
SQM-LU OPERATOR'S MANUAL



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Contents

1	Introduction	7
1.1	QuickStart	7
1.1.1	Other software	7
1.1.2	FITS integration	7
2	Measurements	8
2.1	Getting accurate readings	9
2.1.1	Seeing conditions	9
2.1.2	Light pollution	9
2.1.3	Other luminance scales	10
3	Theory of operation	12
3.1	Light measurement	12
3.2	Communication to the PC	12
4	Specifications	13
5	Hardware connections	14
6	Software development	15
6.1	Writing your own software interface	15
6.2	Pascal	16
7	Unihedron Device Manager	17
7.1	Getting UDM	17
7.2	Installation	17
7.2.1	System requirements	17
7.2.2	Windows	17
7.2.3	Mac	17
7.2.4	Linux	17
7.3	Operation	18
7.3.1	Start up	18
7.3.2	Main screen	18
7.3.3	Main menu	19
7.3.4	File menu	19
7.4	Information tab	25
7.5	Log Continuous	25
7.6	Calibration tab	27
7.7	Report Interval tab	28
7.8	Firmware tab	29
7.9	Configuration tab	30
7.10	Simulation Tab	31
8	Commands and responses	32

8.1	Commands	32
8.2	Response details	33
8.2.1	Reading request	33
8.2.2	Unaveraged reading request	33
8.2.3	Unit information	34
8.3	Calibration commands	35
8.3.1	Calibration information request	35
8.3.2	Light calibration command	35
8.3.3	Dark calibration command	36
8.3.4	Disarm calibration command	36
8.3.5	Manually set light calibration offset	37
8.3.6	Manually set light calibration temperature	37
8.3.7	Manually set dark calibration time period	37
8.3.8	Manually set dark calibration temperature	38
8.4	Setting Interval reporting parameters	39
8.4.1	Interval reporting period setting	39
8.4.2	Threshold setting for interval reporting	39
8.4.3	Interval setting response	40
8.5	Simulation commands	41
9	Installation	43
9.1	Electrical connection	43
9.2	Mechanical installation	43
9.2.1	Cover selection	43
9.2.2	Cover calibration	43
9.2.3	Cover maintenance	44
10	Default settings	45
11	Firmware upgrade	46
11.1	Details	46
12	Calibration	47
12.1	Recalibration	47
12.2	Light calibration	47
12.3	Dark calibration	47
12.4	Confirmation	47
13	Troubleshooting	48
14	Glossary	52

List of Figures

2.1	Mpsas interpretive scale	8
2.2	Mpsas vs NELM	11
4.1	Front of unit	13
4.2	Back of unit	13

5.1	Wired connection	14
7.1	Splash screen	18
7.2	File menu	19
7.3	File Open dialog	20
7.4	View menu	20
7.5	View : Log	21
7.6	View:Directories	21
7.7	Data logging header	22
7.8	Set Location dialog	23
7.9	Help menu	23
7.10	Help : About	24
7.11	Found device (single)	24
7.12	Found device (multiple)	24
7.13	USB connection details	25
7.14	Ethernet connection details	25
7.15	Information tab	25
7.16	Log Continuously screen	26
7.17	Log Continuously Trigger tab	26
7.18	Log Continuously Annotation tab	27
7.19	Calibration tab (initial)	27
7.20	Calibration tab (populated)	28
7.21	Report interval tab	29
7.22	Firmware tab	29
7.23	Firmware selection	30
7.24	Configuration tab	30
7.25	Light calibration confirmation	31
7.26	Dark calibration confirmation	31
7.27	Simulation tab	31
9.1	Housing	43
9.2	Example cover calibration	44

List of Tables

2.1	Apparent Magnitudes of Known Celestial Objects adapted from [2]	8
8.1	Summary of standard commands	32
8.2	Reading request response	33
8.3	Unaveraged reading request response	33
8.4	Unit information request response	34
8.5	Calibration information request response	35
8.6	Light calibration response	35
8.7	Dark calibration response	36
8.8	Disarm calibration response	36
8.9	Response for manual setting of light calibration offset	37
8.10	Response for manually setting of light calibration temperature	37
8.11	Response of manually setting dark calibration time period	38

8.12 Response for manually setting of dark calibration temperature	38
8.13 Interval report	39
8.14 Response of viewing or setting interval reporting parameters	40
8.15 Response of request for internal simulation values	41
8.16 Request simulation (S....x)	41
8.17 Response of setting simulation values (S...x)	41
13.1 Reading seem too bright	48
13.2 Driver not found	48
13.3 USB device not found, or more than one device on the same COM port	48
13.4 Recording stops	48
13.5 Meter cannot be found by PC	49
13.6 Meter cannot be found by Windows operating system	49
13.7 Cannot get a reading	50
14.1 Glossary of terms	52

List of Equations

2.1 MPSAS to cd/m^2	10
2.2 NELM to MPSAS	11
2.3 MPSAS to NELM	11

1 Introduction

Thank you for purchasing the SQM-LU. You will soon be on your way to collecting scientific data.

The SQM series of products have been used in the following applications:

- Quantitatively comparing the sky brightness at different astronomical observing sites.
- Documenting the evolution of light pollution.
- Setting planetarium dome illumination to mimic the skies that people are likely to experience elsewhere in the city.
- Monitoring sky brightness through the night, night-to-night, and year-to-year for astronomical observation records.
- Determining which nights show the greatest promise for finding the 'faintest fuzzies'.
- Calibrating the effect of sky brightness on qualitative measures such as the Bortle Scale or NELM.
- Investigating how sky brightness correlates with the solar cycle and month-to-month sunspot activity.
- Helping to provide local ground truth for future sky brightness prediction with the Clear Sky Clock.
- Helping CCD users make a correlation between the SQM reading and when the background reaches some ADC level.
- Assisting Sea Turtle researchers in studying the amounts of light in areas where turtle hatchlings are affected by artificial lights.
- Researching bird-song synchronization with dawn.
- Researching twilight brightness changes with the addition of external Neutral Density filters. Unihedron offers adapters to attach such filters onto the meter.

1.1 QuickStart

1. Connect the SQM-LU meter to the computer with the supplied USB cable. Wait for any device drivers to automatically load (if required). You may have to visit www.FTDIchip.com to get the latest VCP drivers if they do not get installed automatically.
2. Ensure that your computer date and time is up-to-date.
3. Launch UDM (Unihedron Device Manager software supplied on the CD).
4. Click the "Find" button to find attached SQM devices, then click on the SQM-LU that you connected.
5. Click on "Reading" to get a reading from the SQM-LU.

1.1.1 Other software

If you are using Windows, you may want to use Knightware SQM-Reader from www.knightware.biz/sqm.

Also, if you are using Windows, Linux, or Mac, you can use the Perl scripts supplied on the CD for various functions.

1.1.2 FITS integration

Some programs (listed below) gather information from the Unihedron Sky Quality meter products and insert that data into the Flexible Image Transport System (FITS) header.

- [MaxPilote](#) (Freeware) incorporates SQM readings from an SQM-LE/SQM-LU into the FITS header while at the same time provide constant readings in a live and updated Data Window.
- [CCDAutoPilot](#)
- [FITS4Win2](#) uses the MPSAS keyword for sorting and filtering image files.

2 Measurements

The SQM-LU provides readings in Magnitudes per square arcsecond, abbreviated as: mpsas, and written mathematically as $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$.

Mpsas is a logarithmic measurement which means that large changes in sky brightness correspond to relatively small numerical changes. A difference of 5 magnitudes is a factor of 100 times the intensity. Therefore a sky brightness $5.0 \frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$ darker corresponds to a reduction in photon arrival rate of a factor of 100.

The following schematic gives a rough idea of how to interpret the readings of the SQM:

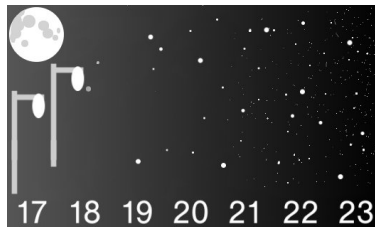


Figure 2.1: Mpsas interpretive scale

Magnitudes are an astronomical unit of measure for object brightness. Brighter objects have a lower magnitude and darker objects have a higher magnitude value. For example; a star that is 6th magnitude is brighter than a star that is 11th magnitude.

The star Vega is used as the reference point of ≈ 0 magnitude. Table 2.1 shows the apparent magnitude of some common known celestial objects.

Table 2.1: Apparent Magnitudes of Known Celestial Objects adapted from [2]

App. Mag.	Celestial Object
-26.73	Sun
-12.6	full Moon
-4.7	Maximum brightness of Venus
+0.03	Vega, the original zero point
+6	Faintest stars observable with naked eye
+27	Faintest objects observable in visible light with 8m ground-based telescopes
+30	Faintest objects observable in visible light with Hubble Space Telescope

Arcsecond is the definition of an arc being divided up into seconds.

- There are 360 degrees in a circle.
- There are 60 arcminutes in a degree, and 21600 arcminutes in a circle.

- There are 60 arcseconds in an arcminute, and 1296000 arcseconds in a circle.

Square arcsecond (arcsec^2) is the area covered by a square measuring $1\text{arcsec} \times 1\text{arcsec}$.

Magnitude per square arcsecond is the definition of brightness in magnitudes spread out over one square arcsecond of the sky. For example; if the SQM provides a reading of 20.00 mpsas, that would be like saying that a light of a 20th magnitude star brightness was spread over one square arcsecond of the sky.

The "magnitudes per square arcsecond" numbers are commonly used in astronomy to measure sky brightness. More details can be found at www.stjarnhimlen.se/comp/radfaq.html

Each magnitude lower (numerically) means just over 2.5 times as much more light is coming from a given patch of sky. A change of 5 mags/sq arcsec means the sky is 100x brighter.

Also, a reading of greater than 22.0 is unlikely to be recorded and the darkest we've personally experienced with the SQM is 21.80.

2.1 Getting accurate readings

Various factors will cause the night sky brightness to fluctuate. Taking more readings will be useful in ruling out spurious events. The SQM gathers light for at least a one second period, and the brightness report is based on the light that was accumulated during that time.

At the darkest sites, natural variations in conditions such as airglow and the brightness of the zodiacal light are limiting factors.

Prevent artificially high (dark) readings by ensuring that there is nothing blocking the view of the sensor. Avoid taking readings near trees or buildings that may block the sensor.

Prevent artificially low (bright) readings by ensuring that there are no lighted objects (street lamps, the moon, etc.) that shine into the sensor at any angle.

