD)

s2s = S2_settings()
s2_query_settings(s2port, s2s)
s2s.output_voltage_set = 2.5
s2s.pulsing_mode = S2_PULSING_INTERNAL
s2_set_settings(s2port, s2s, False)

s2i = S2_info()

for i in range(10):
    s2_set_settings(s2port, s2s, False)

    s2_query_info(s2port, s2i)
    info((s2i.output_voltage_measured, s2i.output_current_measured))

serial_close(s2port)
```

Figure 5.15.: Python Software Controls for S-2 pulsers.

## 5.5. General procedures



**CAUTION:**

The laser shall only be operated under conditions as specified in the datasheet or by ALPES LASERS directly: all other operation may result in the destruction of the laser and loss of warranty.

### 5.5.1. QCL startup

In order to insure the laser's performance and enhance its lifetime, the following steps must be followed thoroughly:

1. make sure all devices are turned off
2. start cooling for LLH or HHL housing (see section 3.1 for prerequisites)



**CAUTION:**

The laser must be used at the temperature specified in the datasheet. Operating the laser below or above the given temperature is likely to damage the laser and will result in the loss of warranty.

Contact ALPES LASERS or a representant before using the laser at a temperature outside the range specified in the datasheet.

3. startup the TCU following procedure 5.2.1 or the TC-3 following procedure 5.1.1
4. if the laser is operated in CW mode, follow procedures included in the CW laser driver OEM manual. Always keep the current 1mA above 0 to avoid reversing the polarity.
5. if the laser is operated in pulsed mode with TPG and LDD:
  - a) startup the external power supply:
    - i. connect the external power supply to mains
    - ii. remove the red/black banana cables
    - iii. turn on the external power supply
    - iv. set the voltage and current to 0, but keep the voltage 100 mV above 0 to avoid accidental polarity reversal
    - v. turn off the external power supply

- vi. connect the red/black banana cables
- vii. switch on the external power supply
- b) setup the TPG pulse parameters following the guidelines of section 5.3
- c) connect the TPG back to the Starter Kit and turn it on

**CAUTION:**

Make sure the laser temperature is below specifications before turning on the external power supply. Overheating the laser chip may result in permanent damage.

- 6. if the laser is operated in pulsed mode with a S-2 QCL Pulsar:
  - a) before connecting the laser, ensure the S-2 software is set so that it respects the maximum specification of the laser
  - b) connect the S-2 pulser to the setting in which you intend to use it (be it to the TC-3, to an external computer, or to your own control setup)
  - c) connect the laser to the S-2 pins
- 7. increase the current (or voltage if you use a LDD) slowly and monitor the voltage (current) according to the QCL IV curve included in the ALPES LASERS datasheet (see section 4.4):
  - for LDD usage: the current should start increasing at the threshold voltage, at a value close to the one indicated in the ALPES LASERS datasheet. At the maximum voltage, the current supplied by the external power supply (eps) should correspond to the maximum peak current (see section 4.4.1) of the datasheet multiplied by the duty cycle with some overhead:

$$I_{\text{eps}} = I_{\text{peak}} \times \text{duty cycle} + \text{overhead}$$

**CAUTION:**

Do not exceed maximum voltage or current specified in ALPES LASERS datasheet. Permanent damage to the laser chip may occur.

- if no current is flowing, a misconnection might be the cause, repeat step 8 of the installation procedure described in section 3.2
- if a current above 100 mA is read with a voltage below 100 mV, a ground loop might be the cause, review all connections according to section 3.3
- 8. monitor the laser power using a powermeter:
  - a) make sure that the range complies with the power range of the laser (see datasheet)

- b) reset it to 0
- c) align the laser beam with the powermeter

The power should start rising around the threshold of the ALPES LASERS datasheet IV curve (see section 4.4).

*Note:* exact power measurement of an IR beam is very difficult to predict as it depends on the room temperature and powermeter characteristics. Therefore the exact values shown in the datasheet might not be reproduced in a different setup as the one used by ALPES LASERS for routine tests.

### 5.5.2. QCL shutdown

1. reduce the external power supply voltage slowly, do *not* reach 0 as the polarity might reverse



**CAUTION:**  
Make sure the polarity of the laser is correct. Permanent damage may occur.

2. if a pulsed QCL is operated with TPG and LDD: turn off the TPG first
3. set the temperature controller to a temperature close to room temperature
4. wait until the temperature setting is reached
5. turn off the temperature controller

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## 6. Technical specifications

The technical specifications of ALPES LASERS products are given in the following tables:

- QCLs in table 6.1
- housings in table 6.2
- electronic equipment in table 6.3
- Broadgain Lasers bandwidth in table 6.6

Some technicals drawings are provided in figures 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10.

	<b>Distributed Feedback</b>	<b>Fabry-Perot</b>
Type	Single mode lasers	Multi mode lasers
Wavelength	4.2-14 microns	4.2-14 microns
Wavelength range	2-7 cm <sup>-1</sup>	50-300 cm <sup>-1</sup>
Power	0.5-300 milliwatt	0.5-300 milliwatt
Pulse length	25 ns to continuous	25 ns to continuous
Temperature of operation	77K to 323 K	77K to 323 K
Mounts	NS or ST or special	NS or ST or special

Figure 6.1.: Technical specifications of ALPES LASERS QCLs.

	<b>Laser Laboratory Housing (LLH)</b>	<b>High Heat Load (HHL)</b>	<b>TO3</b>	<b>TO3W</b>
Main purpose	Easy laser exchange	Sealed	with lens	with window
Size	100 mm X 50 mm X 50 mm	70 mm X 54 mm X 25.5 mm	38.8 mm X 25.4 mm X 20.5 mm	38.8 mm X 25.4 mm X 20.5 mm
Input	LBI connector, CTL connector, water connectors	Ten-Pin connector	8 pins connector	8 pins connector
Output port	Anti-reflection coated ZnSe protective window	Anti-reflection coated ZnSe protective window	Anti-reflection coated ZnSe collimating lens	Anti-reflection coated ZnSe window
Output beam	Divergent beam	Collimated, divergence < 6 mrad, 4 mm beam diameter	Collimated beam, divergence < 10 mrad, 4 mm beam diameter	Divergent beam 40° X 60° FWHM
Thermoelectric cooler	Peltier cooled laser-stage inside, minimal temperature -30°C	Peltier cooled laser-stage inside, minimal temperature -20°C	Peltier cooled laser-stage inside, max. dissipation 4W	Peltier cooled laser-stage inside, max. dissipation 4W
Temperature monitoring	Pt100	Pt100 or NTC temperature measurement.	NTC thermistor	NTC thermistor
Max TEC current	5.0 A	3.0 A (2.5A on some items)	3.0A	3.0A
Max TEC voltage	17 V	11.6 V (11.0 V on some items)	2.85V	2.85V
Laser Capacity	Supports all NS-mounted CW and pulsed lasers from Alpes Lasers	Supports CW or pulsed lasers with dissipation < 6 W on NS mount	Supports pulsed lasers with <4W average dissipation	Supports pulsed lasers with <4W average dissipation
Cooling needs	The backplate is equipped with a water cooling circuit and connections suitable for 4mm flexible pipes. Water cooling is only necessary for operation temperatures <0°C.	The backplate must be kept at room temperature, up to 35W of heat dissipation needed.	The backplate must be kept at room temperature, up to 10W of heat dissipation needed.	The backplate must be kept at room temperature, up to 10W of heat dissipation needed.

Figure 6.2.: Technical specifications of ALPES LASERS QCL housings.



<b>Laser Diode Driver (LDD)</b>	
Size	15cm X 6cm X 9 cm
Input	Power and timing input provided by CTL cable and associated equipment - see manual
Output	High current pulses through low impedance cable
Peak Current output	0-15 A
Voltage compliance	50V
Rise/fall time	10 ns
Pulse duration	>10ns (with attenuation), flat from 20ns to DC
Repetition Rate	Up to 4 MHz
Duty Cycle	<90%
Operation Temperature	0°C to 60°C

<b>Temperature Control Unit (TCU)</b>	
Size	11.5cm x 22cm x 27.5cm
Power Input	Mains power (120/240V, 50/60Hz)
Input/Output	Through supplied CTL cable
Internal Control	Front panel buttons
External Control	Temperature setpoint can be controlled by voltage on a BNC connector: 10°C/V from -6.5V to +6.5V
Max Current	5.0 A
Temperature setpoint range	-65°C-+65°C
Temperature sensor	pt100

<b>TTL Pulse Generator (TPG)</b>	
Size	23cm X 13.7cm X 6.8cm
Power Input	Mains power (120/240V, 50/60Hz)
Power Output	12V on Lemo connector
Timing input	Optional TTL Gate in/Trig in
Timing Output	TTL signal on BNC connector
Max Current	150 mA
Pulse duration	22 ns - 200 ns
Interval between pulses	100 ns - 105 us
Duty Cycle	up to 50%
Operation Temperature	-60°C to +60°C

<b>CW current driver</b>	
Manufacturer	ILX Lightwave
Size	31.5 cm X 21.5 cm X 8.5 cm
Power Input	Mains power (120/240V, 50/60Hz)
Power Output	D-Sub-9 connector and CIL cable
Max Current	4.0 A
Compliance Voltage	15 V
External Modulation	DC-250 kHz through 400mA/V input
Duty Cycle	up to 50%

Figure 6.3.: Technical specifications of ALPES LASERS electronic equipment (followed in figure 6.4.)

