Redefining Security

Clavis³ QKD Platform

Quantum Key Distribution for academic & research labs

Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is a technology that exploits a fundamental principle of quantum physics – observation causes perturbation – to exchange cryptographic keys over optical fibre networks with provable security.

QKD ensures quantum-safe security, i.e. a guarantee that encrypted messages will remain confidential against the power of quantum computing. As the realisation of quantum computers is foreseen in 4 to 8 years maximum, critical data that should remain confidential for a few years are already at risk today. The study of QKD has therefore acquired a new sense of urgency: it is simply not possible to wait until the arrival of quantum computers to design and test suitable cryptographic methods.

Key Applications

- Quantum Cryptography Research
- Point-to-point evaluation system
- Education and Training
- Demonstration and Technology Evaluation

Key Benefits

- Open QKD platform for R&D applications
- Interface to external detectors
- Interface to external encryptors
- User interface for technology evaluation and testing

Clavis^3 QKD Platform

A Quantum Key Distribution Research Platform

The Clavis^3 was designed as a research platform, with both automated and manual operations. The user can therefore experiment with different parameters and study various setups. The Clavis^3 optical platform is well documented in scientific publications and has been extensively tested and characterised.

THE CLAVIS^3 QKD PLATFORM

The Clavis^3 Quantum Key Distribution Platform – Clavis is the Latin word for key – was developed by ID Quantique to serve as a versatile research tool for both academic and technology evaluation labs. The user can therefore experiment different parameter set-up and configurations, in both automated and manual modes.

The Clavis^3 platform comprises two stations, the transmitter unit, Clavis3-A and the receiver unit, Clavis3-B. Each station consists of an optical and electronic platform controlled by an external computer which is linked to the station through an Ethernet connector.

The Clavis 3-A and Clavis 3-B units are linked by the quantum channel, used for the key transmission. In addition, a Service Channel is used for synchronisation between the two units. It is made of a couple of optical fibre strands, connected to the units with SFP transceivers with LC/UPC connectors. The two fibre strands can be reduced to a single one with SFP transceivers supporting bidirectional transmissions.

Secure key exchange is possible over fibres with a maximum loss of 12 dB to 18 dB (typ. up to one hundred kilometres), as well as over a single core using WDM. The optical platform is well documented in scientific publications and has been extensively tested and characterised.

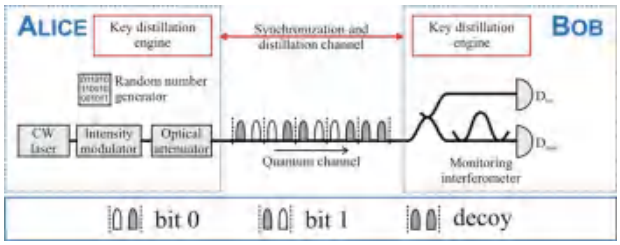
The Clavis^3 also integrates a key management system that manage key requests and key transfers between QKD optical systems and external encryptors. Key distribution to encryptors or any key consumer is performed over secured QKD ETSI REST API or proprietary interfaces developped in partnership with major vendors.

The Clavis^3 receiver, Clavis3-B, can use external single-photon detectors, which can be provided either by ID Quantique, or by the end-user himself.

A comprehensive software suite implements automated hardware operation and complete key distillation.

OPTICAL SCHEME

The Clavis^3 quantum key distribution platform is based on the Coherent One-Way (COW), protocol, patented by IDQ.



The COW optical scheme

The transmitter, Clavis3-A (ALICE) contains a laser, which emits a CW beam. The beam is subsequently modulated, to provide coherent optical pulses, with bit patterns corresponding to zeros and ones. The pulses are then attenuated to reach single photon levels. These pulses travel from the transmitter, Clavis3-A, over the quantum channel, to the receiver, Clavis3-B, where they are detected. In the receiver, some of the pulses reach the detector D_{bit}, where they generate the key, and some of the pulses go through the monitoring interferometer and reach detector D_{mon}. They are used to monitor eavesdropping.

The Clavis^3 stations provide electronic synchronisation signals to connect and synchronise external components and systems. The wavelength of the laser used in the Clavis^3 platform is stabilised to a value on the ITU grid.

KEY DISTILLATION

After the raw key material has been exchanged, it is post-processed in order to correct errors and reduce the information to which an eavesdropper could have access to an arbitrarily low level. In the Clavis^3 platform, this post-processing is fully implemented and automated in order to allow secure key exchange. It consists of five main steps:

Sifting: sifting removes the bits, which cannot be used in the key itself (for example when decoy sequences are sent).