2.1.1 Seeing conditions

The apparent blurring/transparency and twinkling (scintillation) of stars is due to wind in the upper atmosphere that causes water molecules to distort the light from space.

Stars are too small in comparison to the entire SQM field of view, so scintillation is not expected to alter the SQM reading significantly.

2.1.2 Light pollution

Undesirable artificial light that reaches you is considered to be light pollution. Much of this light comes from outdoor illumination of parking lots, street lamps, office buildings, advertising signs, etc..

Other causes of extra light in the night sky are listed below:

Aurora

Charged particles emitted from the Sun are directed to the poles of the earth by the Earth's magnetic field. These particles collide with atoms in the atmosphere and cause light to be emitted. Aiming the meter at the polar regions during Aurora Borealis (in the North) or Aurora Australis (in the South) will reduce the reading (lighter). Aiming the meter towards the equator will increase the reading (darker) under these conditions.

Airglow

Airglow is light produced by various phenomenon in the atmosphere which prevent the sky from being totally dark. Effects of the magnetic poles of the Earth may cause airglow to be brighter near the poles.

The Milky Way

The northern view of the Milky Way contributes about 0.10 mpsas under 21.5 mpsas (moonless) skies.

The southern view of the Milky Way might be as big an effect as 0.30 mpsas where it goes near-overhead.

For more information, see Surface Photometries of the Milky Way (Schlosser+ 1997)

vizier.u-strasbg.fr/ftp/cats/VII/199/ReadMe

Moisture

Clouds, fog, and mist will reflect artificial light back down to the Earth causing a brighter (lower) reading. If there is no artificial light, then clouds may prevent starlight from coming to you and the reading will be darker (higher). This extra-dark situation can occur in very isolated areas like mountain tops, the ocean, or the desert. You will have to be aware of this special situation when analyzing readings.

Volcanic eruptions

Dust released into the atmosphere by volcanoes can reflect light from the surface of the earth back down. In a dark location this dust will prevent the light from stars and Milky Way and produce a darker (higher) reading.

Zodiacal light

The sunlight reflected off dust particles in the ecliptic plane of our solar system is called zodiacal light.

The amount of light will be different depending on whether the meter is pointed to the poles or plane of the solar system. It is likely to have less than 2% effect. The primary reason for this small effect is that the brightest and widest part of the zodiacal light is nearest the horizon where the SQM has almost no sensitivity (due to it being a primarily zenith-looking device). The portions at higher altitude are the narrowest and faintest and they would barely creep into the sensitivity cone of the SQM.

2.1.3 Other luminance scales

Candela per square meter (cd/m^2) is commonly used by lighting engineers.

To convert the SQM mpsas reading to cd/m^2 , use Equation (2.1):

$$[\text{cd}/\text{m}^2] = 10.8 \times 10^4 \times 10^{(-0.4 \times [\text{mag}/\text{arcsec}^2])} \quad (2.1)$$

Naked eye limiting magnitude (NELM)

Quite often astronomers will refer to a sky by the darkest star they can see, for example a “6th magnitude sky”, in that case you can see 6th magnitude stars and nothing dimmer like 7th magnitude stars. The term “6th magnitude skies” is very subjective to a persons ability to see in the night, for example an older person might say “5th magnitude skies” but a young child with better night vision might say “7th magnitude skies”.

Nobody has performed the task of defining a relationship between the two methods of sky brightness (x magnitude skies and magnitudes per square arcsecond) -- probably because one is subjective and the other is objective and a wide variety of people would have to be polled.

An approximation exists for the conversion between NELM and MPSAS. You can use an NELM converter[5] created by SQM user K. Fisher to do that conversion, or the chart shown in Figure 2.2 and Equations (2.2) and (2.3).

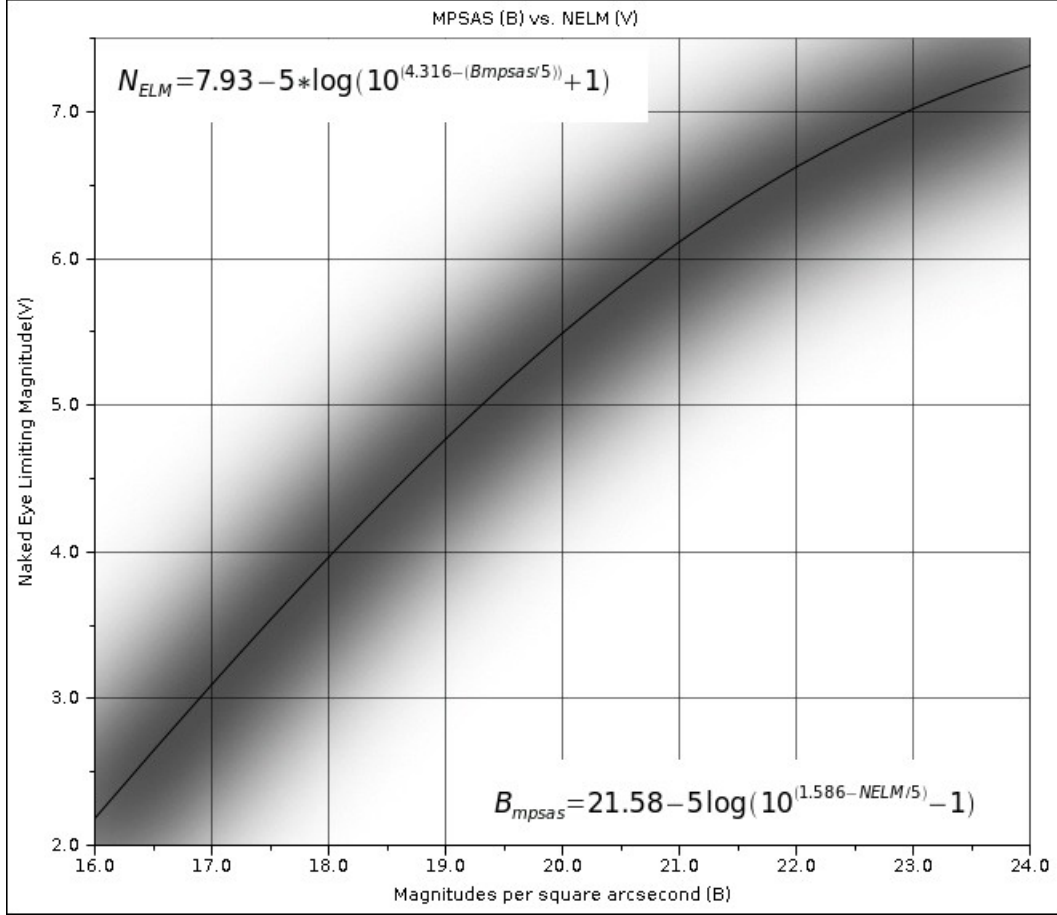


Figure 2.2: Mpsas vs NELM

Convert NELM (V mags) to MPSAS (B) sky brightness [3]

$$B_{mpsas} = 21.58 - 5 \times \log(10^{(1.586 - NELM/5)} - 1) \quad (2.2)$$

Convert MPSAS (B) sky brightness to NELM (V mags) [4]

$$NELM = 7.93 - 5 \times \log(10^{(4.316 - (B_{mpsas}/5))} + 1) \quad (2.3)$$

NSU

A newly proposed term to define “Natural Sky Units”:

In “natural sky units” (radiance relative to an assumed natural radiance of 21.6 magSQM/arcsec², see methods), the range was 0.22 - 2200 NSU. Before the introduction of anthropogenic light, the radiance of a patch of sky near zenith on moon-free nights is likely to have been nearly always within the range 21 (galactic center near zenith) to 24 mag/arcsec² (very thick clouds), or 0.1 - 1.7 NSU.[1]

3 Theory of operation

3.1 Light measurement

The SQM-LU measures the darkness of the night sky to provide readings of magnitudes per square arc second through a USB connection, and is capable of internally recording readings.

A light sensor (TSL237) provides the micro-controller with a light level, and readings from the temperature sensor are used to compensate the light sensor readings through the range of operating temperatures.

3.2 Communication to the PC

Commands sent from a PC through the USB cable to the USB interface are relayed to the micro-controller.

The micro-controller responds to commands by sending data strings to the USB interface which are then relayed to the PC.

Readings are gathered asynchronously by the micro-controller. Requests from the PC are buffered and dealt with as time permits.

4 Specifications

USB connection	USB B connector. 5m USB A to USB B cable supplied. USB FTDI VCP driver, serial port emulator at 115200baud.
Physical Size	5.5" x 2.6" x 1.1"
Meter precision	Each SQM-LU is factory-calibrated. The absolute precision of each meter is believed to be $\pm 10\%$ (± 0.10 mag/arcsec ²). The difference in zero-point between each calibrated meter is typically $\pm 10\%$ (± 0.10 mag/arcsec ²)
Power requirement	18mA (from the 5V USB connection).
Operating temperature range	-40°C to 85°C
Temperature Accuracy	$\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ maximum at 25°C
Temperature update rate	4.3 seconds, 256 samples taken at 60Hz then averaged.



Figure 4.1: Front of unit



Figure 4.2: Back of unit

5 Hardware connections

The SQM-LU requires one connection to a USB hub or a PC for configuring the device and recovering the readings as shown in Figure 5.1.

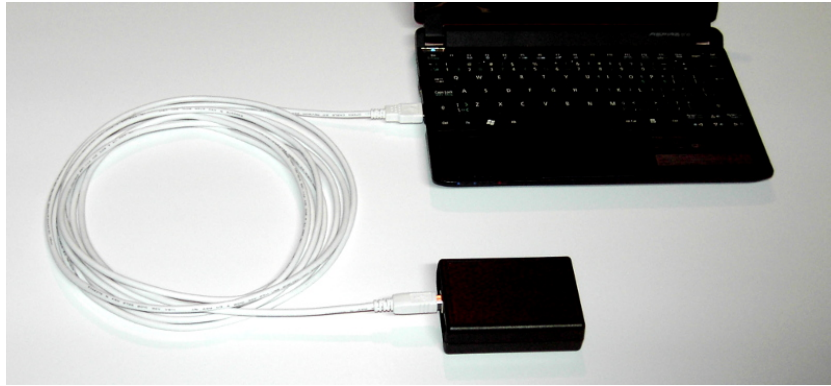


Figure 5.1: Wired connection

The maximum length cable per the USB specification is 15ft (3m). USB extenders exist on the market, some work up to 198ft (60m).

6 Software development

The SQM-LU uses the FTDI FT232R chip to communicate as a standard serial port device using the FTDI software drivers which are available for all major operating system platforms. Drivers are available from www.ftdichip.com.