<b>Temperature Controller (TC-3)</b>	
Size	9cm x 21.5cm x 28cm
Power Input	Mains power (120/240V, 50/60Hz)
Input/Output	Through supplied TC-LLH(HHL) cable
Internal Control	Front panel buttons
External Control	USB connectors
Max Current	5.0 A
Temperature setpoint range	-99°C-+250°C (limited range with allowed for QCL use)
Temperature sensor	pt100, NTC, user-defined

<b>QCL Pulser (S-2)</b>	
Size	75mm x 42.75mm x 22mm
Power Input	Mains power (120/240V, 50/60Hz)
Input/Output	DC 8-24V
Control	USB interface or direct access to pins
Output voltage	0 to 25V in 5 mV increments
Output current	Up to 8A peak current, up to 2.5A average current
Rise/fall time	5 to 15 ns (package dependent)
Pulse duration	20 ns up to CW in 20 ns increment
Repetition Rate	up to 1 Mhz
Operation Temperature	0°C to 60°C

Figure 6.4.: Technical specifications of ALPES LASERS electronic equipment (continued from 6.3)

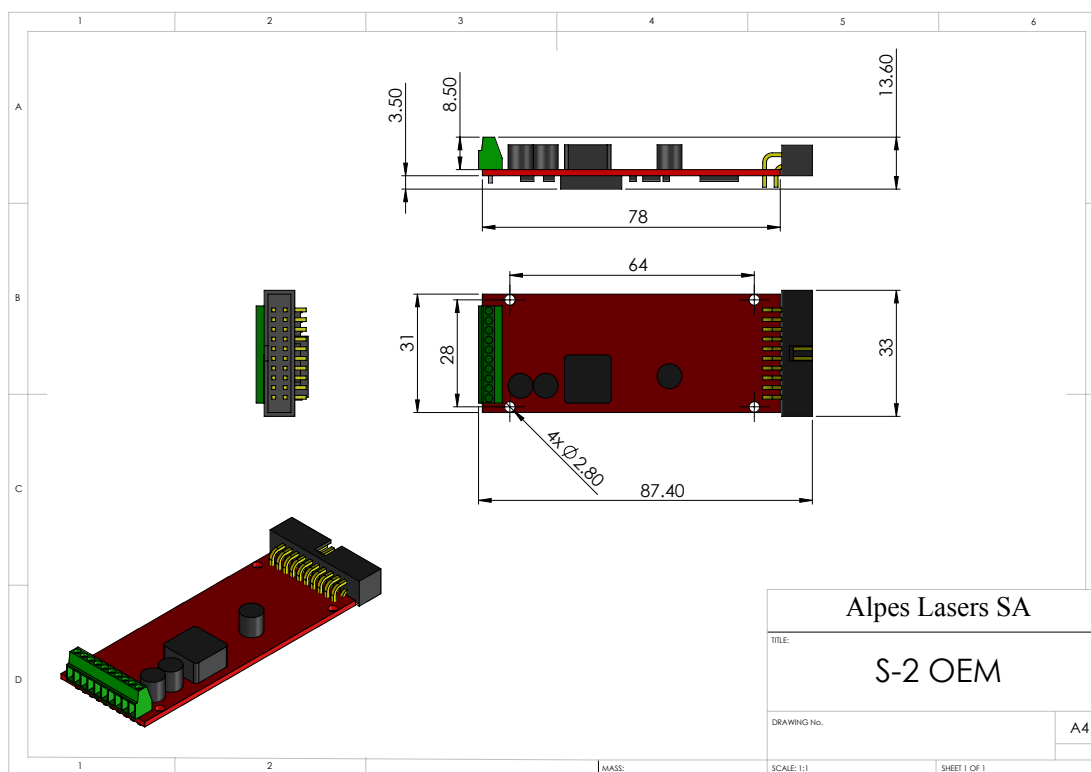


Figure 6.5.: S-2 driver in OEM configuration (protective box also available).

Type	FP min	FP max	PEC-min	PEC-max	CWEC-min	CWEC-max
BG-10-12	780	1030	787	1042	-	-
BG-8-10	995	1260	976	1283	1020	1235
BG-7-8	1190	1425	1096	1473	1150	1420
BG-6-7	1345	1660	1325	1680	1370	1635

Figure 6.6.: Examples of broadgain laser parameters, where *FP min and max* are the limits of the multimode emission, *PEC min and max* are the observed limits of single mode pulsed emission in an external cavity and *CWEC min and max* the observed limits of continuous emission in an external cavity. Parameters were measured without AR coatings. Note that performance may vary depending on the external cavity.

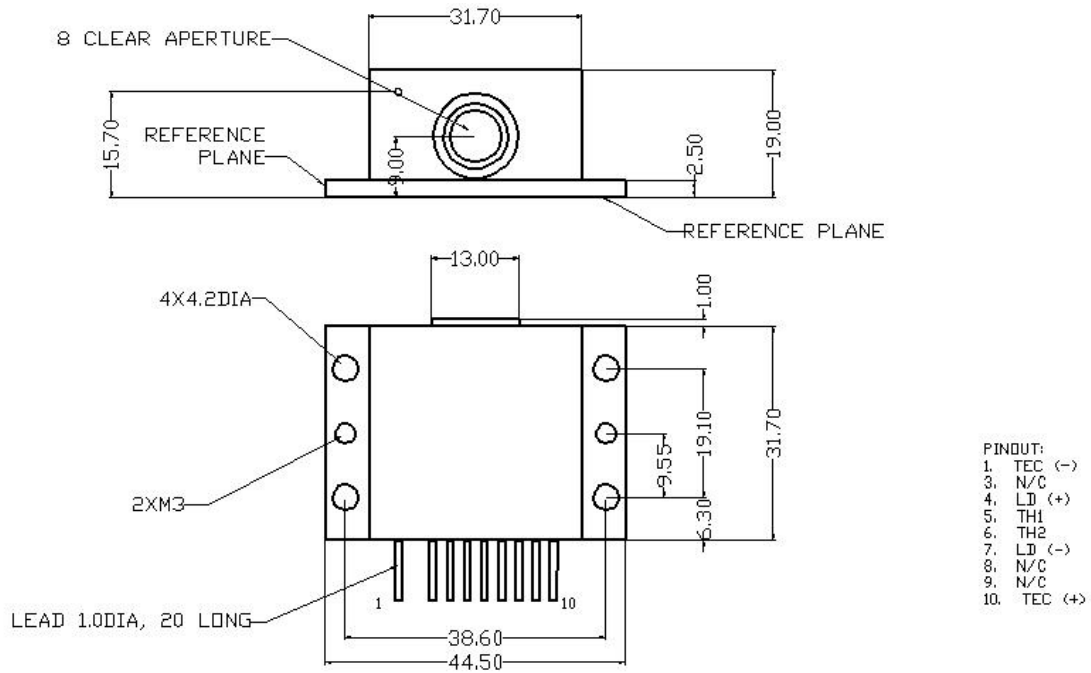


Figure 6.7.: HHL housing.

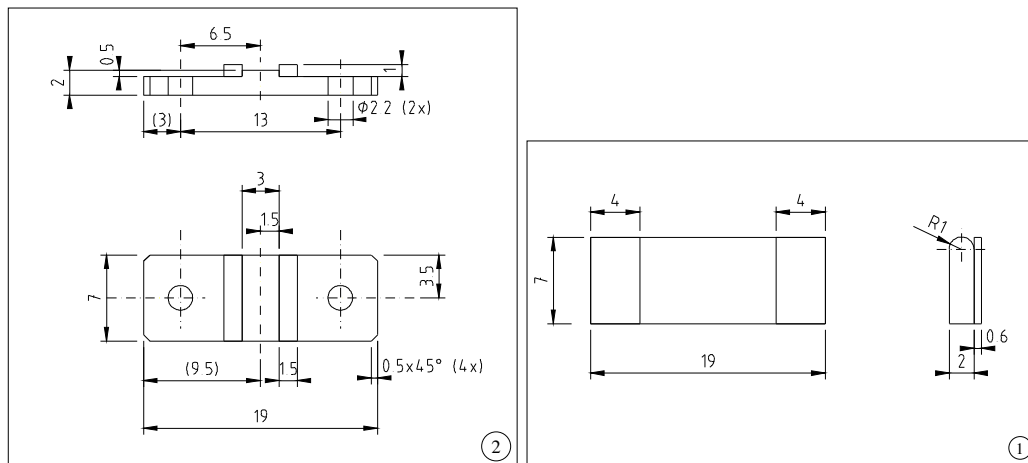


Figure 6.8.: NS (left) and ST (right) mounting support.

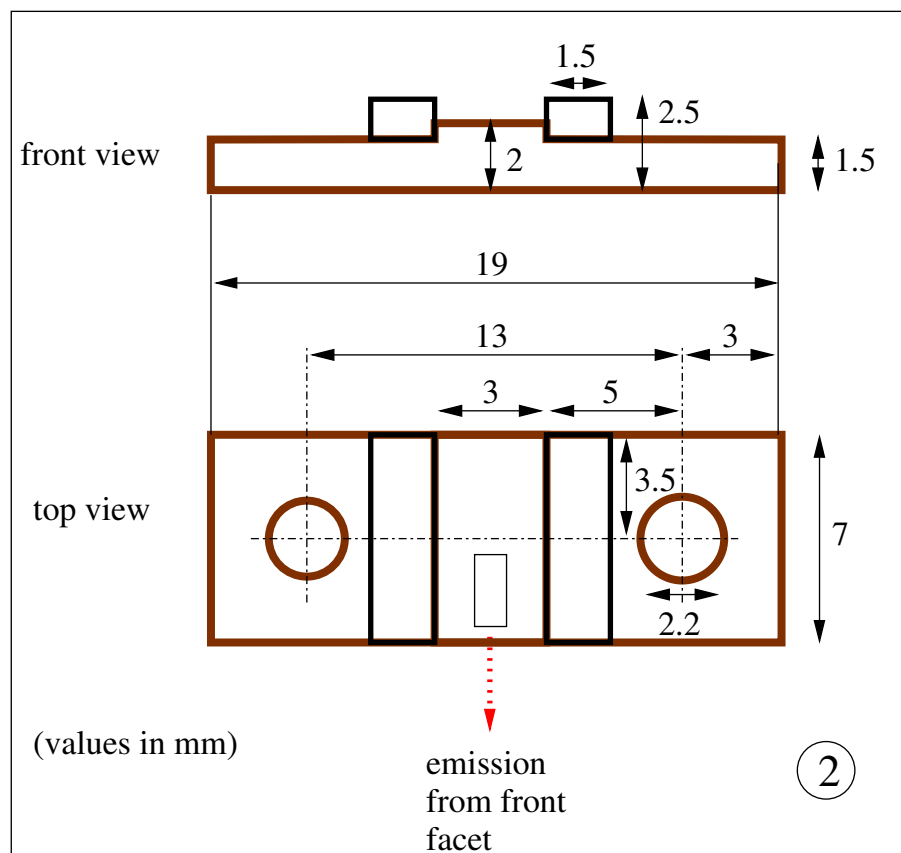


Figure 6.9.: NS mounting.

