

AN4545 **Application note**

VL6180X basic ranging application note

Introduction

The VL6180X is a proximity sensor based on ST's patented FlightSense™ technology. The VL6180X interfaces to your micro-controller via the industry standard I²C bus. The module also includes an ambient light sensor (ALS).

This application note describes how to set up the VL6180X and perform range measurements with the sensor.

Note:

Settings presented in this document are for test purpose only. Performance and reliability not guaranteed.



Figure 1. VL6180X

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1 Set-up

1.1 Powering the module

To power the module, we recommend connecting a 2v8 supply to AVDD and AVDD_VCSEL. AVSS and AVSS_VCSEL must be connected to ground.

- Note: GPIO-0 is set as a shut down pin by default hence must be pulled high to avoid shutting down the device.
- Note: AVDD_VCSEL must be applied before or at the same time as AVDD to ensure internal error check on the IR emitter passes.





1.2 Communication with the VL6180X

Communication with the VL6180X is via the I²C bus. The default 7-bit address of the VL6180X is 0x29. It can be changed by the user to any 7-bit addresses by writing to the I2C_SLAVE__DEVICE_ADDRESS {0x212} register. The SCL and SDA lines should each have a pull-up resistor on the I²C bus.

Note: The VL6180X uses a 16-bit register index.



1.3 Initialisation

The latest Standard Ranging (SR) settings must be loaded onto VL6180X after the device has powered up. The following is the recommended procedure for loading the settings into the VL6180X.

- 1. Check device has powered up (Optional)
 - a) Check SYSTEM__FRESH_OUT_OF_RESET {0x16} register is equal to 0x01.
- 2. Load settings onto VL6180X
 - a) See Section 9 for the settings.
- 3. Apply other specific settings e.g. cross talk, GPIO, max convergence time etc. (Optional)
- 4. Write 0x00 to SYSTEM__FRESH_OUT_OF_RESET {0x16} (Optional)
 - a) Help host determine if settings have been loaded.
- 5. VL6180X is ready to start a range measurement.

Note: This procedure must be repeated if the VL6180X has been power cycled or if GPIO-0 has been toggled. SYSTEM__FRESH_OUT_OF_RESET {0x16} will reset to 0x01 if the VL6180X has been power cycled or if GPIO-0 was toggled.



Figure 3. Initialisation steps



2 Performing range measurements

After the settings have been loaded, range measurements can be started in one of two modes, Single-shot mode and Continuous mode.

In Single-shot mode, the VL6180X will perform a single range measurement and will enter software standby once the measurement has completed.

In continuous mode the VL6180X will perform back to back range measurements at a user determined rate until the stop command is issued. *Section 2.1* and *Section 2.2* outline the recommended procedure on performing a range measurements. *Section 7* contains example code on how to initialise the device and perform range measurements with the sensor.



Figure 4. Flowchart for performing range measurements





2.1 Performing a range measurement in single-shot mode

- 1. Check device is ready to start a range measurement. (Optional)
 - a) Check bit 0 of RESULT_RANGE_STATUS {0x4d} is set.
- 2. Start a range measurement.
 - a) Write 0x01 to SYSRANGE__START {0x18}.
- 3. Wait for range measurement to complete.
 - a) Poll RESULT__INTERRUPT_STATUS_GPIO {0x4f} register till bit 2 is set to 1. (New Sample Ready threshold event).
- 4. Reading range result.
 - a) Read RESULT__RANGE_VAL {0x62}.
 - b) This is the range measurement between the VL6180X and target in mm
- 5. Clear the Interrupt status.
 - a) Write 0x07 to SYSTEM_INTERRUPT_CLEAR {0x15}.
- 6. Repeat the previous steps 1 to 4 for more range measurements.

2.2 Performing a range measurement in continuous mode

- 1. Check device is ready to start range measurement. (Optional)
- 2. Check bit 0 of RESULT_RANGE_STATUS {0x4d} is set.
- 3. Start range measurements.
 - a) Write 0x03 to SYSRANGE__START {0x18}.
- 4. Wait for range measurement to complete.
 - a) Poll RESULT__INTERRUPT_STATUS_GPIO {0x4f} register till bit 2 is set to 1. (New Sample Ready threshold event).
- 5. Reading range result.
 - a) Read RESULT__RANGE_VAL {0x62}.
 - b) This is the range measurement between the VL6180X and target in mm.
- 6. Clear the Interrupt status.
 - a) Write 0x07 to SYSTEM__INTERRUPT_CLEAR {0x15}.
- 7. Repeat the steps 2 to 4 for more range measurements.
- 8. Stop range measurements.
 - a) Write 0x01 to SYSRANGE__START {0x18}.



3 Other ranging outputs

As well as the range output, the following can also be read along with each range measurement.