Once the driver is installed, commands can be sent to the SQM-LU using a serial terminal emulator to the serial communications port that the device routes to.

When connecting the SQM-LU to a PC where the FTDI device driver is loaded, the serial port label will be determined at connection time.

Each SQM-LU has a unique serial number usually with a prefix of "FT.....". This serial number can be used to identify the exact SQM-LU device from other USB devices.

6.1 Writing your own software interface

All of the commands and responses of the SQM-LU are documented in Section 8.

To communicate with the SQM-LU, the following general steps are required:

1. A serial connection must be made to the serial port assigned to the SQM-LU.
2. Data commands are sent to the SQM-LU, and it responds with a string of characters.
3. Close the serial port so that other programs can access the SQM-LU. Note: Only one connection can be made to the SQM-LU at a time. Therefore leaving a connection open constantly prevents other connections from being made.

Various examples of reading from the SQM devices are supplied on the CD and available at the Unihedron website. Below is an example using Perl to read the SQM USB device:

Listing 6.1: Read SQM-LU using Perl

```
#!/usr/bin/perl

#Filename: read-sqmlu.pl
#Description: Utility to read Unihedron Sky Quality Meter-LU (USB model)

# Define the required module
use Device::SerialPort;

# Open and configure serial port
$port= Device::SerialPort->new("/dev/ttyUSB2");
$port->user_msg(ON);
$port->baudrate(115200);
$port->parity("none");
$port->stopbits(1);
$port->databits(8);
$port->handshake("none");
$port->write_settings || undef $port;
$port->read_char_time(1); # Wait for each character

# Send request to SQM
$port->write("rx\r");
```

```
# Get response from SQM
(count,saw)=port->read(255);

# Close the port so that other programs can use the SQM
port->close;

# Print the SQM result to the screen
printf("%s", saw);
```

The above program prints a result like this:

r,-09.42m,0000005915Hz,0000000000c,0000000.000s, 027.0C

6.2 Pascal

The UDM program contains many examples of finding the SQM devices and reading data from them. It is open source and written in [Lazarus/FreePascal](#). The source files for UDM are available here:

unihedron.com/projects/darksky/cd/udm/ .

7 Unihedron Device Manager

The Unihedron Device Manager (UDM) program is intended for use in maintaining and testing the Unihedron connected Sky Quality Meter products. Windows, Mac, Linux versions of UDM are available on the supplied CD. It is used to:

- Read version information.
- Request readings.
- Read and set calibration data.
- Read and set all other meter parameters.
- Install new firmware.
- Setup and retrieve data from datalogging meters.
- Continuously log data from connected meters.

7.1 Getting UDM

UDM is supplied on the CD that shipped with the SQM-LU. The latest version of UDM is available at the Unihedron website at this location

www.unihedron.com/projects/darksky/cd/

7.2 Installation

7.2.1 System requirements

The UDM is a fairly simple (but large) program which should run sufficiently on any present-day computer under the Windows, Mac, or Linux operating systems.

7.2.2 Windows

The Windows version of UDM is in a setup.exe style file located in the Windows subdirectory of the CD, for example:

`\Windows\setup1.0.0.38.exe`

Simply double-click on that file to start the installation procedure.

7.2.3 Mac

The Mac OSX version of UDM is a dmg file located in the Mac subdirectory of the CD, for example:

`/Mac/udm.app.dmg`

Drag the app to the /Applications directory.

7.2.4 Linux

The Linux version of UDM is available in a Debian package separately for both 32bit and 64bit systems located in the Linux directory of the CD, for example:

`/Linux/udm.20140821-1_i386.deb`

Open the file with package installer program like GDebi.

7.3 Operation

After starting UDM, a list of found devices should appear, if your device is not listed on the screen, try clicking “Find” once more to search for connected devices.

If more than one SQM device is found, then you will have to select (click) on one of the devices, otherwise if only one device is found, then click on “Version” or “Reading” of the information tab for more information.

The tabs can be used to select various functions when working with your selected device. These tabs and their functions are described further in this document.

7.3.1 Start up

After starting the UDM program, a splash screen shown in Figure 7.1 is temporarily shown while the program searches for attached devices.

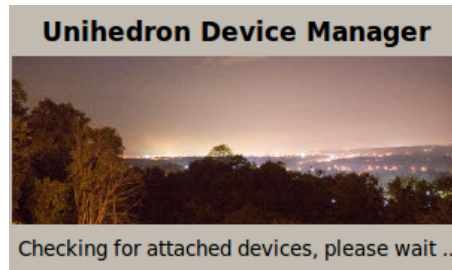


Figure 7.1: Splash screen

1. UDM searches for attached USB devices first. This step is fairly quick (a few seconds).
2. UDM then searches for attached Ethernet devices within the reach of the Ethernet network but not outside a firewall. This step may take about 30 seconds.

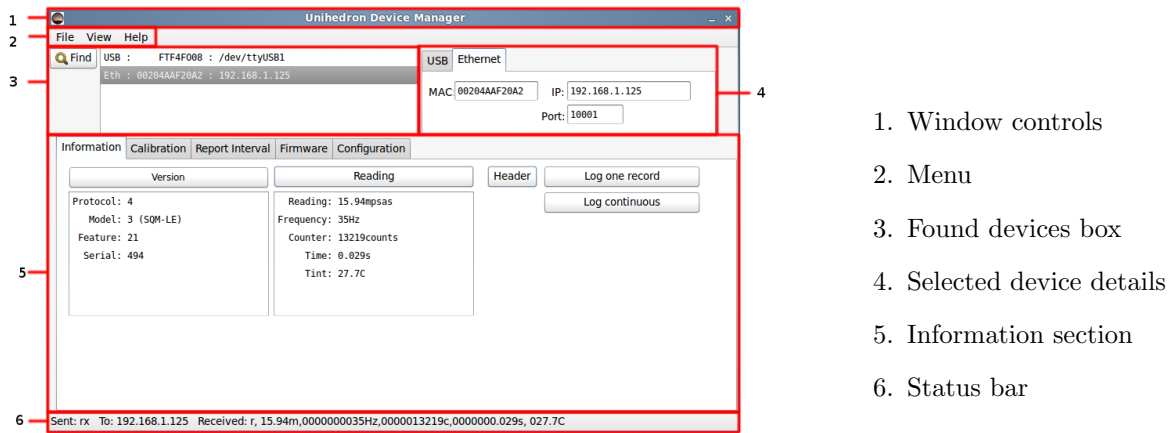
If no devices are found, then the main UDM program will be shown with the “found devices box” empty. You can attach an SQM device to your computer and press the “Find” button to search for the newly connected devices.

If you know that an Ethernet device is connected but it does not show up, then a network problem may be the cause. Also check the power connection to the SQM-LE.

If you know that a USB device is connected but it does not show up, then there may be a device driver issue. Check the USB device listing for your operating system. These USB devices should appear as a COMM port. Also, check the troubleshooting notes in section 13 on page 48 for possible solutions.

7.3.2 Main screen

The main screen of UDM consist of the following sections:



1. Window controls
2. Menu
3. Found devices box
4. Selected device details
5. Information section
6. Status bar

7.3.3 Main menu

The main menu of UDM consists of the items; File, View, Tools, Help as defined below.

7.3.4 File menu

The file menu is used for: opening files, finding newly attached devices, and quitting the program as shown in Figure 7.2.



Figure 7.2: File menu

File : Open

The “File : Open” menu item is used to open up previously stored log files or calibration reports.

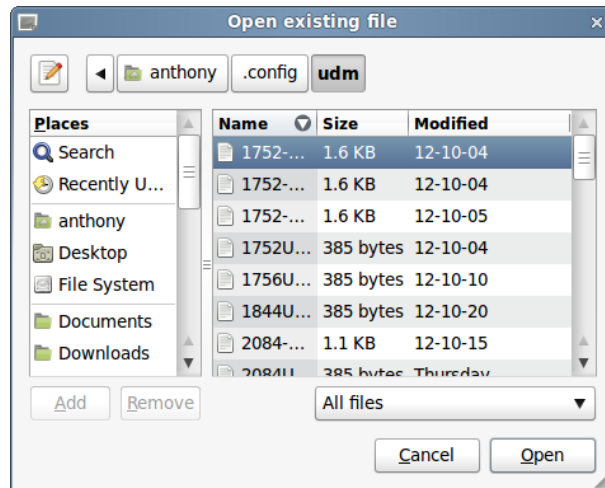


Figure 7.3: File Open dialog

File : Find USB

The “File : Find USB” function can be used to only find attached USB devices and ignore possible Ethernet devices. The hotkey Ctrl+U can also be used instead of the mouse.

File : Find Ethernet

The “File : Find Ethernet” function can be used to only find attached Ethernet devices and ignore possible USB devices. The hotkey Ctrl+E can also be used instead of the mouse.

File : Quit

The “File : Quit” menu item is used to close the UDM program.

The program can also be closed from the window panel “X”.

View menu

The view menu allows you to enable various tabs and check other settings of the UDM program.

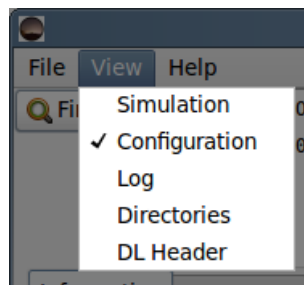


Figure 7.4: View menu

View : Simulation

Click on “View : Simulation” to toggle visibility of the “Simulation” tab. The Simulation tab can be used to send requests to the SQM-LU to simulate conversions of frequency and period to light meter values. See page 31 for more details.

View : Configuration

Click on “View : Configuration” to toggle visibility of the “Configuration” tab. The Configuration tab is used to configure the SQM with its calibration values when calibrated light and dark settings are being performed.

View : Log shows a window of commands and responses sent to and received from the SQM during this session of running UDM. Some excessively repetitive commands are suppressed from this listing.

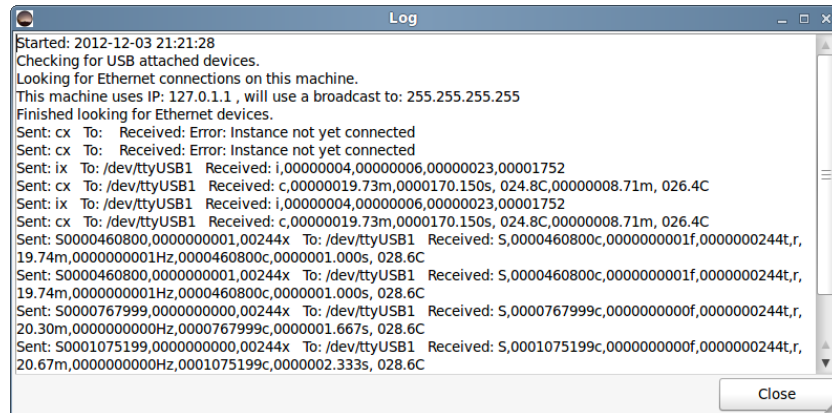


Figure 7.5: View : Log

View : Directories shows the directory paths used by UDM to store and retrieve data.