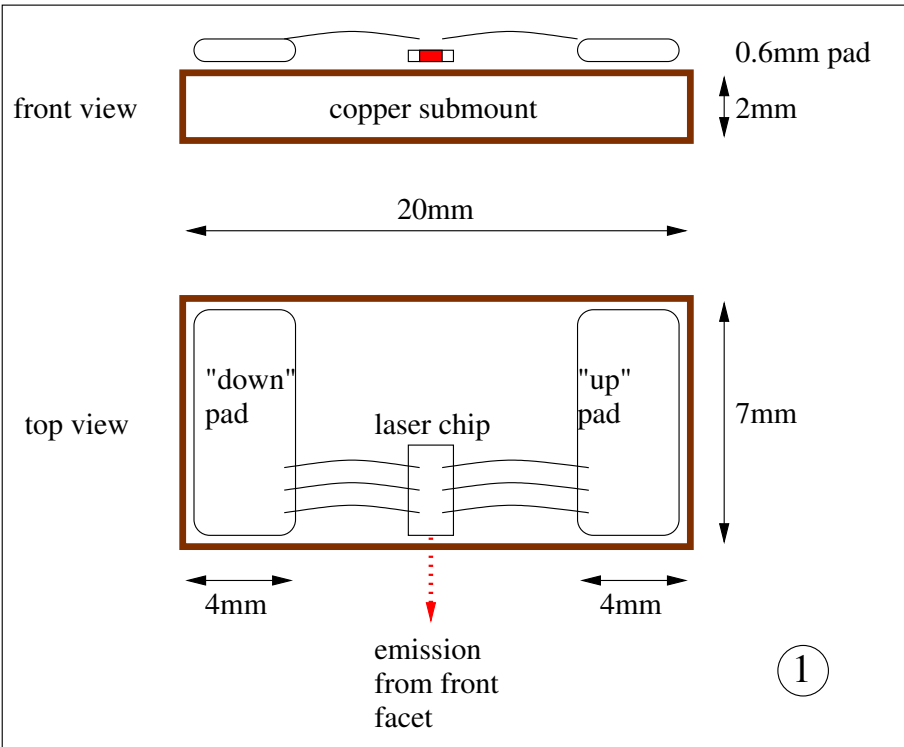


Figure 6.10.: ST mounting.

# 7. Maintenance

This chapter explains the maintenance procedures for the installation of a QCL in the HHL housing and Starter Kit components calibration.

**IMPORTANT:**  
The maintenance procedures included in this chapter have to be followed carefully by expert users only. Delicate operations may result in permanent damage to the laser if not carried out properly.

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## 7.1. Laser installation in LLH housing

The guidelines for manipulating the laser safely and the procedure for exchanging the laser in a LLH housing are outlined in this section.

### 7.1.1. Handling

The laser should always lay flat, with its vertical axis upwards, on a flat and stable surfaces. There should be nothing touching the edges. When mounted in an appropriate and stable holder, it can be operated in any orientation.



**CAUTION:**  
Do not position the laser upside down. This may damage the bonding wires and possibly the laser itself.

The most delicate parts of a QCL are the laser chip itself and the bonds connecting it to the ceramic pads (see section 1.1.2 for details). Therefore the QCL should be manipulated using tweezers touching the submount, as shown in figure 7.1. Whenever possible, carry the QCL laying flat on a stable surface. Avoid contact of the front facet of the QCL with any object, like the walls of its storage box.

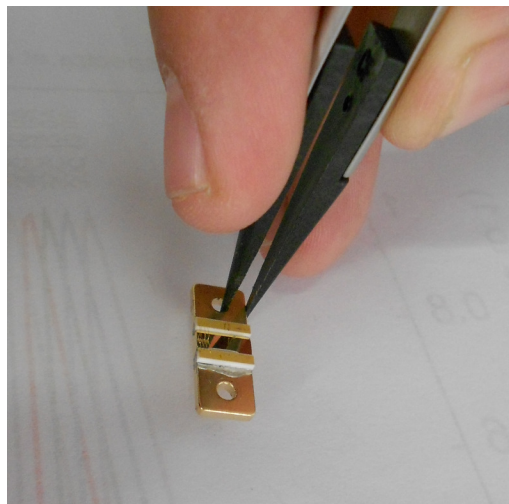


Figure 7.1.: Handling of QCL.





**CAUTION:**  
Do not touch the bonds nor the laser chip itself, as the QCL may be permanently damaged.



**CAUTION:**  
Avoid any dust to deposit on the laser chip or any laser submount item. Malfunctioning or permanent damage to the laser may occur.

### 7.1.2. Contact set

The contact set shown in figures 7.2 connects the laser active pad to the low impedance line of the LLH through a copper contact, as shown in figure 7.3.

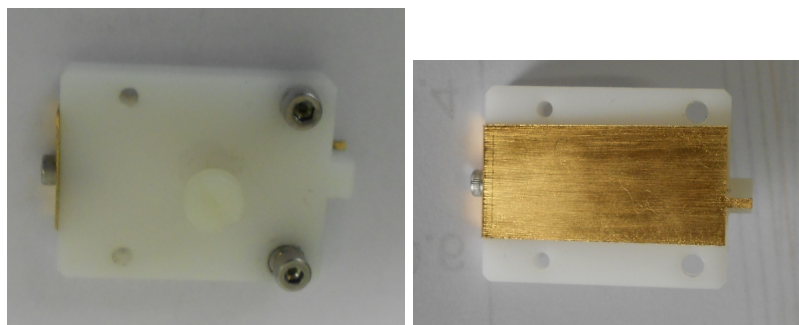


Figure 7.2.: LLH contact set, top (left) and bottom (right).

The laser submount is screwed onto the LLH base copper plate, on which the contact set is screwed to insure electrical contact between the selected pad and the low impedance line, as shown in figure 7.4. The low impedance line (LBI) connects the laser chip to the LDD in pulsed mode, or external power supply in CW mode, through the LLH `laser` and `base` connectors.

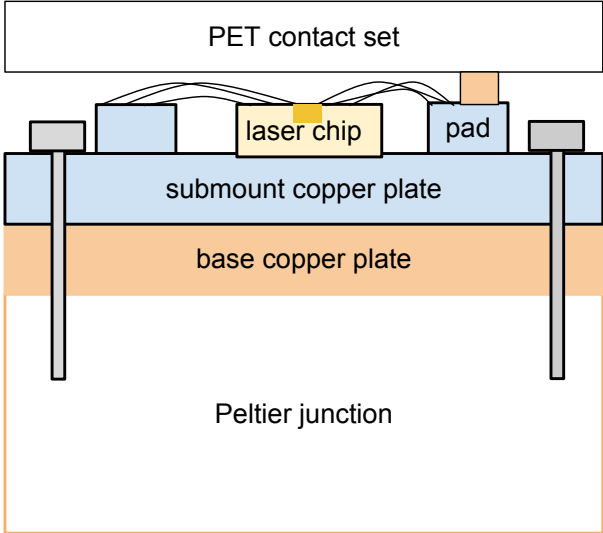


Figure 7.3.: Schematic side view of the laser submount, contact set and LLH.

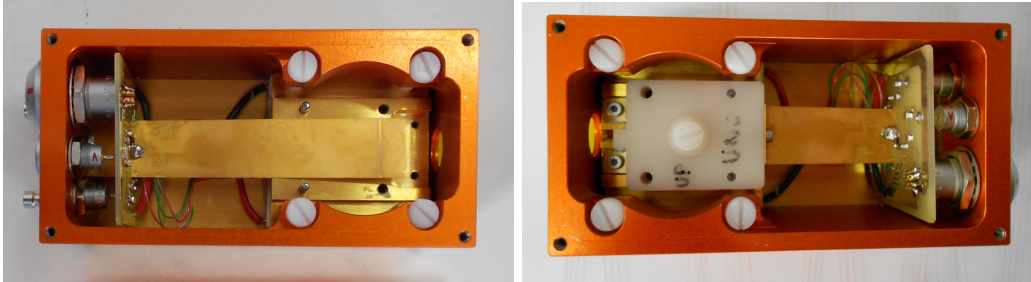


Figure 7.4.: Inside view of the LLH, without (left) and with (right) contact set.

### 7.1.3. Procedure

This procedure allows the installation of a new laser into the LLH housing.

1. disconnect the LLH and open its cover (2), as shown in figure 7.7

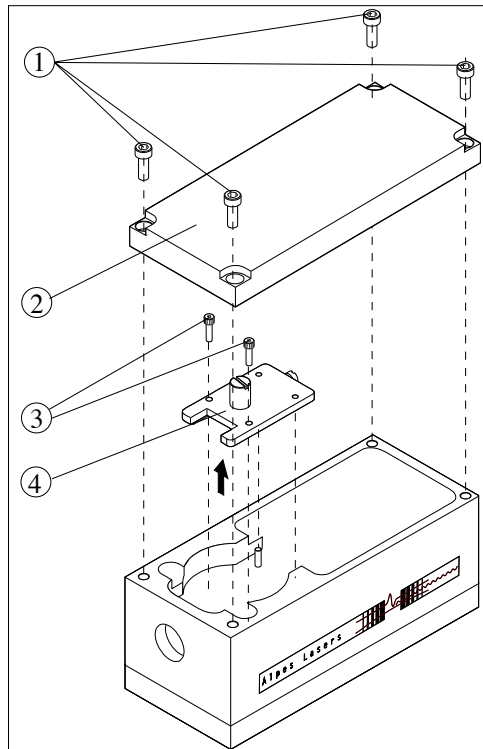


Figure 7.5.: Exchanging the laser in the LLH housing.

2. remove the two screws (3) holding the contact set (4) using a 2mm hex key
3. remove the contact set using the central PET<sup>1</sup> knob, as show in figure 7.6. *Note:* this PET screw is used as a knob, do not remove it.
4. remove the two screws holding the laser submount using a 1.5 mm hex key, as show in figure 7.6
5. remove the laser submount from its storage box using tweezers

**IMPORTANT:**  
The guidelines presented in section 7.1.1 must be followed carefully.

<sup>1</sup>PET refers to polyethylene teraphthalate, a common plastic.