3.1 Range error codes

Register RESULT__RANGE_STATUS {0x4d} returns an error code after each range measurement. Table 13 gives a summary of the range error codes:

Bits [7:4]	Error code	Error code Description	
0	No error	No error Valid measurement	
1-5	System error	System error detected. No measurement possible.	255
6	Early convergence estimate	ECE check failed	255
7	Max convergence	System did not converge before the specified max. convergence time limit No target detected	255
8	Range ignore	Ignore threshold check failed	255
9-10	Not used	-	-
11	SNR	Ambient conditions too high. Measurement invalidated	255
12	Raw range algo underflow	Range < 0 (because offset is programmable a negative range result is possible)	0
13	Raw range algo overflow	Result is out of range. This occurs typically around 200 mm	255
14	Ranging algo underflow	Range < 0 (because offset is programmable a negative range result is possible)	0
15	Ranging algo overflow	Result is out of range. This occurs typically around 200 mm	255

Table	1.	Range	error	codes

1. Range overflow occurs typically around 200 mm.

3.2 Return array statistics

3.2.1 Return signal rate

Register RESULT__RANGE_RETURN_RATE {0x66} contains the signal rate from the return array recorded during the range measurement.

To convert the return rate into Mcps, read {0x66} and divide the value by 128.

Note: {0x66} is a 16-bit register.



3.2.2 Return convergence time

Register RESULT__RANGE_RETURN_CONV_TIME {0x7c} contains the time in μ s it took for the return array on VL6180X to settle or converge on a target distance during the range measurement.

Note: If Return convergence time is equal to the max convergence time, then VL6180X was not able to detect a target during the last measurement.

{0x7c} is a 32-bit register.

3.2.3 Return signal count

Register RESULT__RANGE_RETURN_VCSEL_COUNT {0x6c} contains the number of counts recorded during the convergence time^(a) from the return array during the range measurement.

The following equation show the relationship between count, signal rate and convergence time.

Return Signal Rate [Mcps] = $\frac{\text{Return Signal Count}}{\text{Convergence Time [}\mu\text{s]}}$

Note: {0x6c} is a 32-bit register.

3.2.4 Return ambient count

Register RESULT__RANGE_RETURN_AMB_COUNT {0x74} contains the number of ambient counts recorded during the convergence time^(a) during the range measurement. The ambient counter is only active for 1/6th of the convergence time, hence the count value must be multiplied by 6.

See the following equation of how to convert the ambient count into Mcps.

Return Ambient Rate [Mcps] =
$$\frac{\text{Return Ambient Count} \times 6}{\text{Convergence Time [µs]}}$$

Note: {0x74} is a 32-bit register

3.3 Reference array statistic

3.3.1 Reference signal rate

Register RESULT__RANGE_REFERENCE_RATE {0x68} contains the signal rate from the reference array recorded during the range measurement.

To convert the reference rate into Mcps, read {0x68} and divide the value by 128.

Note: {0x68} is a 16-bit register.

a. The count register continues to increment till both return and reference array have converged. This means for the Convergence time [µs], the maximum value between {0x7c} and {0x80} should be used in the equation. Under normal operation, {0x7c} should be the larger number value.



3.3.2 Reference convergence time

Register RESULT__RANGE_REFERENCE_CONV_TIME $\{0x80\}$ contains the time in μ s it took for the reference array to settle or converged on a target distance during the range measurement.

Note: {0x7c} is a 32-bit register.

3.3.3 Reference signal count

Register RESULT__RANGE_REFERENCE_SIGNAL_COUNT {0x70} contains the number of counts recorded during the convergence time⁽¹⁾ from the reference array during each range measurement.

The following equation show the relationship between count, signal rate and convergence time.

Reference Signal Rate [Mcps] = $\frac{\text{Reference Signal Count}}{\text{Convergence Time [}\mu\text{s]}}$

Note: {0x70} is a 32-bit register.

3.3.4 Reference ambient count

Register RESULT__RANGE_REFERENCE_AMB_COUNT {0x78} contains the number of ambient counts recorded during the convergence time⁽¹⁾ from the reference array. The ambient counter is only active for 1/6 of the convergence time, hence the count value must be multiplied by 6.

See the following equation of how to convert the ambient count into Mcps.

Reference Ambient Rate [Mcps] =	Reference Ambient Count \times 6
Reference Ambient Rate [wichs]	Convergence Time [µs]

Note: {0x78} is a 32-bit register



4 Typical ranging output

4.1 Range output

Figure 5 shows the typical ranging output from VL6180X for different targets^(b) at different distances.



Figure 5. Graph of range output vs. target distance. The test was performed in the dark and with no cover glass.

The range output of VL6180X with each of the targets should be linear with range. There could however be an offset error^(c). This error can be corrected by performing a manual offset calibration, see Section 4.1.1.