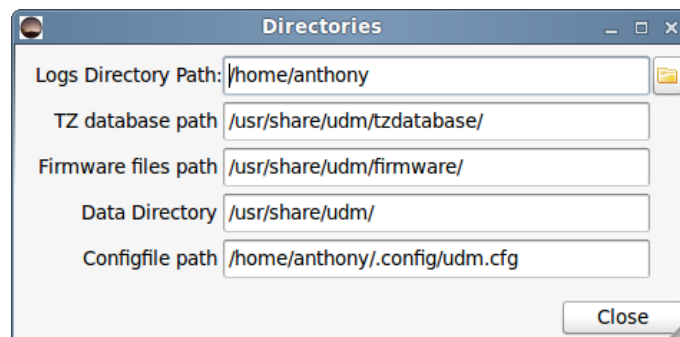


Figure 7.6: View:Directories

Logs Directory Path shows the path where logged records are kept. These logged records are created when using the “Log one Record” or “Log Continuously” features. Also, log files from data-logging meters will be stored here from the “Retrieve All” function.

The “Logs Directory Path” path can be changed from its default by pressing the folder button the right. After the path has been changed, new log files will be stored in that new folder.

TZ database path The Time Zone information is required for datalogging purposes because the timestamp is logged as UTC. Since time zones change over the years, the entire Time Zone database is required and hence distributed with UDM and stored at the displayed “TZ database path”. This path is not changeable.

The Time Zone database is taken from: <http://www.twinsun.com/tz/tz-link.htm>

Firmware files path The firmware for the SQM-LU can be updated or reverted using UDM. These firmware files are stored at the displayed firmware files path. This path is not changeable.

Data Directory is the place where some data files are kept, specifically the change-log for UDM and firmware files. This path is not changeable.

Configfile path is the place where UDM stores its configuration about the program and attached SQM devices. This path is not changeable.

View : DL Header shows the Data-logger header editing page. See the information at www.darksky.org/measurements for a detailed description of each field.

Datalogging header <2>

Definitions: darksky.org/measurements

Serial Number: 2881

Instrument ID: My_instrument

Data supplier: Me

Location name: Here

Position (lat, lon, elev(m)): 43.184280, -79.520729, 75.0 Edit

Local timezone region: northamerica

Local timezone name: America/Toronto

Time Synchronization: none

Moving / Stationary position: STATIONARY

Moving / Fixed look direction: FIXED

Number of channels: 1

Cover Offset: -.11

Filters per channel: HOVA CM-500

Measurement direction per channel: up

Field of view (degrees): 20

Comments: a comment line

Close

Figure 7.7: Data logging header

DL : Position can be changed by pressing the Edit button which calls up the following dialog:

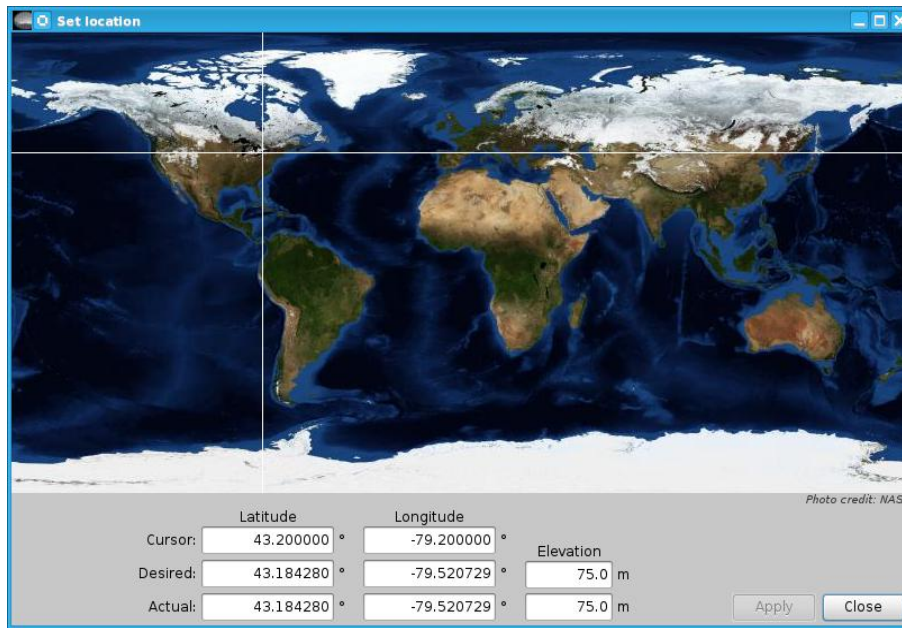


Figure 7.8: Set Location dialog

The “Set location” dialog is used to type in your location and have it verified on the world map. Use the following steps to set the location:

1. Type the exact location coordinates (in degrees) of the SQM-LU into the “Desired” fields.
2. The mouse pointer can be used to select an approximate location if you are not sure of the exact coordinates.
3. The “Elevation” entry is optional as it is not used for anything yet.
4. Press the “Apply” button when you are satisfied with the desired values. Note: The “Apply” button will only be enabled if there is a difference between the desired and actual values.
5. Press “Close” when you are satisfied with the actual values.

The “Local timezone region” and “Local timezone name” are required by UDM to calculate local times of the recorded data before storing to disk. UTC timestamps are stored in the SQM-LU.

The cover offset is a text only field that indicates what offset was used on the calibration data of the SQM-LU.

Help menu

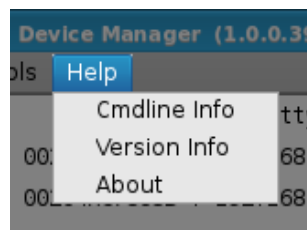


Figure 7.9: Help menu

Help : Cmdline Info shows the commands that can be used when starting UDM from the command line.

Help : Version Info shows the detailed version information for the UDM software.

Help : About displays a simple screen with the version identifier.



Figure 7.10: Help : About

Found devices box shows all the connected SQMs available that UDM can find from this computer.

If only one device is found, then UDM auto-selects it and gathers the version information for that selected device.

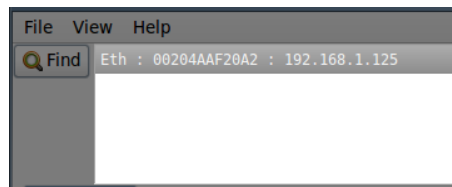


Figure 7.11: Found device (single)

If more than one device is found, then UDM does not select any of the devices. You may select the desired device by clicking in the found devices box on the SQM that you want to know more about. Once you select the device, then the connection details are displayed. Clicking on the “Version” or “Reading” button will gather more information from the meter.



Figure 7.12: Found device (multiple)

Device details shows the connection details of the selected SQM listed in the “Found devices” box.

The USB “Port” field is editable so you may enter your own port that might not be defined in the found box. See Figure 7.13.

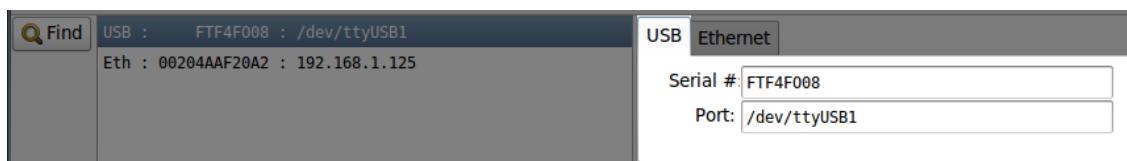


Figure 7.13: USB connection details

The Ethernet IP and port fields are editable so you may enter your own IP and port that might not be defined in the found box. The default port number for the SQM-LE is 10001. See Figure 7.14.



Figure 7.14: Ethernet connection details

7.4 Information tab

The information tab is used to show information about the version and the reading of the selected SQM.

Press the “Version” button for an updated list of data about the device version, and press the “Reading button” for an updated list of data about the device reading.

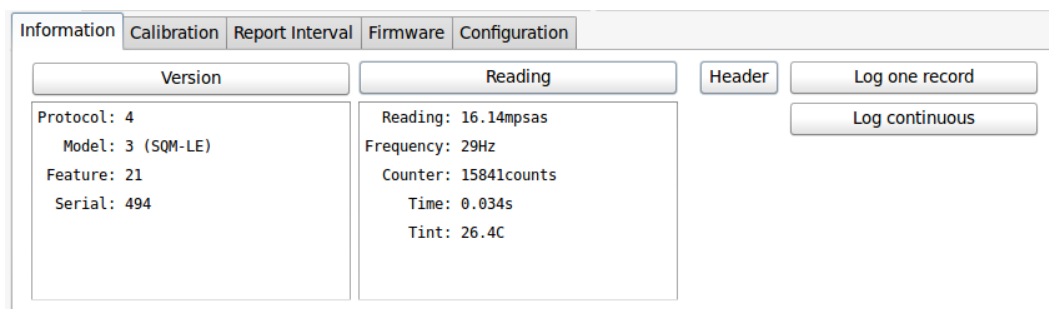


Figure 7.15: Information tab

The Header button calls up the data file header entry screen, see the datalogging Header section on page 22 for more information. This header information is used when storing logged data to the disk with the “Log one record” or “Log continuous” functions described below.

Log one record gathers one data record from the connected SQM and stores that information to a data log file on the disk in the “Logs directory path”. The location of the file can be identified and changed by “View : Directories”. The log file can be accessed later from the “File : Open” menu.

7.5 Log Continuous

The “Log continuous” function allows data from the connected SQM device to be logged repetitively as shown in Figure 7.16.