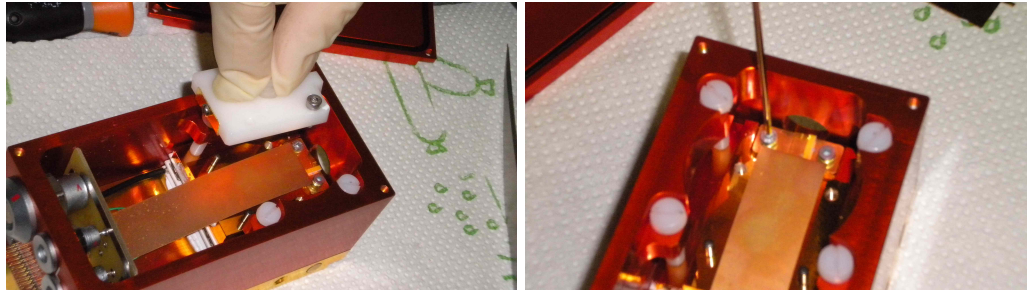


Figure 7.6.: Laser exchange procedure: removing the contact set (left), securing the laser submount (right).



**CAUTION:**

Do not drop the screws onto the submount. This may result in permanent damage to the laser.

6. secure the laser submount into the LLH with the two dedicated screws; use tweezers to hold the screw in place while screwing with an allen wrench.
7. put the contact set on top of the laser submount into the LLH housing:
  - a) use the middle knob to hold the contact set
  - b) position the two rear holes above the pins for proper alignment
  - c) tighten the two dedicated screws through the front holes
  - d) press slightly for good electrical contact
8. use a multimeter to measure the resistance between the `base` and the `laser` connectors. It should lie between  $30 \Omega$  and  $300 \text{ k}\Omega$ ; no resistance indicates a shortcut, infinite resistance indicates a misconnection<sup>2</sup>. In those two cases, perform step 7 until a good contact is obtained.
9. close the LLH cover

---

<sup>2</sup>The laser's resistance is measured between the submount copper base and the ceramic pad. The resistance between the `base` and the `laser` connectors on the LLH should be the same as the laser's resistance ( $\pm 2\Omega$ ).

### 7.1.4. UP and DN contact exchange

Follow procedure 7.1.3, adding those additional steps to step 7:

1. remove the screw (5) located at the back of the contact set, as shown in figure 7.7
2. remove the copper contact (6)
3. replace it with the copper contact supplied by ALPES LASERS with the new laser
4. tighten back the screw (5)

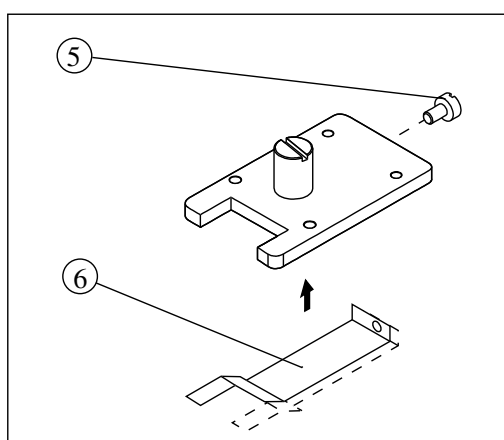


Figure 7.7.: Exchanging the laser submount UP and DN contact (right).

## 7.2. Calibration procedures

In this section the calibration procedures for the TPG and TCU are detailed. In both cases a few preliminary steps must be followed:

1. Switch off the device.
2. remove the TPG or TCU cover (refer to figure 7.8):
  - a) Pull off the light gray plastic pieces of the side of the front and back plates.
  - b) Lift off the light gray plastic shades from the side of the box; this allows for access to the screws holding the top and bottom covers.

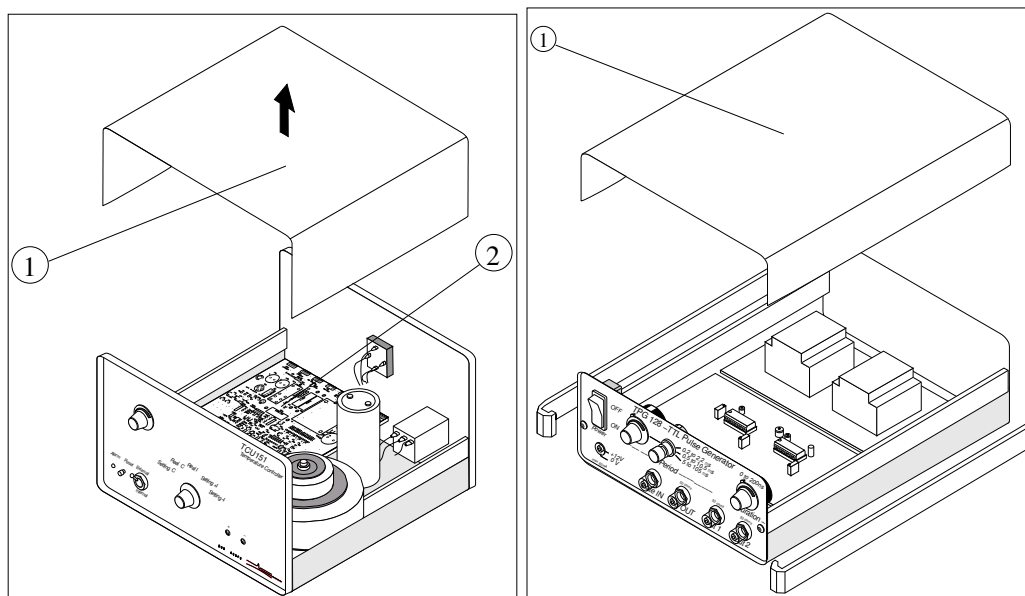


Figure 7.8.: TPG (left) and TCU (right) cover removal.

3. Switch on the device.



### DANGER

Contact with AC line potential can cause death or serious injury. If work on live electrical circuits is required, use all appropriate precautions and hot work procedures required at your location.

### 7.2.1. TCU interlock level setting procedure

This procedure allows to set the TCU interlock level.

1. switch off the TCU
2. unplug the power cable
3. remove the cover to access the main board following step 2 of the previous procedure.
4. locate the **J9 Interlock** connector
5. position the associated jumper according the desired type of interlock:
  - NC (normally closed): pins (4) and (5)
  - NO (normally open): pins (3) and (4)

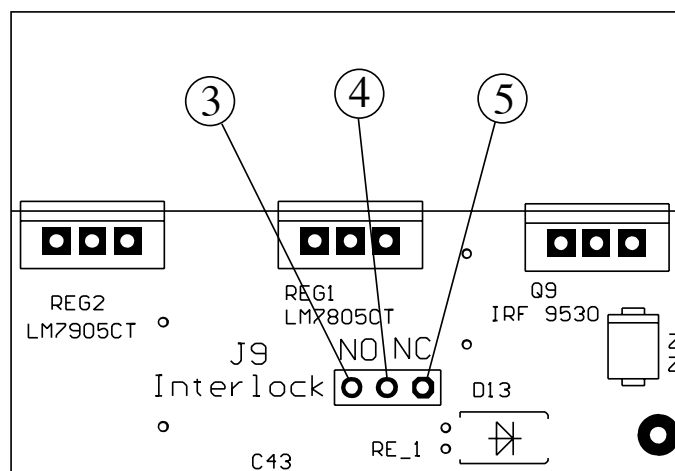


Figure 7.9.: TCU board J9 Interlock connector.

### 7.2.2. TCU calibration

This procedure must be followed for a general calibration of the TCU command knobs and selectors. Refer to section 5.2 for TCU front panel commands description.

**IMPORTANT:**  
The TCU is calibrated in factory. This procedure is not a routine procedure and must be performed by experts only.

#### Material needed

- Voltmeter HP3458A or equivalent.
- Voltage source Keithley SMU237 or equivalent.
- Precision resistor 100 Ohm 1% or better.
- Cable: LEMO 6 poles female 6 bananas female (LEMO connector: LFGG.1B.306.CLAD72Z, LEMO handler GMA.1B.065.DG).



**DANGER**  
Contact with AC line potential can cause death or serious injury. If work on live electrical circuits is required, use all appropriate precautions and hot work procedures required at your location.

#### Procedure

1. Power off the instrument.
2. Open the TCU top cover to access the main board.



## 3. +5V/-5V power supply check.

**CAUTION:**

Do not connect the signal IN-34 V DC (connector J1 (3)). This may result in permanent damage to the Peltier junction.

- a) Check that the input impedance between +5V/-5V and GND have the following values:
  - **TP1 (4) - GND (5):**  $> 2.5 \text{ k}\Omega$ .
  - **TP2 (6) - GND (5):**  $< 4 \text{ k}\Omega$ .
- b) Power up the instrument.
- c) Check that the **+5V/-5V** power supply voltage have the following values:
  - **TP1 (4) - GND (5):** 4.95 to 5.2 V.
  - **TP2 (6) - GND (5):** 4.95 to 5.2 V.

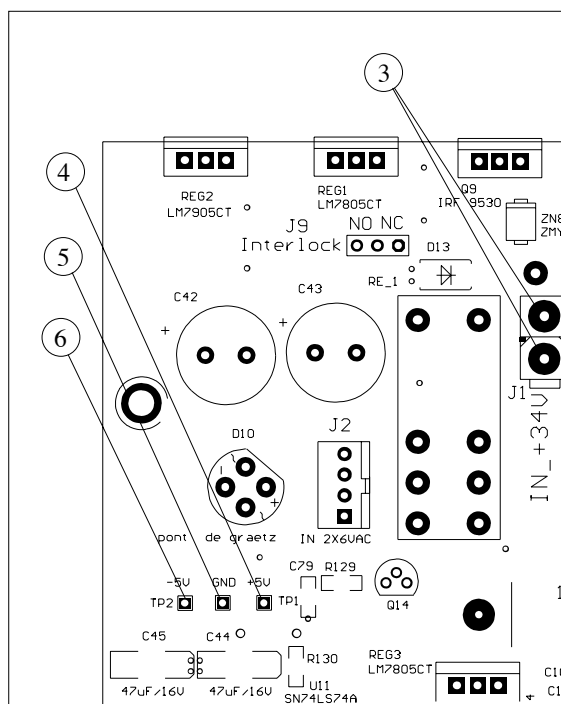


Figure 7.10.: TCU main board (zoom I).

4. Sensing level and range adjustment (refer to figure 7.11)

- a) Replace the cable connected to **J8** (4) with the  $100\pm 1\ \Omega$  resistor. *Note:* the precision (gold band on the resistor) is important. Connect one side of the resistor to pins 1 and 2, the other side to pins 3 and 4.
- b) Measure the voltage on **Zn3/R10** (3): the value should be  $-V = 1.22$  to  $1.25V$ .
