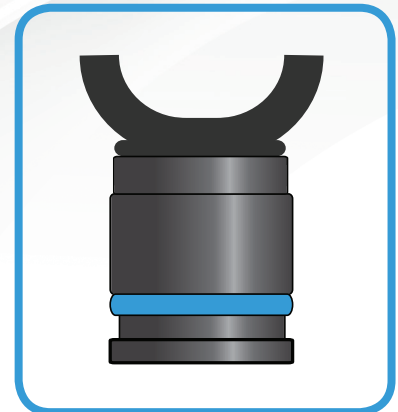


The Optomask is a relay device that allows for flexible and precise aperture control in order to take advantage of faster acquisition rates when using sub-arrays on EMCCD cameras. As the name says, the OptoMask optically masks the area of the sensor outside of the defined sub-array ROI (Region of Interest). Please don't hesitate to contact us if you require further assistance.

Support Jack Assembly

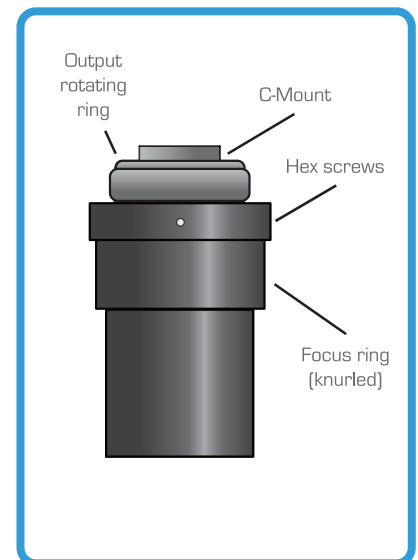
The OptoMask is supplied with a support jack to carry the weight of the unit and to ensure that it sits in the same plane as the microscope or other optical system. The base height can be adjusted and locked in position with the blue locking collar. The jack should be placed as close as possible to the camera to provide maximum support.



Focusing and alignment

In order to achieve optimal optical masking, the blades of the OptoMask should be in sharp focus on the acquired images and operate parallel to the camera sensor limits. The OptoMask is factory calibrated and tested, but a user adjustable fine focus is provided to allow for any variability in sensor Z position between cameras. The following procedure should be followed for final optimisation:

- 1) Insert the OptoMask in the emission light path, power up the camera and launch your software to display full sensor live images.
- 2) Untighten the Hex grub screws on both the output rotating ring and the focus ring.
- 3) Using the aperture control / adjustment blades, reduce the size of the aperture so that it is clearly visible within the camera image and orientate the camera so that the operation of the aperture blades runs parallel to the edges of the image - you can now lock off the Hex screws on the output rotating ring.
- 4) Adjusting the knurled focus ring, make sure that the edges of the aperture are as sharp as possible.
- 5) Verify that the system is now infinity corrected by bringing a high contrast object on the microscope stage into focus at the same point as the aperture - both should be in sharp focus on the image relayed to the camera - you can now lock off the Hex screws on the focus ring.



X - Y Lens Adjustment

[6] Now confirm that the camera sensor is perfectly centred in the frame of the OptoMask. This can be observed either by setting the aperture blades to be slightly smaller than the entire camera sensor (Fig A) or, ideally, by using a centered rectangular ROI in the software (Fig B). The mask aperture blades should be set so as to give a frame of even thickness on all four sides. If there is any offset then this can be removed using the X-Y lens adjustment screws.

[7] Finally the mask size should be set ready for experiments. To avoid light leakage to masked pixels then the frame should be set so that it is just visible on all four sides. If using the full sensor then it is acceptable to increase this size slightly so as to be marginally bigger than the active area, but we would not recommend that the blades simply be opened fully due to the risk of scattered photons reaching the sensor.

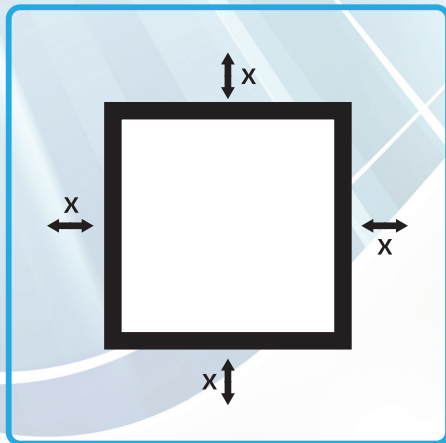


Fig A

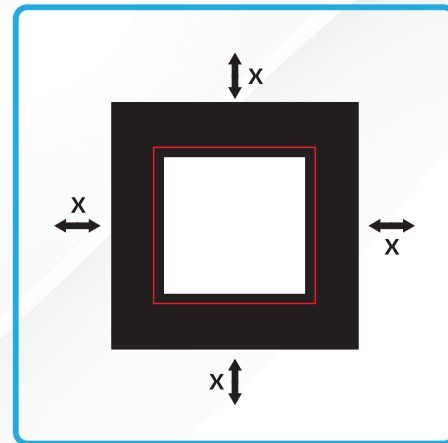
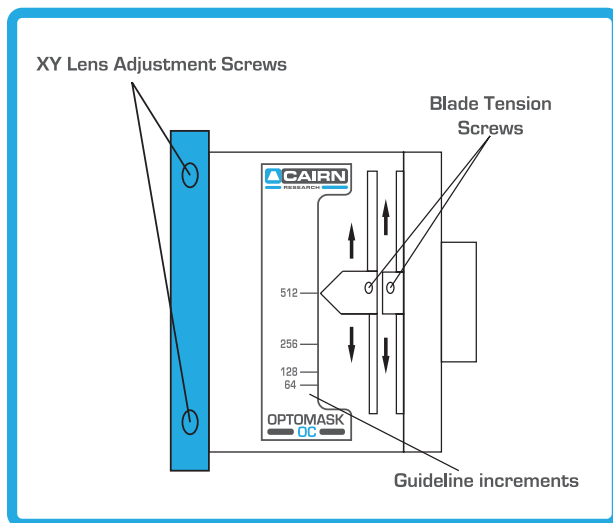


Fig B



If friction is lost on Aperture blades then gently tighten blade tension screws.

Operating the OptoMask

After completing the steps described above, your OptoMask will now be focused and aligned, so changing between different sub-array sizes and full sensor apertures can be done by operating the aperture control only.

Software integration / configuration

Please refer to your software and camera's manuals to configure image acquisition using sub-arrays.