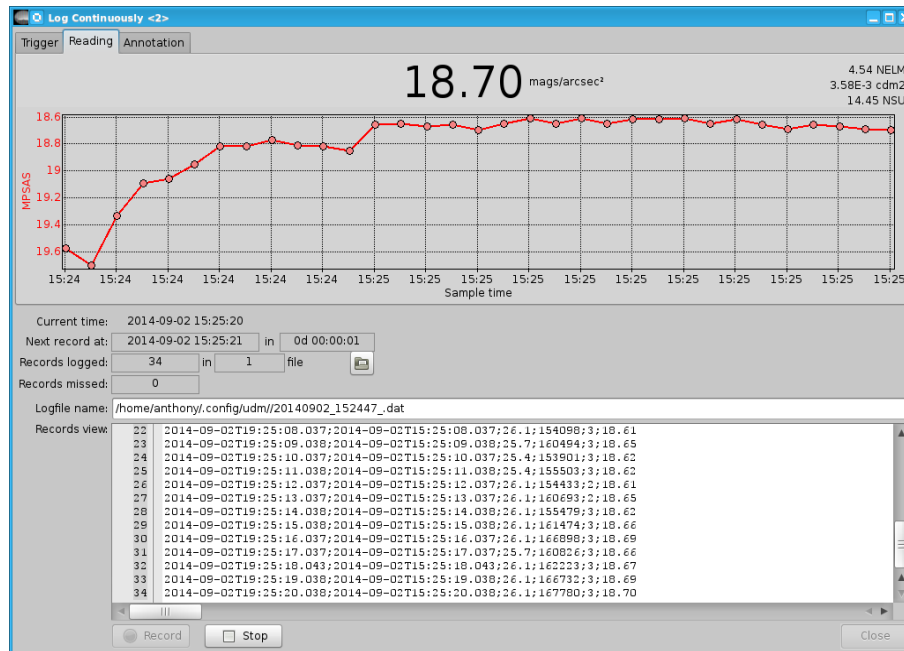


Figure 7.16: Log Continuously screen

Log Continuous Trigger options must be defined before logging, see Figure 7.17 for possibilities:

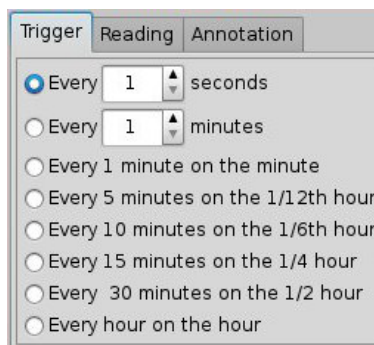


Figure 7.17: Log Continuously Trigger tab

To operate the continuous logging function:

1. Select the frequency of logging from the trigger tab.
2. Press the “Record” button. The records are stored in a logfile whose location is shown in the “Logfile name” area. A new logfile is automatically created at the beginning of each day (at local time 0:00).
3. Press the “Stop” button when you want to stop the recording process.
4. Log files can be accessed by the “File : Open” menu selection or by pressing the “folder” button shown in the “Log Continuously” screen.
5. Press “Close” when done with the continuous logging feature.

Annotation settings While the “Log Continuous” mode is recording data, annotations can be made to the log file records with hotkeys. The Annotation tab allows the definition of hotkeys and their associated annotation text that will appear at the end of an annotated record.

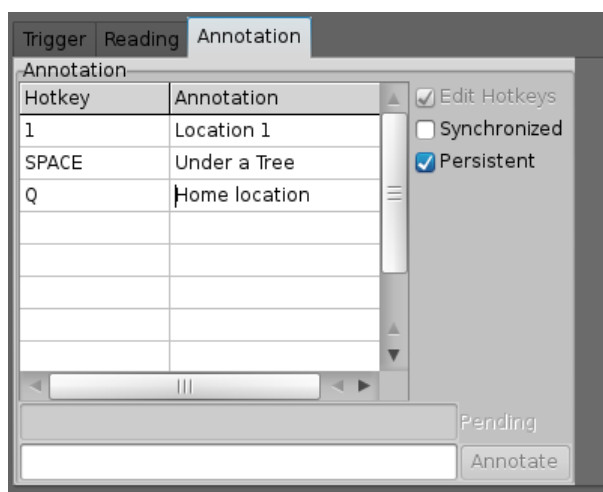


Figure 7.18: Log Continuously Annotation tab

Persistent annotation The “Persistent” mode makes the annotated text persistently appear at the end of each logged record after the first time the hotkey is pressed.

Without “Persistent” checked, annotation text is only appended to a record when the hotkey is pressed, and other records have no annotation text.

Synchronized annotation The “Synchronized” mode postpones annotation requests until the next scheduled record so that the annotated text is synchronized with scheduled triggered recordings.

Without “Synchronized” checked, the hotkey will immediately trigger a record log, and the associated annotation text will be appended to that triggered record.

7.6 Calibration tab

The Calibration tab is used to show and set the calibration data for the selected SQM device.

Figure 7.19: Calibration tab (initial)

Press the “Get Calibration Info” button so that the updated calibration data is brought in from the SQM on to the Actual values boxes as show below.

	Desired Values		Actual Values	
Light Calibration Offset:	<input type="text"/>	Set	19.73	mpsas
Light Calibration Temperature:	<input type="text"/>	Set	24.8	°C
Dark Calibration Period:	<input type="text"/>	Set	170.150	s
Dark Calibration Temperature:	<input type="text"/>	Set	26.4	°C

Notes:

- See calibration sheet for original settings.
- Add/subtract Light Cal offset for extra glass covering.
- Temperature values get reconverted, so the actual may be slightly different than the desired.

Figure 7.20: Calibration tab (populated)

Use the following steps to change the calibration values:

1. Enter the new calibration data on the left side entry box (Desired values column).
2. Press the associated “Set” button.
3. The value is sent to the SQM, and then confirmed in the right side box (Actual values column).

Note that temperatures set in to the SQM use their own resolution and may not be reflected as the same value entered. For example. 24.7°C might read back as 24.8 °C.

The original factory calibration values were provided on a paper with the shipped unit. If you have lost this information, please contact Unihedron to have the information emailed.

7.7 Report Interval tab

The Report Interval tab is used to show and set the report interval information for the selected SQM. Report interval settings are used to control the SQM to send readings out at a regular rate (in seconds) and only if darker than a specified threshold value. See section 8.4 on page 39 for more information about “Interval reporting”.

The screenshot shows the 'Report Interval' tab within a software window. At the top, there are tabs for 'Information', 'Calibration', 'Report Interval' (selected), 'Firmware', and 'Configuration'. Below the tabs is a 'Get Report Interval Info' button. The main area contains two sections for setting values. The first section is for 'Report Interval Time (s)', with a text input field, 'E/R' and 'R' buttons, and two 'Actual Values' boxes labeled 'in EEPROM' and 'in RAM', both showing '60'. Below this are 'Notes' for setting the interval to 0 to disable it or into RAM for testing. The second section is for 'Report Threshold (mpsas)', with a text input field, 'E/R' and 'R' buttons, and two 'Actual Values' boxes labeled 'in EEPROM' and 'in RAM', both showing '0.00'. Below this are 'Notes' for setting the threshold to limit reporting or into RAM for testing.

Figure 7.21: Report interval tab

Use the “R” button to temporarily set the value in to RAM for experimentation. The new value will be used instantly. The RAM value is set to the EEPROM value on power-up.

Use the “E/R” button to set the value in to EEPROM and RAM. The new value will be used instantly and also after power up.

Report interval is measured in seconds (i.e. 300 = 5 minutes).

Report threshold is measured in Magnitudes per square arcsecond (mpsas), a larger positive value is darker.

7.8 Firmware tab

In a case where new firmware is supplied by Unihedron to correct bugs or add features, use this tab to select and load firmware in to the SQM-LU.

All available versions of firmware are shipped with the UDM software package in case you want to revert to an earlier firmware version for testing purposes. New firmware versions are announced on the Unihedron forum.

The screenshot shows the 'Firmware' tab within the same software window. The tabs at the top are 'Information', 'Calibration', 'Report Interval', 'Firmware' (selected), 'Data Logging', and 'Configuration'. The main area contains three buttons: 'Select Firmware', 'Load Firmware', and 'XPort defaults'. Each button is followed by a horizontal progress bar. To the right of the 'Select Firmware' button is an 'Info' button.

Figure 7.22: Firmware tab

Follow these steps to load new firmware:

1. Press the “Select Firmware” button to choose the firmware file to load in to the SQM as shown in Figure 7.23:

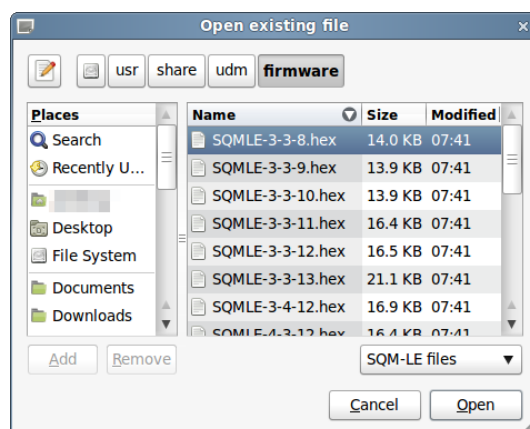


Figure 7.23: Firmware selection

2. Select the desired firmware file then press “Open”.
3. The “Load firmware” button will be enabled and you can press it now to start loading the firmware in to the SQM-LU. The status bar will indicate successful completion when the firmware has been completely loaded.

7.9 Configuration tab

The “Configuration tab” shows the factory set calibration values. A new calibration using a calibrated light source and darkroom can be performed by following the instructions on the right side of the screen. The calibration report can be logged to a data file and also printed out from this screen.

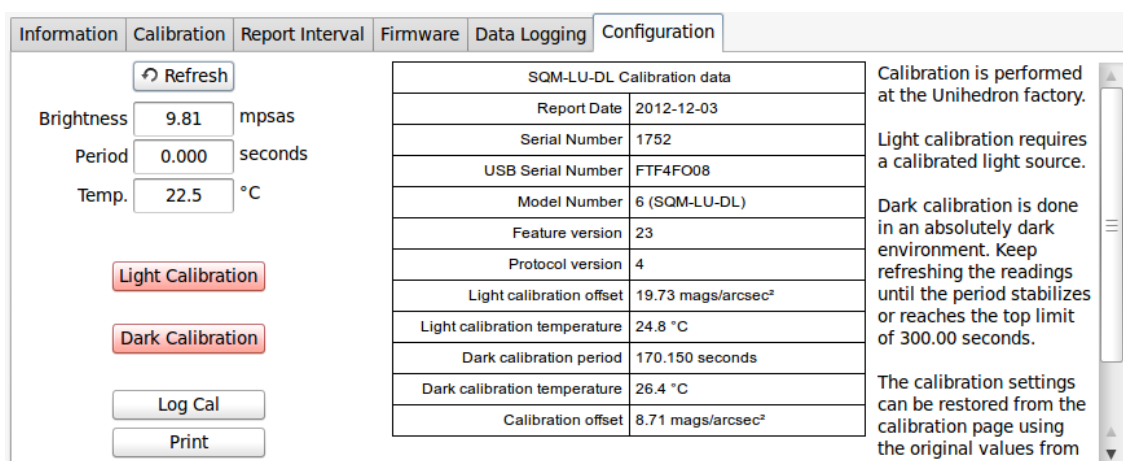


Figure 7.24: Configuration tab

Warning confirmations as shown in Figure 7.25 and Figure 7.26 are shown when trying to calibrate the unit yourself:

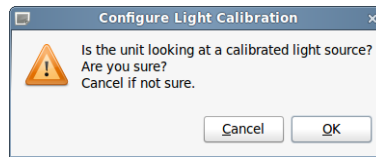


Figure 7.25: Light calibration confirmation

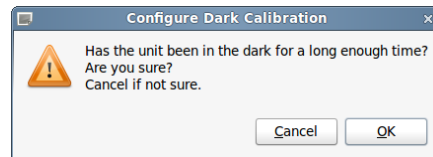


Figure 7.26: Dark calibration confirmation

7.10 Simulation Tab

The “Simulation” tab is enabled from the View menu.