- c) Measure the voltage at the intersection of **R19/R35** (5): the value should be  $V=100mV$ , adjustable with the **P1** (2)) knob.  
*Note:* If the range is too small, replace the resistor **R1** (1) =  $1.3k\Omega$  with  $1.4k\Omega$ .
- d) Set the selector (9) to display **Real °C**.
- e) Adjust the trimmer **P6** (6) in order to obtain the value of **000 °C** on the screen (8).
- f) Vary the Temperature Reference by using the **Set Temperature** 5 turns knob (7) located on the front panel. The range displayed should be **-074 to + 074**.

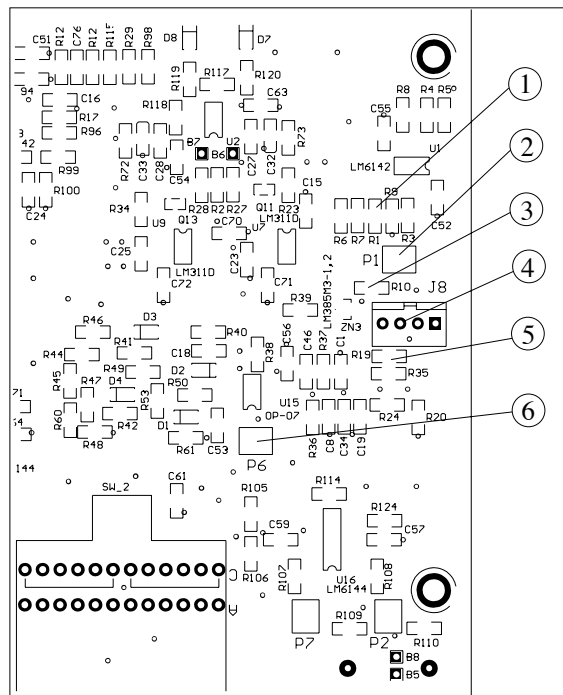


Figure 7.11.: TCU main board (zoom II).

## 5. Temperature Reference offset adjustment (refer to figure 7.12)

- a) Adjust **B13** (3) to **0.000** with **P3** (4)
- b) Set the temperature with the **Set Temperature** knob (Fig.40 (7)) to +5 °C  
↔ The temperature reference signal B13 should be  $\geq 4.3V$
- c) Set the temperature with the **Set Temperature** knob (Fig.40 (7)) to -5 °C  
↔ The temperature reference signal B3 should be  $\leq 4.3V$
- d) Check the switch range by setting the Temperature Reference at + 2 °C and -2 °C:
  - B7 = -5V and +5V
  - B6 = +5V and -5V
- e) Check the output voltage of the transistors  
↔ The signals on **R78** and **R81** should toggle simultaneously with the inversal signals on **R79** and **R80**



## CAUTION:

The signals B6 and B7 (2) must never be at 0V simultaneously. This may result in a short-circuit

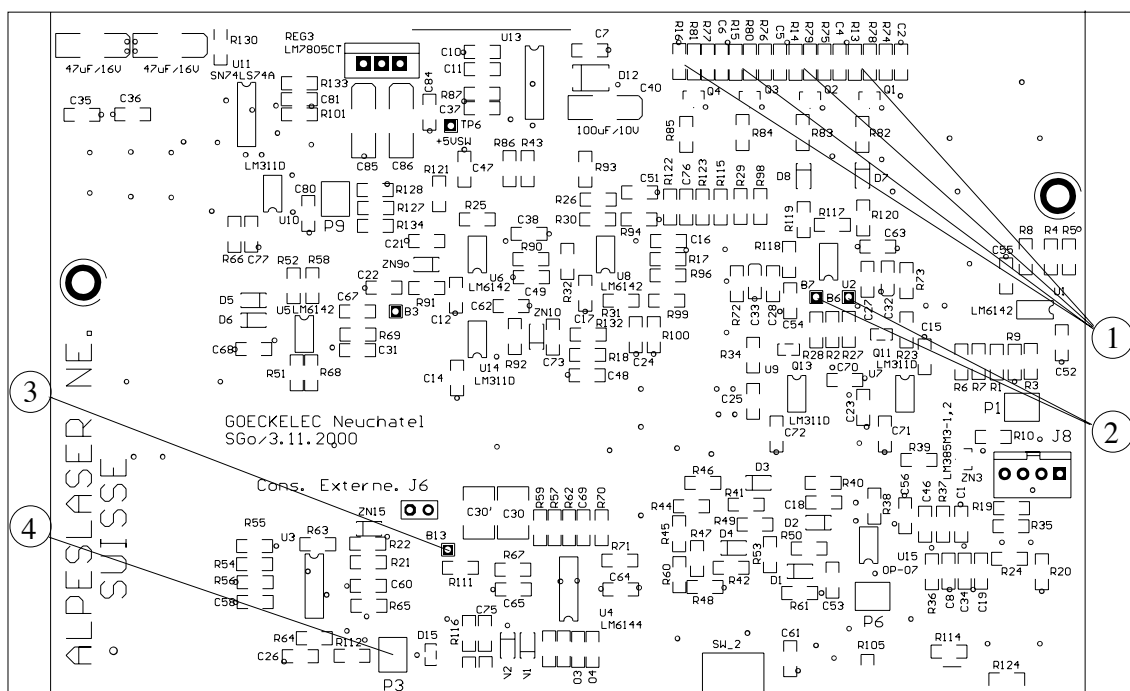


Figure 7.12.: TCU main board (view I).

6. Oscillator check (refer to figure 7.13): measure the frequency on the **pin 7 of U13** (1); the value must be 28KHz + /- 3KHz.
7. Current/Voltage ratio adjustment (refer to figure 7.13)
  - a) Adjust the trimmer **P4** (6) in order to read **B4** = 0.6V (4).
  - b) Set the selector (5) to mode **Setting +I**: the LCD screen should display **1.00 A**.  
 Note: If it is not the case, adjust it with **P2** (2).
  - c) Adjust the trimmer **P4** in order to read **B4** = 3.0 V: the LCD screen should display **5.00 A**.  
 Note: If it is not the case, adjust it with **P2** (2). Example : 0,6 V  $\Rightarrow$  0,99 A and 3V  $\Rightarrow$  4,99 A.
  - d) Set the switch on the front panel to **Setting -I**.
  - e) Repeat steps [2] and [4] for **P5** (7) and **B5** (3).

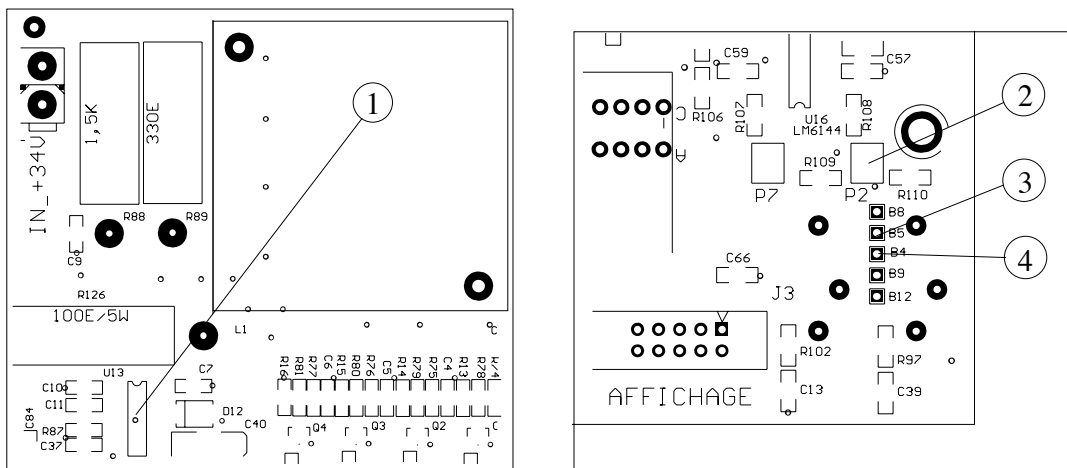


Figure 7.13.: TCU main board, oscillator check (left), current/voltage ratio adjustment (right).

**IMPORTANT:**

For the remainder of this procedure, limit the positive current to 1 A and the negative current to 1.2 A using the 5 turns knob.

8. Temperature limit threshold

- a) Measure the voltage on **pin 2** of **U10** (1): the value should be: 0.7V (= 70 °C) (If needed, adjust it with the trimmer **P9(2)**).
- b) Power down the instrument.

9. Starting the power section of the instrument.

- a) Remove the 100 E reference resistor from **J8** (4) and plug the output cable **J8**.
- b) Plug the external cable into the LLH100, and verify that the Pt100 is properly mounted in the latter.
- c) Use an external power supply (0-30VDC/3A) to simulate the internal power supply.
- d) Limit the current to 200 mA and connect it to main board **J1** connector (3).
- e) Power on the instrument and the external power supply.

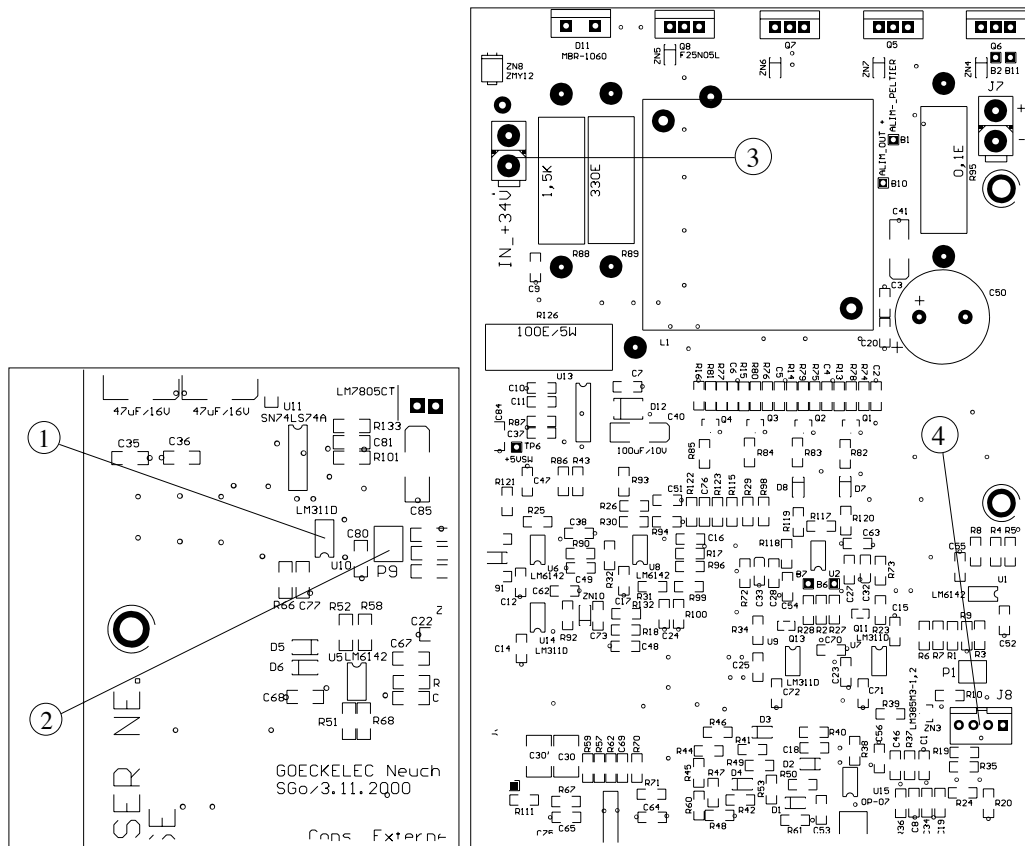


Figure 7.14.: TCU main board (zoom III and IV).

