



GOCE: First In-Orbit Experience

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The GOCE mission is (at time of writing) planned for launch in March 2009. This objective of this paper is to describe the initial in-orbit operations experience with the satellite and its instrumentation, focussing on the commissioning and calibration activities. Also described are the first data processing efforts, including a very preliminary estimate of the data quality.

GOCE will be launched by a Rockot launch vehicle into a 96.7° sun-synchronous orbit of 280 km altitude from which it will decay down to an initial measurement altitude of 263 km. The satellite will map the Earth's gravity field at unprecedented spatial resolution and accuracy for about 20 months (nominal mission).