The “Simulation” tab allows the simulation of raw light sensor values for experimentation purposes. The “Start” button initiates feeding the range of values to the internal formulas of the SQM and results are displayed on this tab. The simulation will stop once all the steps are complete or when the “Stop” button is pressed.

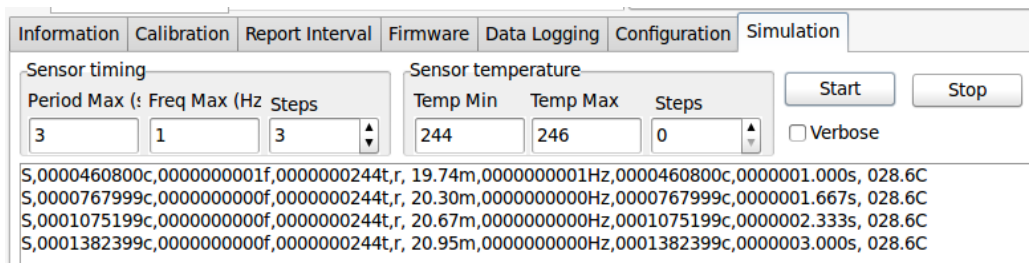


Figure 7.27: Simulation tab

8 Commands and responses

The SQM-LU accepts a sequence of characters as a command, then executes those commands and usually provides a response of a sequence of characters. The following details are useful when programming your own interface to send data to and receive data from the SQM-LU.

8.1 Commands

Commands consist of a string of characters. The first character is the command type. The following is a list of the “Standard” commands:

Table 8.1: Summary of standard commands

Command	Description
rx	Reading request.
cx	Calibration information request.
ix	Unit information request (note lower case “i”).
zcalAx	Arm Light Calibration command.
zcalBx	Arm Dark Calibration command.
zcalDx	Disarm Calibration command.
zcal5	Manually Set Light Calibration Offset.
zcal6	Manually Set Light Calibration Temperature.
zcal7	Manually Set Dark Calibration Time Period.
zcal8	Manually Set Dark Calibration Temperature.
0x19	Reset micro-controller. Hexadecimal value 19. See the “Firmware Upgrade” chapter on page 46 for more details.
:	Intel Hex firmware upgrade initiation. See the “Firmware Upgrade” chapter on page 46 for more details.
P...x	Set period (in seconds) for interval reporting to EEPROM and RAM for booting and immediate use. Firmware feature=13.
p...x	Set period (in seconds) for interval reporting to RAM for immediate use. Firmware feature=13.
T...x	Set threshold (in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$) for interval reporting only to EEPROM and RAM for booting and immediate use. Firmware feature \geq 13.
t...x	Set threshold (in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$) for interval reporting only to RAM for immediate use. Firmware feature \geq 13.
Ix	Request interval settings (note upper case “I”). Firmware feature \geq 13.
sx	Request reading of internal variables.
S...x	Simulate internal calculations.

8.2 Response details

8.2.1 Reading request

The “Reading” request “**rx**” or “**Rx**” commands the SQM-LU to provide the current darkness value as well as all variables used to generate that result.

Readings produced by this request are averaged internally by using the last 8 readings and shifting those values through an 8 cell buffer then summing and dividing by 8. Use the “**ux**” command to get the un-averaged and most recent value. Averaging is only performed on period-mode readings (when the light sensor frequency is below 128Hz). Frequency mode readings (above 128Hz) are automatically averaged because the reading is taken from a one second sampling of pulses.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.2:

Table 8.2: Reading request response

Column	Example value	Description
0	r	Indicates that a reading is being returned.
2-8	<code>_06.70m</code>	Reading in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value. A reading of 0.00m means that the light at the sensor has reached the upper brightness limit of the unit.
10-21	<code>0000022921Hz</code>	Frequency of sensor in Hz.
23-33	<code>0000000020c</code>	Period of sensor in counts, counts occur at a rate of 460.8 kHz (14.7456MHz/32).
35-46	<code>0000000.000s</code>	Period of sensor in seconds with millisecond resolution.
48-54	<code>_039.4C</code>	Temperature measured at light sensor in degrees C. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value.
55-56		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
r, 06.70m,0000022921Hz,0000000020c,0000000.000s, 039.4C
0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456
```

Future versions of this reading string will only modify reported values beyond position 54. Characters 0 to 54 may be considered stable.

A special case “**Rx**” command returns the serial number in the same format as the interval report does. See page 39 “Setting Interval reporting parameters” for report details.

8.2.2 Unaveraged reading request

The “unaveraged reading” request “**ux**” commands the meter to provide the current darkness value as well as all variables used to generate that result. This readings is not averaged out like the “**rx**” command.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.3:

Table 8.3: Unaveraged reading request response

Column	Example value	Description
0	u	Indicates that a reading is being returned.

Table continued on next page ...

Table 8.3 – continued from previous page

Column	Example value	Description
2-8	└06.70m	Reading in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value. A reading of 0.00m means that the light at the sensor has reached the upper brightness limit of the unit.
10-21	0000022921Hz	Frequency of sensor in Hz.
23-33	0000000020c	Period of sensor in counts, counts occur at a rate of 460.8 kHz (14.7456MHz/32).
35-46	0000000.000s	Period of sensor in seconds with millisecond resolution.
48-54	└039.4C	Temperature measured at light sensor in degrees C. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value.
55-56		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
u, 06.70m,0000022921Hz,0000000020c,0000000.000s, 039.4C
0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456
```

Future versions of this reading string will only modify reported values beyond position 54. Characters 0 to 54 may be considered stable.

8.2.3 Unit information

Unit information command “ix” provides details about the software in the micro-controller.

The format of the response is:

Table 8.4: Unit information request response

Column	Example value	Description
0	i	Indicates that the unit information response is being returned.
2-9	00000002	Protocol number (8 digits). This will always be the first 8 characters (after the “i,” response). This value indicates the revision number of the data protocol to/from the SQM-LU. The protocol version is independent of the feature version.
11-18	00000003	Model number (8 digits). The model value identifies the specific hardware model that the firmware is tailored for.
20-27	00000001	Feature number (8 digits). The feature value identifies software features. This number is independent of the data protocol.
29-36	00000413	Serial number (8 digits). Each unit has its own unique serial number.
37-38		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
i,00000002,00000003,00000001,00000413
0123456789 123456789 123456789 12345678
```

8.3 Calibration commands

8.3.1 Calibration information request

The calibration information request “cx” returns all data about the specific light sensor in the unit required to calculate a reading.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.5:

Table 8.5: Calibration information request response

Column	Example value	Description
0	c	Indicates that the calibration information is being returned.
2-13	00000017.60m	Light calibration offset in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$.
15-26	0000000.000s	Dark calibration time period in seconds with millisecond resolution.
28-34	└039.4C	Temperature in degrees C measured during light calibration. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value.
36-47	00000008.71m	Offset of light sensor in $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$ based on manufacturing reference.
49-55	└039.4C	Temperature in degrees C measured during dark calibration. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value.
56-57		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
c,00000017.60m,0000000.000s, 039.4C,00000008.71m, 039.4C
0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 1234567
```

8.3.2 Light calibration command

Calibration of the SQM-LU is done at the factory in a controlled light and temperature environment.

Executing the Light calibration command “zcalAx” arms the light calibration mode.

A calibrated light source of approximately 13.5fc is supplied to the sensor.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.6:

Table 8.6: Light calibration response

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Indicates that a “Calibration” response is being returned.
1	A	Indicates Light Calibration mode.
2	a	Indicates that the calibration is armed.
3	L	L = Locked; Wait for unlock before calibrating after Arm command, firmware upgrades are disabled. U = Unlocked; Calibrate immediately after Arm command, Enable firmware upgrade.
4-5		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
zAaL
012345
```

8.3.3 Dark calibration command

Dark Calibration is done at the factory along with Light calibration and calibration temperature recording.

Executing the dark calibration command “**zcalBx**” arms the dark calibration mode.

Dark calibration is performed in a completely dark environment. Check a reading to ensure that the period is correct after entering the dark environment, it could take a few minutes to collect an accurate dark period. A dark period of only a few seconds is too small.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.7:

Table 8.7: Dark calibration response

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
1	B	Dark Calibration.
2	a	Armed.
3	L	L = Locked; Wait for unlock before calibrating after Arm command, firmware upgrades are disabled. U = Unlocked; Calibrate immediately after Arm command, Enable firmware upgrade.
4-5		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
zBaL
012345
```

8.3.4 Disarm calibration command

The Disarm calibration command “**zcalDx**” disarms calibration modes from being triggered by the unlock mode.

The format of the response is shown in table 8.8:

Table 8.8: Disarm calibration response

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
1	x	Indicates “All” calibration modes.
2	d	Disarmed.
3	L	L = Locked; Wait for unlock before calibrating after Arm command, firmware upgrades are disabled. U = Unlocked; Calibrate immediately after Arm command, Enable firmware upgrade.
4-5		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
zxdL
012345
```

8.3.5 Manually set light calibration offset

Calibration is done at the factory, however, in the case where calibration values must be restored or set to something else, this command allows a new calibration value to be placed into the meter.

Executing the command “zcal5#####.##x” manually sets the light calibration offset to the value specified in “#####.##”. The units are $\frac{\text{magnitudes}}{\text{arcsecond}^2}$.

The format of the response is shown in table: 8.9:

Table 8.9: Response for manual setting of light calibration offset

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
2	5	Manual Set Light Calibration Offset
4-15	00000017.60m	Value that was set into EEPROM
16-17		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
z,5,00000017.60m
0123456789 1234567
```

8.3.6 Manually set light calibration temperature

Calibration is done at the factory, however, in the case where calibration values must be restored or set to something else, this command allows a new calibration value to be placed into the meter.