## 10. Current adjustment

- a) Set the selector (3) to **Setting °C** and adjust the temperature value to 25 °C by means of the **Set Temperature** 5 turns potentiometer P8 (2).
- b) On the external power supply, rise slowly the voltage to 30 V and the current to 1.5 A: the tension should stabilize at 30 V.  
*Note:* If the current is too high, stop the test and verify the transistors **Q1** to **Q4** (1) and their associated resistors. There might be a soldering problem. In this case, fix it and repeat the procedure from step 5.
- c) Set the selector (3) to mode **Real I**: the displayed value should be  $\leq 1$ A.
- d) Set the selector (3) to mode **Real °C**: the value displayed should tend to the defined value. If not, adjust **P3**.
- e) Wait a minute and check the Peltier temperature with a thermometer
- f) Set the selector (3) to the **Setting +I**.
- g) Increase the limit of the positive current to 3.5A by using the **+I** trimmer (4) located on the front panel.
- h) Increase the limit of negative current to 5A by using the **-I** trimmer (5) located on the front panel.
- i) Change the temperature reference to -25 °C and check the displayed current.

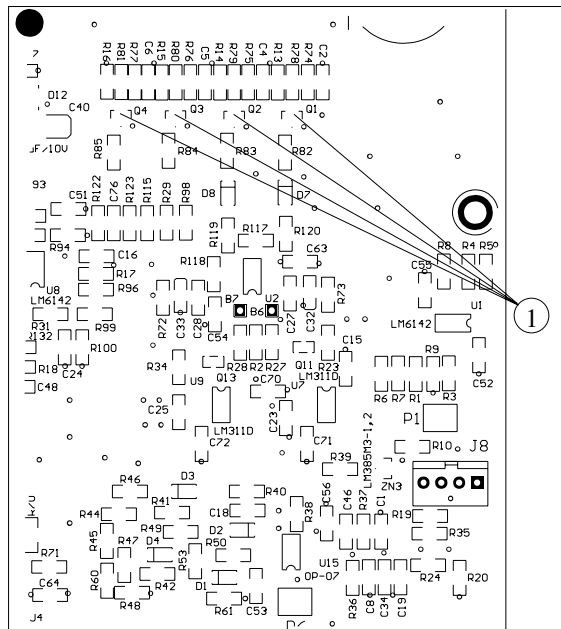


Figure 7.15.: TCU main board, current adjustment.

11. Temperature limit testing

- a) Decrease the temperature limit threshold from 0.7 V to 0.3 V.

*For more details, see **Temperature limit threshold** on page 107.*

- b) Increase the temperature reference to 35 °C.

*↔ When the threshold is overpassed, the red LED (1) in front panel should light up.*

- c) Wait the real temperature drops 10 °C below the threshold.

- d) Reset the instrument with the **RESET** button (2).

*↔ The red LED (1) should turn off.*

- e) Reset the temperature limit threshold to 0.7 V. *For more details, see **Temperature limit threshold** on page 107.*

12. Monitoring: check the output voltage on the rear instrument BNC connector (5).

*For 35 °C, the voltage should be 350 mV.*

13. External reference:

- a) connect an external power supply to the **External Reference** BNC connector (6).

- b) Set the voltage to 3.5 V.

Set the switch **External/Internal** (3) to **External**.

Set the selector (4) to the **Setting °C**.

*↔ The temperature displayed (2) should be 35 °C.*

Set the selector (4) to Real °C.

*↔ The temperature displayed (2) should follow the reference temperature.*



### 7.2.3. TPG calibration

These procedures describe the steps necessary to calibrate the TPG front panel knobs settings. Refer to figure 5.3 for the TPG commands description.

**IMPORTANT:**

The TPG is calibrated in factory. This procedure is not a routine procedure and must be performed by experts only.



**DANGER**

Contact with AC line potential can cause death or serious injury. If work on live electrical circuits is required, use all appropriate precautions and hot work procedures required at your location.

- [1] Verify the +5 V power supply.
- [2] During the first test, set all knobs and adjustable capacitors to their medium values.
- [3] Adjust to the knob **50 ns adj** (3) in order to obtain a 500 ns long pulse on **TP2** (2).
- [4] Measure the pulse period through the boxTrigOut output connector using a scope.

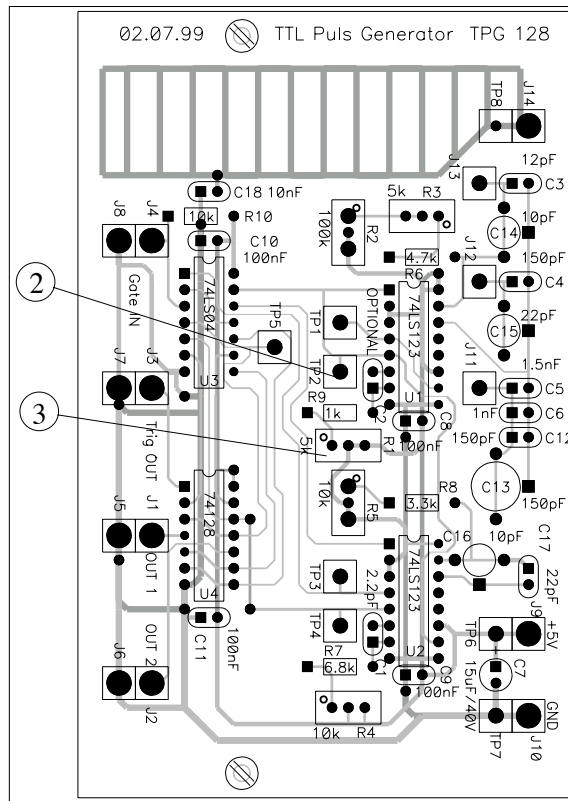


Figure 7.16.: TPG main board (view I).

[5] Select the range  $5 \mu\text{s}$  to  $105 \mu\text{s}$  on the period selection knob. Turn the 10 turns adjustment knob to its last position. Adjust the adjustable capacitor **max 105  $\mu\text{s}$  adj** (4) in order to obtain a  $105 \mu\text{s}$  long period.

[6] Turn the adjustment knob 10 times to its original position. Adjust the pot **Period min adj** (1) in order to have a period of  $5 \mu\text{s}$ .

[7] Repeat steps 5) and 6) in order to obtain  $105 \pm 1 \mu\text{s}$  and  $5 \pm 0,1 \mu\text{s}$  for the two settings of the **Period** knob.

[8] Choose the range  $0.2 \mu\text{s}$  to  $2.2 \mu\text{s}$ . Turn the 10 turns adjustment knob to its last position.. Adjust the **max 2,2  $\mu\text{s}$  adj** capacitor (2) in order to obtain a period of  $2.2 \mu\text{s}$ .

[9] Turn the adjustment knob 10 times back to its previous position. Check that the period is  $200 \text{ ns}$ . If this is not the case, re-adjust the pot **50 ns adj** (5) in order to obtain  $200 \pm 20 \text{ ns}$ . (In general, it is not possible to go below  $210 \text{ ns}$ ).

[10] Choose the range  $0.5 \mu\text{s}$  to  $10.5 \mu\text{s}$ . Pot 10 turn **Period** on 10. Adjust the capacitor **max 10,5  $\mu\text{s}$  adj** (3) in order to have a period of  $10,5 \mu\text{s}$ .

[11] Turn the adjustment knob 10 times back to its original position. Check the that period is of  $0.6 \pm 0.1 \mu\text{s}$ .

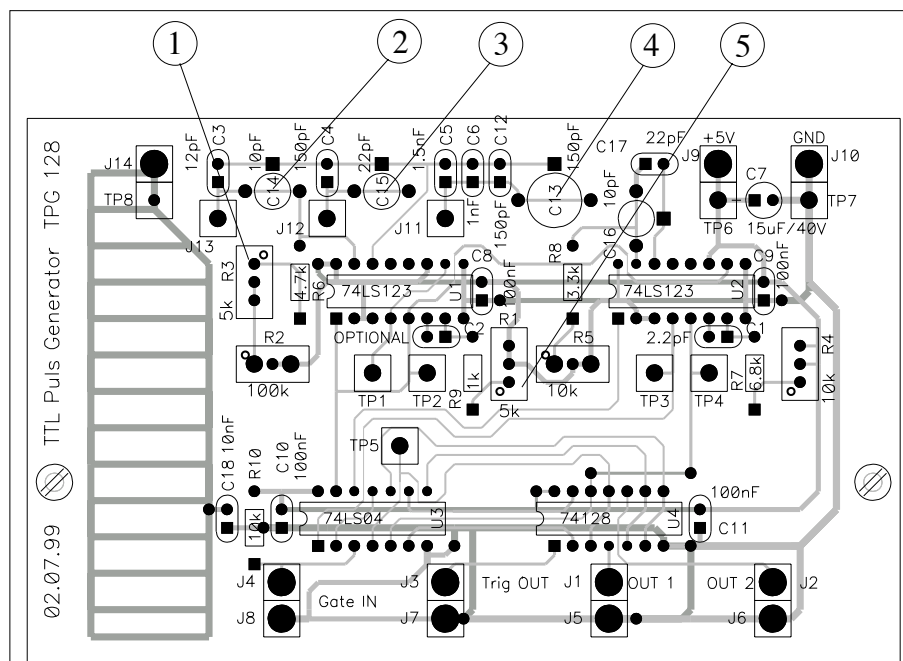


Figure 7.17.: TPG main board (view II).