Faster Key Processing

All key distillation steps are hardware-based, implemented in an FPGA inside the platform, for enhanced speed and reliability.

Key reconciliation: key reconciliation relies on the Low Density Parity Code (LDPC) algorithm to remove errors; it is also used to estimate the bit error rate.

Privacy Amplification: PA uses the Wegman-Carter Strongly Universal Hashing to reduce the information, which may have leaked to an eavesdropper, to any chosen level. The set of Universal Hashing functions is constituted of Toeplitz matrices.

Authentication: authentication of the two stations is done through IT-secure polynomial Universal-Hashing with One-Time Pad encryption.

Key material storage and management: the final keys are stored and can be later accessed for verification, key usage and further analysis.

SOFTWARE SUITE

Graphical User interface for configuration, parameter set-up and monitoring

The Clavis³ Cockpit is a graphical interface that can be used to control and operate the Clavis³ platform. It provides access to some hardware parameters and allows the user to visualise processes ranging from system calibration to secure key exchange. When interfacing with external encryptors, a KEMS interface is also provided to configure links between QKD and encryptors.

IDQ4P Communication Protocol for key streaming and key management

The IDQ4P Communication Protocol is the proprietary communication protocol used for key transmission and management of the Clavis³ platform. Users can write customised programs accessing the system to perform the tasks required by quantum key distribution. The protocol defines a key channel for the streaming of indexed keys and management/control channels for startup/shutdown, SW/FW updates, system notifications including events and alerts. A comprehensive and detailed reference manual is provided.

Why Clavis³ QKD Platform?

- Research platform with GUI for visualisation of parameters and QKD processes
- High speed key generation, with 1.25 GHz pulse repetition rate at the transmitter
- Possibility to have external detectors for maximum flexibility
- Key exchange testing with external encryptors
- Hardware-based key processing (in an FPGA), to allow high key distribution rate
- Manual & automated operation
- *Synch Out* signals

Clavis³ QKD Platform at a glance

Model	Clavis³
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Parameters	
Dimensions (L x W x H)	424 x 402 x 144 mm To be installed on a plate in a 19'' rack
Weight (QKDS-A)	10 kg
Weight (QKDS-B)	10 kg
Operating conditions:	
Temperature	20 to 30 °C
Max relative humidity (@ 30 °C)	80%
Non-operating conditions:	
Temperature	-10 to +60 °C
Max relative humidity (@ 40 °C)	90%
Recommended computer specifications	
Ethernet connexion	✓
RAM	4 GB
Hard Disk	A minimum of 100 MB of free space for software suite installation, additional space is needed when running the applications
Processor	Minimum Intel Core Duo
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS	
Hardware	
Optical platform	✓
Proprietary digital signal generation and data acquisition electronics	✓
Random number generation	One Quantis QRNG OEM component in each station
Power supply	100-240 VAC @ 50/60 Hz
Interfaces and Inputs/Outputs	
Optical connectors (front panel):	
Quantum channel Connector type: Optical fibre type:	 FC/APC SMF-28
Service channel Two SFP modules, with LC/UPC connectors (for two-fibre configuration) Or one bidirectional SFP module (for single-fibre configuration)	
Computer interface (back panel):	Ethernet
Front Panel Indicators	
Power LED indicator (red: on)	
Quantum Link LED indicator (green: quantum channel active)	
Data LED indicator (green: raw key exchange in progress)	
Quantum Link LED indicator	
Key Exchange Characteristics	
Maximum transmission loss acceptable (typ.)	12 dB Standard
	14/18/16/18 dB Premium
Maximum length of quantum channel (typ. @ 0.24 dB/km)	50 km / 58 km / 66 km /75 km
Secret key rate (typ.)	1.4 kb/s (12 dB)
Sifting and Key Distillation	Fully automated

ID Quantique

Chemin de la Marbrerie 3,
1227 Carouge/Geneva Switzerland

T +41 22 301 83 71
F +41 22 301 83 79
E info@idquantique.com

www.idquantique.com

ID Quantique (IDQ) is the world leader in quantum-safe security solutions, designed to protect data for the long-term future. The company provides quantum-safe network encryption, secure quantum key generation and quantum key distribution solutions and services to the financial industry, enterprises and government organisations globally.

IDQ also commercialises a quantum random number generator, which is the reference in the gaming and security industries.

Additionally, IDQ is a leading provider of optical instrumentation products; most notably photon counters and related electronics. The company's innovative photonic solutions are used in both commercial and research applications.

Disclaimer: The information and specification set forth in this document are subject to change at any time by ID Quantique without prior notice.
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