The “Light calibration temperature” is the temperature of the meter when the meter was calibrated for its “Light calibration offset”.

Executing the command “zcal6#####.##x” manually sets the light calibration temperature to the value specified in “#####.##”. The units are °C.

Note: The meter records the temperature in a raw value with different resolution, so the reply back may not be exactly the same as the value sent.

The format of the response is shown in table: 8.10:

Table 8.10: Response for manually setting of light calibration temperature

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
2	6	Manual Set Light Calibration Offset
4-9	019.0C	Value that was set into EEPROM
10-11		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
z,6,019.0C
0123456789 1
```

8.3.7 Manually set dark calibration time period

Calibration is done at the factory, however, in the case where calibration values must be restored or set to something else, this command allows a new calibration value to be placed into the meter.

The “Dark calibration time period” is the amount of time that has elapsed for the light sensor to make one cycle while in complete darkness. The meter sets a time limit of 300 seconds on this value.

Executing the command “zcal7#####.###x” manually sets the light calibration offset to the value specified in “#####.###”. The units are in seconds.

The format of the response is shown in table: 8.11:

Table 8.11: Response of manually setting dark calibration time period

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
2	7	Manual Set Dark Calibration time period.
4-15	0000300.000s	Value that was set into EEPROM
16-17		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
z,7,00000300.00s
0123456789 1234567
```

8.3.8 Manually set dark calibration temperature

Calibration is done at the factory, however, in the case where calibration values must be restored or set to something else, this command allows a new calibration value to be placed into the meter.

The “Dark calibration temperature” is the temperature of the meter when the meter was calibrated for its “Dark calibration time period”.

Executing the command “zcal8#####.##x” manually sets the light calibration offset to the value specified in “#####.##”. The units are °C.

Note: The meter records the temperature in a raw value with different resolution, so the reply back may not be exactly the same as the value sent.

The format of the response is shown in table: 8.12:

Table 8.12: Response for manually setting of dark calibration temperature

Column	Example value	Description
0	z	Calibration response is being returned.
2	8	Manual Set Dark Calibration temperature.
4-9	019.0C	Value that was set into EEPROM
10-11		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example of the response is:

```
z,8,019.0C
0123456789 1
```

8.4 Setting Interval reporting parameters

For firmware feature ≥ 13 , the SQM-LU is capable of sending timed interval reports. Each interval report is the same as the reading request report except that the serial number (feature ≥ 14) is attached at the end so that numerous reporting SQM-LUs can be distinguished from each other.

The format of the interval report is shown in table 8.13:

Table 8.13: Interval report

Column	Example value	Description
0	r	Indicates that a reading is being returned.
2-8	└06.70m	Reading in magnitudes per square arc second. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value. A reading of 0.00m means that the light at the sensor has reached the upper brightness limit of the unit.
10-21	0000022921Hz	Frequency of sensor in Hz.
23-33	0000000020c	Period of sensor in counts, counts occur at a rate of 460.8 kHz (14.7456MHz/32).
35-46	0000000.000s	Period of sensor in seconds with millisecond resolution.
48-54	└039.4C	Temperature measured at light sensor in degrees C. Leading space for positive value. Leading negative sign (-) for negative value.
55-63	00000413	Serial number (8 digits). Each unit has its own unique serial number.
64-65		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example is:

```
r, 06.70m,0000022921Hz,0000000020c,0000000.000s, 039.4C,00000413
0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 12345
```

8.4.1 Interval reporting period setting

Executing the command “P#####x” (note upper case “P”) sets the period of the timed interval reports to the EEPROM and RAM for booting and immediate use.

Executing the command “p#####x” (note lower case “p”) sets the period of the timed interval reports to RAM only for immediate use.

The units are seconds. For example, the command “p0000000360x” sets the reporting time to once every 360 seconds.

8.4.2 Threshold setting for interval reporting

Executing the command “T#####.##x” (note upper case “T”) sets the threshold of the timed interval reports to EEPROM and RAM for boot and immediate use.

Executing the command “t#####.##x” (note lower case “t”) sets the threshold of the timed interval reports to RAM for immediate use only.

The units are $\frac{\text{magnitudes}}{\text{arcsecond}^2}$. For example, t00000016.00x limits reporting to values only over 16.00 $\frac{\text{magnitudes}}{\text{arcsecond}^2}$

8.4.3 Interval setting response

Either making the request “Ix” (note upper case “I”) or any request to set the interval report setting produces the following response shown in table 8.14:

Table 8.14: Response of viewing or setting interval reporting parameters

Column	Example value	Description
0	I	Interval settings from EEPROM and RAM are being returned.
2-12	0000000360s	Interval period that was set into EEPROM.
14-24	0000300360s	Interval period that was set into RAM.
26-37	00000017.60m	Threshold value that was set into EEPROM.
39-50	00000017.60m	Threshold value that was set into RAM.
51-52		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example response is:

```
I,0000000360s,0000000360s,00000017.60m,00000017.60m
0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 12
```


8.5 Simulation commands

The following simulation commands help to determine the results of $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$ readings derived from the light and temperature sensors.

To read the internal simulation values, issue the “**sx**” command, the response is shown in table 8.15:

Table 8.15: Response of request for internal simulation values

Column	Example value	Description
0-1	s,	Confirmation of the command.
2-12	0000000360c	Number of counts.
14-24	0000000360f	Frequency in Hz.
26-37	0000000244t	Temperature ADC value as seen by the CPU.
38-39		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example response is:

```
s,0000000360c,0000000360f,0000000360t
0123456789 123456789 123456789 12345678
```

To set the internal simulation values and read the calculated response, issue the “**S...x**” command as detailed in Table 8.16. The result of that command is shown in Table 8.17.

Table 8.16: Request simulation (S...x)

Column	Example value	Description
0-1	S,	Initiation of Sx command.
2-12	0000000360	Simulated counts.
12	,	Separation character (can be anything except x).
13-22	0000000360	Simulated Frequency in Hz
23	,	Separation character (can be anything except x).
24-33	00244	Simulated Temperature ADC value.
34	x	Terminating character.

An example command is:

```
S,0000000360,0000000360,0000000360x
0123456789 123456789 123456789 1234
```

Table 8.17: Response of setting simulation values (S...x)

Column	Example value	Description
0-1	S,	Confirmation of S...x command.
2-13	0000094000c,	Simulated counts.
14-25	0000000000f,	Simulated frequency in Hz.
26-37	0000000245t,	Simulated temperature ADC value.

Table continued on next page ...

Table 8.17 – *continued from previous page*

Column	Example value	Description
38-39	<code>r,</code>	Beginning of calculated readings.
40-47	<code>␣18.04m,</code>	Calculated $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$.
48-60	<code>0000000000Hz,</code>	Frequency used for calculation.
61-72	<code>0000094000c,</code>	Counts used for calculation.
73-85	<code>0000000.204s,</code>	Calculated period from counts.
86-92	<code>␣029.0C</code>	Temperature used for calculation.
93-94		Carriage return (0x0d), Line feed (0x0a).

An example response is:

`S,0000094000c,0000000000f,0000000245t,r, 18.04m,0000000000Hz,0000094000c,0000000.204s, 029.0C`
`0123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 123456789 1234`

9 Installation

9.1 Electrical connection

9.2 Mechanical installation

Unihedron sells an enclosure that is suitable for mounting either the SQM-LE or SQM-LU into. You can read more about it, including plans to build your own at www.unihedron.com/projects/sqmhousing/.



Figure 9.1: Housing

9.2.1 Cover selection

If the unit is to be mounted in exposed location, we recommend the Unihedron plastic weatherproof housing with glass window plate, or an acrylic dome. Acrylic domes will last 2-3 years but eventually weather on the surface. It is not clear that this will affect the reading much. The best test would be to swap a weathered and new one back and forth when changing one out. Presumably the main consideration would be to keep the domes clean every so often and to make sure that the mounting plane is painted black so that it doesn't reflect light back to the inside of the dome and then back into the meter.

Source of acrylic domes: www.globalplastics.ca/domes.htm

9.2.2 Cover calibration

Since the meter is not weather-proof, it must be protected in some way from the elements. The Unihedron meter housing or a plastic dome is recommended. This will reduce the incoming light (approximately 15-20%).

Because a covering will reduce the incoming light, the resultant reading will be darker (higher $\frac{mag}{arcsec^2}$ value). The offset determined by a simple light experiment should be subtracted from the reading.

Apply this subtraction offset as a negative value, i.e. if you measured 16.60 outside the covering, then 16.75 under the dome, then an offset of -0.15 should be applied to all readings.

An example using the UDM software; if your offset is -0.12 and your factory calibrated light calibration offset is 19.92 then you should change the light-calibration-offset on the calibration-tab to 19.80. European users will see and use a comma instead of a decimal point.

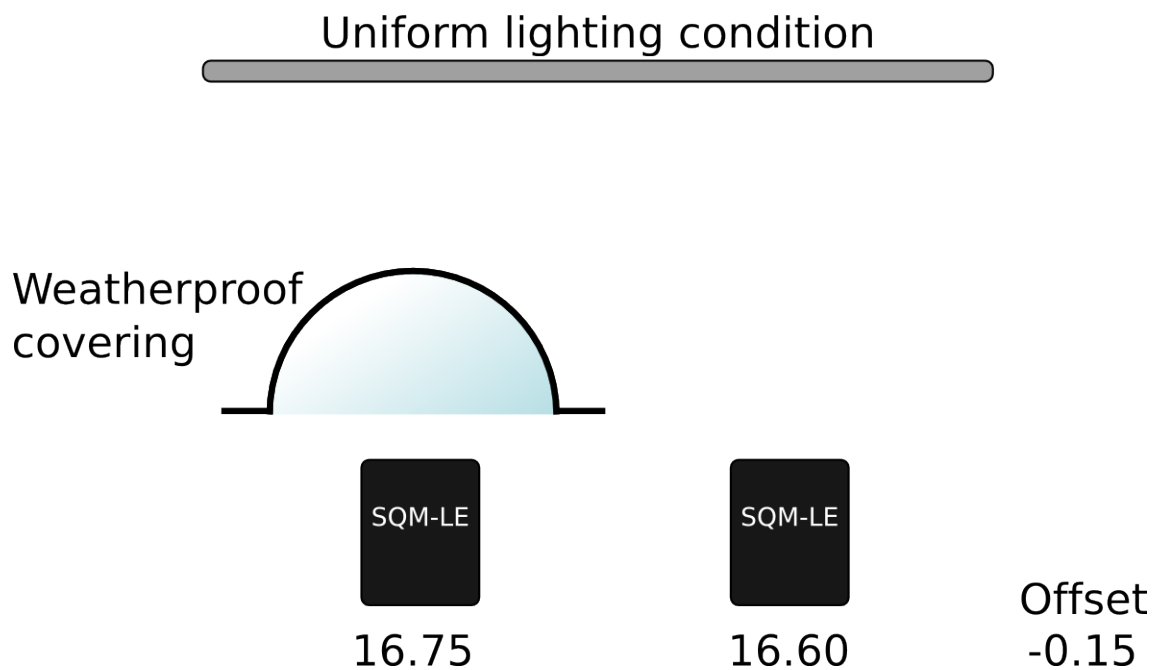


Figure 9.2: Example cover calibration

9.2.3 Cover maintenance

Keep the covering clean of dust, water, ice, and bird droppings.