clearpage

[12] Connect oscilloscope to the **Output** connector. Load with a  $50\Omega$  . Choose a repetition period of about  $5\ \mu\text{s}$ .

[13] Turn the boxduration adjustment knob to its last position. Adjust the **Max duration** capacitor (2) so it has an output pulse of  $200\ \text{ns} \pm 5\ \text{ns}$ .

[14] Turn the boxduration adjustment knob to its first position. Adjust the pot **Out Ons adj** (1) so that the output pulse is  $0\ \text{ns}$ . The pulse is  $0\ \text{ns}$  long when its shape is triangular with an amplitude of  $1,1\ \text{V}$  (half of the maximum value).

[15] Repeat steps [13] and [14] until the values are OK.

[16] Make sure that the boxGate in settig is in external mode. A signal is present on the **Output** connector if the input **Gate in** open (high TTL level) = **gate** open; no signal is measured on the **Output** output connector indicates a short circuit on on input **Gate in** (low TTL level) = **gate** closed.

[17] Check that the  $+12\ \text{V}$  is present on the Lemo 00 connector ( $+12\ \text{V}$  on the centre connector).

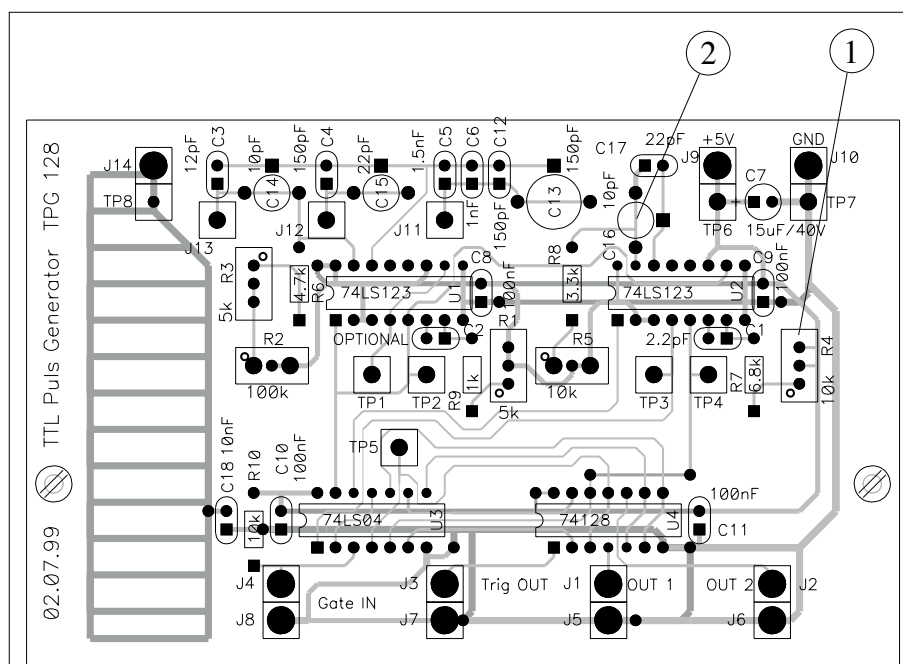


Figure 7.18.: TPG main board

# A. QCL theory and application notes

## A.1. QCL wavelength range

Unlike standard bipolar semiconductor lasers (e.g.  $1.55\mu\text{m}$  telecom devices), for which the emission wavelength is closely related to the band gap energy, the QCL transition consists in the transition of an electron inside sub-bands, from one upper quantum well level to a lower quantum well level.

A series of potential wells and barriers for the electrons are built by using two different semiconductor materials (InGaAs and AlInAs). These wells and barriers are so thin that the electrons are allowed only a discrete set of energy levels, similar to the orbitals of an atom. The positions of the allowed energy levels are determined by the thicknesses of the wells and barrier. This makes it possible to define a wide range of laser transitions by using only one material system (InGaAs/AlInAs grown on InP). This range is limited by the intrinsic absorption of the material and the potential difference between the wells and barriers.

All QCLs are created using the same materials, but with layers of specific thicknesses and compositions to obtain a given emission wavelength. The wavelength is determined by the geometry of the semiconductor layers that make up the laser crystal.

## A.2. QCL electrical response

The QCL can be modeled with a combination of one resistor and two capacitors. R1 increases from a higher resistance at low biases to 1-4 Ohms at the operating point. The resistance at low bias varies from 10-20  $\Omega$  to 10<sup>2</sup> k $\Omega$  for 10  $\mu\text{m}$  and 4  $\mu\text{m}$  wavelength QCLs respectively. C1 is a 100 pF capacitor (essentially bias independent) between the cathode and the anode comes from the bonding pads. C2 depends on the laser mounting; typically, C1 < 100 pF in the LLH.

As an example, the values given below apply for a 10  $\mu\text{m}$  laser wavelength. *Note:* Voltage and resistor values may vary according to the type of laser.

R1 : ..... 10 to 20  $\Omega$  when a voltage of less than 4 to 6 Volts is applied

R1 : ..... 1 to 4  $\Omega$  up to 10 - 12 Volts

R1 : ..... 10 to 20  $\Omega$  over 12 Volts, after which the laser no longer operates

C1 : ..... 100pF, capacitor between the anode and the cathode

C2 : ..... <100pF, depending on your mounting of the laser

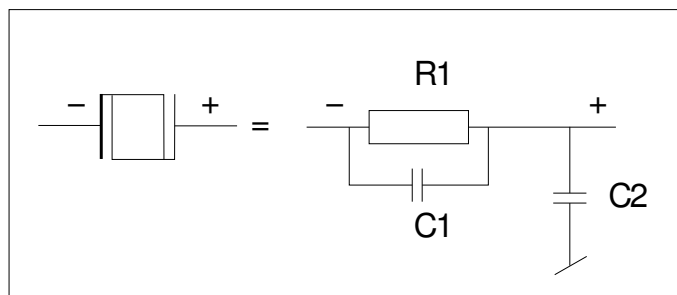


Figure A.1.: Electrical model for QCL.

## B. Operations for advanced users

In this section, tips for advanced users are provided for specific application. It is not recommended to perform these procedures under normal operation conditions.

**IMPORTANT:**

The operation instructions contained in this section must be performed by expert users only, as permanent damage to the laser may occur if not manipulated correctly.

### B.1. Direct QCL voltage

These connections give direct access to the voltage of the laser.

**IMPORTANT:**

Direct voltage measurement of the QCL must be performed by experts only and agreed upon with ALPES LASERS.

The "L" connection connects the AC coupled to the cathode of the laser through a divider by ten. The end of cable must be  $50\Omega$  terminated for accurate measurement. The "B" is connected the same to the anode of the laser (Base Receptacle).

By using the math trace of an oscilloscope showing the "L" channel minus the "B", one can get the voltage on the laser. This measurement is more accurate than the information obtained from the LDD.

*Note:* the cables are not included in the Starter Kit but can be supplied by ALPES LASERS.

## B.2. Soldering wire bonds from laser chip to submount

**IMPORTANT:**  
Soldering bonds to the carrier is a delicate operation. Contact  
ALPES LASERS before attempting this operation.

As the QCL chip itself is soldered and the contact pads on the ceramics are made out of gold, it is not possible to use a normal Lead-Tin solder. The temperature is too high, therefore the solder will destroy the gold contacts by forming an alloy. ALPES LASERS recommends the use of pure Indium for soldering, in the form of paste of microscopic beads in flux.

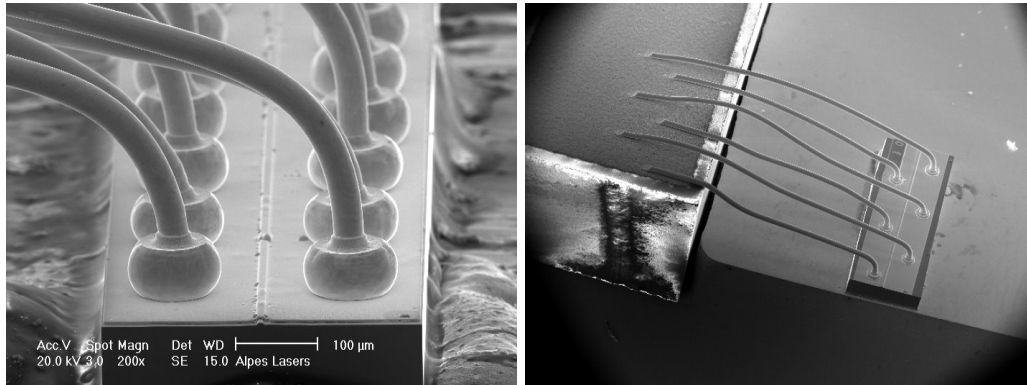


Figure B.1.: Laser chip wire bonds.

It very important to never touch any part of the laser chip itself (especially not the facets) nor the bonds. This may result in fatal damage to the QCL. Solder with a very fine tip soldering iron at about 170°C and only at the corner of the contact pad. This is furthest from the bonds and the chip. Use only very thin and flexible wires.



## B.3. Bias-T circuit for pulsed lasers

Since the tuning of a QC laser is done by changing the temperature of the active zone, the DC bias current can be used to control the emission wavelength of the laser via its heating effect. The bias-T allows electrically controlled rapid scanning wavelength-emission.

### B.3.1. Principle

Since the tuning of a QC laser is done by changing the temperature of the active zone, a DC bias current can be used to control the emission wavelength of the laser via its heating effect. Tuning can also be achieved by changing the temperature of the whole laser, at a much slower speed, because of the high thermal capacity of the laser submount and base. A bias-T circuit allows for a quick scan of the emission wavelength because the laser emission response is much faster and the active zone is the only heated zone.

The DC current is drawn from the external power supply and applied to the laser in addition to the pulsed current. It is recommended to apply currents of up to 0.1kHz, but several customers have used the bias-T at frequencies of up to several kHz.

### Laser lifetime

Heating of the active zone will increase thermal stress of the laser, therefore the expected lifetime will decrease more rapidly compared to increasing the temperature of the laser submount and base. If operation at a fixed wavelength is needed, this should be adjusted with the overall temperature control.

### B.3.2. Connection

The bias-T circuit can be integrated in the TPG. The circuit included in the LDD pulser unit is controlled by the twisted black and yellow wires of the control cable with the CPL cable.

### B.3.3. Procedure

- Since the input stage of the bias-T is a bipolar transistor, applied voltage must be higher than about 0.6V to start bias current. The input stage has a voltage limit of 2.6V. The laser itself may be destroyed at lower bias-T control voltage; therefore the maximum rating has to be agreed with Alpes Lasers SA.
- the laser should be operated initially at lowest possible temperature Since a bias-T only allows to heat the laser. The emission wavelength can only be increased (or emission wavenumber decreased) and output power will decrease

with increased bias current due to the additional heat. This reduces the number of lasers available for reaching a given emission wavelength.



**CAUTION:**

Applying a high bias current may destroy the laser due to thermal roll-over. Bias-T setup must be performed by instructed personnel and approved by ALPES LASERS.

- The optical output power must be monitored when setting up the bias-T to make sure the thermal roll-over is not reached. Temporary increase of the pulse current must always result in increased optical power output. Otherwise the DC bias current is already too high.
- As a rule of thumb, the overall dissipated power (sum of DC bias current dissipation and pulse current dissipation) must never be higher than the average dissipated power given by the highest current / voltage / temperature combination specified in the datasheet.
- The average dissipated power for a given pulse current  $I$ , pulse voltage  $U$ , and duty cycle  $d$  is given by  $d \times I \times U$ , whereas the dissipated power due to a bias current  $IB$  is given by  $IB \times U$ . ( $U$  is the voltage on the laser, but it is safe for this calculation of bias current dissipation to use the voltage on the LDD pulser input.)

### B.3.4. Gas concentration measurement

The goal of this procedure is to calibrate and optimize the laser spectrum as a function of temperature and current. A spectral scan of the laser is generated over a wavelength region defined by the scan rate of the laser versus current (cm<sup>-1</sup>/A, a basic property of the laser). A 60 mA range might be equivalent to 1.2 cm<sup>-1</sup> of wavelength variance in the laser. The ALPES LASERS datasheets provide a few discrete settings that were measured with a different equipment that can be used as starting points. The curves obtained with the following procedure are to be used to acquire the real gas data.

#### Prerequisites

- Using short pulses and "bias-T" to scan wavelengths
- User has appropriate short pulse generation electronics, cooler control/drive electronics, gas cell(s) and photodetector
- User has and understands ALPES LASERS datasheets for the device to be used

## Procedure

1. set the temperature to 15°C so that any moisture inside the package does not condense on the laser chip
2. Use current settings as indicated in the ALPES LASERS datasheet
3. start the laser: the powermeter (if installed) should indicate some power dissipation
4. set the temperature to allow the highest frequency (shortest wavelength) of interest to be emitted
5. Reset the current to settings appropriate for that temperature and wavelength. Then reduce it a little bit further - but not below threshold (so you still see energy on the detector)
6. put a gas cell between laser and detector and verify that you can still see the laser energy on the detector; take note of the amplitude of the detector signal.
7. Turn on the bias T current to a low value (typically 0.001A) and record the detector signal
8. repeat at 0.001A increments of bias-T current recording values for each increment until 0.060 A is reached (or some other value that has been discussed/agreed with ALPES LASERS). If the temperature and pulse current starting points were right, the line of interest should be visible in the data when plotted. If not, perform the same procedure with new temperature and pulse current settings.
9. Continue to optimize the temperature and drive parameters
  - a) Adjust the pulse length (lower and higher) and repeat the scan; thus learn about the effect of these parameters on power and laser linewidth
  - b) If possible, repeat the measurement with a gas cell with the target gas at low pressure (1 Torr). This will narrow the line greatly and allow to consider the apparent spectral resolution of the laser itself under the drive conditions and to learn whether the driver has any ringing or double pulsing (which will make the line width seem higher).

## B.4. CW modulation

To operate a laser in CW mode, an AC signal is added to the DC current. It is recommended to modulate the external power supply directly, within the parameter range specified in the ALPES LASERS datasheet. If this is not possible, an additional modulated source must be used, like a waveform (ramp) generator for example.

### Interface circuit

To reduce cross-talk with other system components and to improve mechanical stability, this interface circuit should be installed into a small metal box with only the connectors accessible. Do so as shown in figure B.2.

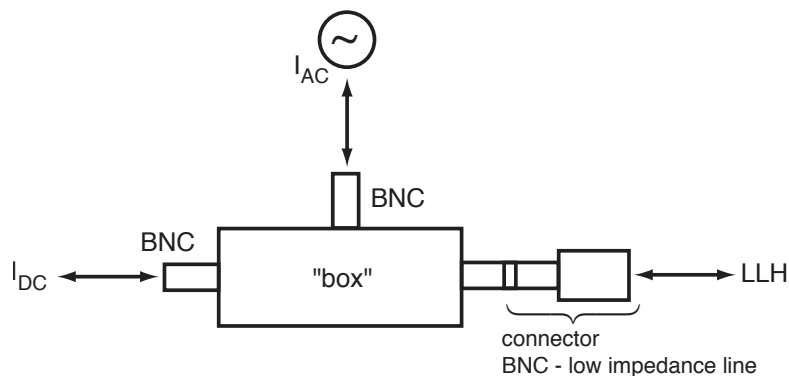


Figure B.2.: Interface circuit for CW laser modulation.

Connectors for the LLH with a BNC plug are available for CW laser operation, ALPES LASERS provides the CIL cable pinout, the adaptor must be made by the user. It is center positive, shield negative, and can directly be connected to a stabilized DC supply. Make sure the polarity is correct and limits as specified in the datasheet are set.

### B.4.1. External power supply protection

To prevent the current modulating and going back to the external power supply, an RLC circuit needs to be added (see figure B.3). The values of  $R_{AC}$ ,  $L$ ,  $C$  depend on the modulation frequency, the AC source and (to some extent) on the QCL.

#### Rule of thumb for L

As the impedance  $X_L = 2\pi fL$  of the inductivity should be much higher than the dynamic resistance  $X_Q$  of the laser to block the AC component from the DC supply, applying  $X_L > 100X_Q$  leads to roughly  $L > 16X_Q/f$ .

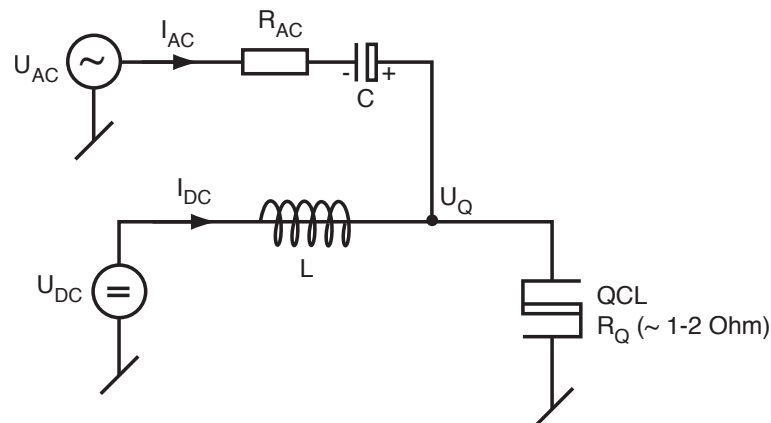


Figure B.3.: RLC circuit for external power supply protection.

In general,  $X_Q$  is of the order of 1..2  $\Omega$ . For a modulation frequency of 10kHz,  $L$  should therefore be of the order of 3mH or larger.

#### rules of thumb for R and C

To prevent the AC source from dominating or reverse biasing the current through the QCL,  $U_{AC} < U_Q$  must always be given (in absolute values). Furthermore, as the AC voltage source together with  $R_{AC}$ ,  $C$  is forming a current source, to prevent variations of QCL dynamic resistance  $X_Q$  to influence the AC current,  $R_{AC} + X_C \gg X_Q$  must be guaranteed. As the generator for  $U_{AC}$  will have an impedance  $Z_{AC}$ , impedance matching demands for  $R_{AC} + X_C + X_Q = Z_{AC}$ . Putting these constraints together leads to  $I_{AC} < U_Q/Z_{AC}$ .

For the capacitor  $C$  to let pass the AC current,  $2\pi R_{AC}C > 1/f$  must be true, and with  $X_C = R_{AC}/100$  or smaller to make sure that the impedance of the AC current source does not vary too much with frequency, it follows that roughly  $C > 8/Z_{AC}/f$ .

For a 50  $\Omega$  generator at 10kHz,  $C$  should therefore be of the order of 16uF or larger.

Please keep in mind that such high capacity components may have a remarkably high inductivity, so it may be useful to put a second capacitor of small value (some nF, Tantalum or similar non-polarized type) in parallel to the one calculated before.

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## C. Cryogenic operation of QCLs

Alpes Lasers can deliver lasers with cooling solutions that can reach cryogenic temperatures.

### C.1. LN2 Dewar

**The LN2 Dewar** is a modified Kadel dewar that serves as housing for a QCL. As it lacks a temperature control, it is typically used for lasers which do not tune appreciably with temperature, such as THz lasers or other Fabry-Perot lasers.



Figure C.1.: A LN2 dewar. The light output is seen on the left, the LBI connector on the right.

The LN2 Dewar is only available with the laser pre-assembled and no user servicing is available. The laser is installed on a cold finger in an empty enclosure.

The laser output is through a transparent window which can be of ZnSe or TPX depending on the wavelength. The light is uncollimated.

The laser is connected to a series of pins which is identical to the pins found on a LLH (see §3.3.1).

### **C.1.1. Usage**

To cool down the dewar, simply fill it with liquid nitrogen from its top. A filled dewar should last for up to 6 hours when not in use, and typically 3-4 hours when in use (the actual cold time will depend highly on the energy dissipation of the laser).

Connect the pulser or CW driver to the pins as if it was a LLH housing.

### **C.1.2. Maintenance**

The laser sits in a vacuum. Over the course of normal operation the housing is air-tight. In case of a leak, the dewar can be sent back to Alpes Lasers to be re-sealed.

## **C.2. Others**

Two other cryostats are offered by Alpes Lasers; a LN2/liquid helium cryostat and a Stirling cooler. The manuals for these devices is not yet available.