10 Default settings

The SQM-LU contains an FTDI USB interface module.

The FTDI interface has not been altered from its default. There should be no reason to alter the FTDI chip settings. The baud rate is defined by the VCP driver side when a terminal program connects to the SQM-LU.

11 Firmware upgrade

See the UDM “Firmware tab” section on page 29 for instructions on updating the firmware in the SQM-LU.

11.1 Details

The SQM-LU contains a micro-controller that is equipped with a boot-loader mechanism which is enabled within a few seconds after reboot/reset.

Intel hex strings sent to the unit are used to overwrite program memory. The following link contains a thorough description of the Intel Hex format: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.hex>

The basic requirements for firmware uploading are:

1. Reset micro-controller by sending the hex character 0x19
2. Within a few seconds, send the first Intel hex record. The colon “:” character indicates the beginning of an Intel Hex record.
3. Wait for a response of “Ok” followed by “CR LF” which indicates that the record was processed properly.
4. Continue sending records and waiting for the acknowledgement.
5. The unit will reset on its own when no more records have been sent for a few seconds.

12 Calibration

The SQM-LU is factory calibrated and a sheet of the calibration values was provided with the unit. Contact Unihedron with your unit's USB S/N if you need a copy of the original calibration sheet.

Some possible reasons for recalibration are:

1. A new covering/housing is being used besides the small case that the unit was shipped with.
2. A regular maintenance program is desired. There is no great need for this as the SQM-LU has no analog components.
3. Compensation for aged housing, if a plastic dome is used that might have degraded over time.
4. Replaced lens or changed field of view for experimental reasons.

12.1 Recalibration

There is no easy way to perform in-field recalibration. It is recommended to send the unit back to Unihedron for proper calibration. There is a nominal fee for recalibration and shipping. Please contact [Unihedron](#) for details.

12.2 Light calibration

The sensor must have a reference point for an amount of light against the signal produced. It is not recommended that this be done after factory calibration and relied upon since an improper setup will result in non-standard results.

A fluorescent light or green LED is used to simulate the spectrum that the meter would see during the night sky. A light meter is used to adjust the light reading to 13.5 fc at the place of the SQM-LU. The light calibration routine inside the SQM-LU expects to see this value.

The light that the SQM-LU and light meter see must be coming from an evenly lit surface.

The "light calibration" command can be sent to the unlocked SQM-LU to set the calibration value.

12.3 Dark calibration

The optical sensor in the SQM-LU produces a reading even when totally dark. This "dark level" reading must be determined so that the meter can compensate for it.

The method of dark calibration is simply to prevent any light from entering the meter then execute a "dark calibration" command to the unit. A darkroom bag is one way to prevent light from entering the unit.

The optical sensor provides timed pulses depending on the amount of light entering. In a dark environment the pulses will be long. The meter has a timeout of 300 seconds, so the dark calibration will take at least 5 minutes (300 seconds) to perform.

Place the unit in a dark environment and monitor the timed readings (rx reading request) until they are consistent, normally the value is in the 80-300 second range, then execute the "dark calibration" command.

12.4 Confirmation

Once the calibration has been done, you should be able to get a light reading from the unit at the calibration light level of the same value as the value printed on your calibration sheet in the "Calibration offset" field. Normally this field has a value of 8.71 mags/arcsec².

13 Troubleshooting

Table 13.1: Reading seem too bright

Problem	The meter reads values that are brighter than expected.
Cause	The IR filter may have fallen out of the lens.
Solution	Ensure that there are no extra sources of visible light in the field of view of the meter. Inspect lens for IR filter. You should see a light blue colour inside the lens.

Table 13.2: Driver not found

Problem	USB driver not found
Cause	Some operating systems may not have the FTDI VCP USB driver installed by default.
Solution	You can get the most updated driver for your operating system from FTDIchip.com here: http://ftdichip.com/Drivers/VCP.htm

Table 13.3: USB device not found, or more than one device on the same COM port

Problem	USB device not found, or more than one device on the same COM port
Cause	Faulty USB driver
Solution	Ensure that the latest FTDI USB VCP driver is installed, you can check the version number from FTDIchip.com here: http://ftdichip.com/Drivers/VCP.htm Use the UDM software to identify found devices. The SQM-LU device has a serial number prefix of FT..... This may help identify what the other device is. Remove any other USB devices attached to the system.

Table 13.4: Recording stops

Problem	The meter stops recording while connected to the computer
Cause	Some computers, especially laptops, have the “USB suspend mode” activated which puts the USB port to sleep when there is not enough activity on the computer.

Table continued on next page ...

Table 13.4 – *continued from previous page*

Solution	<p>The USB sleep issue can be corrected by ensuring that your power settings do not put the USB ports to sleep when the computer is inactive. This can be true for any operating system. In Windows, the Windows Control panel procedure to disable the USB suspend setting is located here:</p> <p>Start Control Panel Hardware and Sound Power Options Edit Power Plan Settings Put the computer to sleep while plugged in = Never Change advanced power settings USB Settings USB selective suspend setting Plugged in = Disabled OK Save changes</p>
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Table 13.5: Meter cannot be found by PC

Problem	Meter cannot be found, or stops working intermittently when connected to computer.
Cause	Faulty FTDI USB module inside meter.
Solution	<p>There is not much that can be done to correct this aside from replacement. However, the following test usually reliably proves the issue. While connected to the computer using UDM, run the unit in “Log continuous” mode at 1 second sampling for at least 1000 samples. If there are any missed readings, the “records missed” counter on the screen will increment and show Red. The test procedure is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start UDM and select the device. 2. Press the “Reading” button to test connectivity. 3. Press the “Log continuous” button. 4. Select “Every x seconds”. 5. Enter 1 into the s box to the right of the selection. 6. Press “Record”. 7. Let this run for at least 1000 records and watch that are no “Records missed”.

Table 13.6: Meter cannot be found by Windows operating system

Problem	The windows computer cannot identify the SQM-LU, and re-installing the FTDI device drivers does not help.
Cause	The Windows FTDI driver installation may be storing old attempts at installing drivers that should have been cleared out.

Table continued on next page ...

Table 13.6 – *continued from previous page*

Solution	<p>The following steps can be used to clean up the FTDI entries in Windows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Install this FTDI “CDM Uninstaller” utility at: www.ftdichip.com/Support/Utilities/CDMUninstaller.v1.4.zip2. The detailed instructions for its operation are here: www.ftdichip.com/Support/Utilities/CDM_Uninst_GUI_Readme.html3. Here is a quick summary of the instructions:4. Start up the CDM uninstaller program5. Press - Add6. Press - Remove devices7. Wait 5 minutes or so until complete8. Close9. Re-insert SQM-LU device10. Wait 5 minutes or so for Windows to install driver and port
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Table 13.7: Cannot get a reading

Problem	Cannot get a reading
Cause	Driver is not installed or the SQM-LU-DL is not connected

Table continued on next page ...

Table 13.7 – *continued from previous page*

Solution	<p>For Windows, check that the unit is registered using the registry editor from the Start menu, select Run, then type in <code>regedit</code> and press OK.</p> <p>For Windows XP and Windows 2000, look here for your device</p> <pre>HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SYSTEM\ Enum\ FTDIBUS\ VID_0403+PID_6001+<i>Serial_Number</i>\ 0000\ PortName</pre> <p>For Windows 98 and Windows ME, look here for your device</p> <pre>HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SYSTEM\ Enum\ FTDIBUS\ VID_0403+PID_6001+<i>Serial_Number</i>\ 0000\ PortName</pre> <p>The <i>Serial_Number</i> is printed on the bottom of the unit.</p> <p>The above will identify which COM port the SQM-LU-DL has been assigned.</p> <p>If the SQM-LU-DL is plugged in, the active COM port will show up in this list:</p> <pre>HK_LOCAL_MACHINE\ HARDWARE\ DEVICEMAP\ SERIALCOMM</pre> <p>For Linux and Mac, use <code>lshal</code> to determine which device the FTDI driver has attached the SQM-LU-DL to. The CD contains a Perl script <code>findftdi.pl</code> to filter out the <code>lshal</code> output.</p>
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14 Glossary

Table 14.1: Glossary of terms

ADC	A nalog to D igital C onverter. A device used to convert an analog signal into a digital value.
CCD	C harge c oupled d evice is a type of image sensor.
EEPROM	E lectrically E rasable P rogrammable R ead O nly M emory is a type of memory that retains its contents after the power has been removed. This type of memory has a limited write/erase cycle as well as a lifetime for data retention. In the SQM-LU, the parameters in the micro-controller can be written 1 million times and last for 100 years.
Firmware	The program that resides inside the device. In the case of the Unihedron SQM products, it is the software that runs the device including reading and reporting the light values.
FITS	F lexible I mage T ransport S ystem is an open standard defining a digital file format useful for storage, transmission and processing of scientific and other images.
FTDI	F uture T echnology D evelopments I nternational is the manufacturer of the USB module inside the SQM-LU. FTDI also supplies the VCP software driver for the computer operating system so that the SQM-LU can communicate with the computer.
mpsas	M agnitudes p er s quare a rcsecond. The unit of measurement reported by the SQM.
RAM	R andom A ccess M emory. Temporary memory that only retains data while power is applied.
SQM-LU	S ky Q uality M eter with L ens and U SB connectivity,
UDM	U nihedron D evice M anager is software used to access the SQM series of meters.
USB	U niversal S erial B us
VCP	V irtual C OM p ort (VCP) drivers cause the USB device to appear as an additional COM port available to the PC. Application software can access the USB device in the same way as it would access a standard COM port. The SQM-LU requires the FTDI VCP driver be installed on the computer operating system so that communications can be done with the meter.

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