Note:

At <10mm the interaction between the target and VL6180X will prevent the range output from reaching 0mm. This is due to a number of physical effects:

- Separation between VCSEL and return array
- Multiple reflections between target surface and VL6180X
- VCSEL output penetrating the target surface and scattering off the layers inside the target

c. See section 4 in the VL6180X dataset for the spec on offset error.



b. Munsell gray target.

4.1.1 Manual offset calibration procedure

This section describes a procedure for calibrating offset.

- 1. Clear the system offset
 - a) Write 0x00 to SYSRANGE_PART_TO_PART_RANGE_OFFSET {0x24}.
- 2. Place a target at 50mm away from VL6180X.
 - a) Using a target with 17% reflectance or higher is recommended.
 - b) When calibrating with cover glass we recommended using a target with reflectance of 88% or higher to minimise error from cross talk, cross
- 3. Collect a number of range measurements with the target in place and calculate mean of the range results.
 - a) For a reliable measurement, take at least 10 measurements.
- 4. Calculate the offset required:

Offset = Target Distance [mm] – Average range [mm]

Offset = 50 – Average range [mm]

- 5. Apply offset:
 - a) Write the calculated offset value to SYSRANGE_PART_TO_PART_RANGE_OFFSET {0x24}.

Note: {0x24} is in 2s complement representation. For offset value 0 to127, write 0x00 to 0x7f. For offset value -1 to -128, write 0xff to 0x80, e.g -30 = 0xe2

4.2 Signal rate

Figure 6 shows the return signal rate output from VL6180X for different targets at different distances. The return signal rate can provide useful information on how optimised VL6180X settings to perform more efficiently and reliably.

The return signal rate from a target will generally follow the inverse square law as the target moves away from VL6180X. Assume the target fills the VL6180X's field of view^(d) and is at a distance >10mm.

As target distance drops below 10mm, the target will start to block off the optical path between the VCSEL and the return array. A target at <10mm can reduce the signal to a level that can prevent the VL6180X from completing a range measurement.

Note: Cover glass can alter the return signal rate characteristics. We therefore recommend the signal rate be re-characterized once the VL6180X has been integrated into the final system before attempting to perform any system optimisation.



d. The field or view of VL6180X is approximately ±12.5°.



Figure 6. Graph of return signal rate vs. target distance. The test was performed in the dark and with no cover glass.

4.3 Convergence time

Figure 7 shows the typical convergence time output from VL6180X for different targets at different distances. The convergence time can provide useful information on how to optimise VL6180X settings to perform more efficiently and reliably.

Note: Cover glass can alter the return convergence time characteristics. We therefore recommend the convergence time be re-re-characterized once the VL6180X has been integrated into the final system before attempting to perform any system optimisation.





Figure 7. Graph of convergence time vs. target distance. The test was performed in the dark and with no cover glass.



5 Cover glass

The VL6180X can be used with a cover glass. The cover glass can cause internal reflection and this can be detected by VL6180X as unwanted signals. This is known as the cross talk.

The cross talk can affect the range output, hence we recommend the user perform the cross talk calibration procedure when using the VL6180X with cover glass (see Section 5.1.1). The range ignore function should also be enabled to remove false detections from the cover glass, see Section 5.1.2.

5.1 Range output

Figure 8 shows the impact of the cover glass on the range output of VL6180X. The internal reflection between the glass and the VL6180X causes the ranging output to decrease at longer distances.

This error in range is a ratio of the target signal rate and magnitude of the cross talk, hence the range output from a darker target are more susceptible to the effect of cross talk.

Figure 9 shows the range output from VL6180X with the cross talk calibration procedure implemented. The range error caused by the cover glass is corrected.

Note: The offset might need to be re-calibrated when ranging though cover glass.

The cross talk rate depends on the glass type and its placement relative to VL6180X. If the glass type or its position changes, then cross talk calibration might need to be re-done.









Figure 9. Graph of range output vs. target distance with cross talk calibration. The test was performed in the dark and with cover glass

5.1.1 Cross ross talk calibration procedure

This section describes a procedure for calibrating system cross talk.

- 1. Perform the offset calibration (recommended)
 - a) See Section 4.1.1.

Note: If the offset is incorrectly calibrated, cross talk calibration will be inaccurate.

- 2. Place a dark target at 100mm away from VL6180X.
 - a) Low reflectance target recommended, e.g. 3% target.
- 3. Ensure SYSRANGE_CROSSTALK_COMPENSATION_RATE {0x1e} is set to 0.
- 4. Collect a number of range measurements with the target in place and calculate mean of the range results and Return signal rate.
 - a) For a reliable measurement, take at least 10 measurements.
- 5. Calculate the cross talk:

cross-talk [Mcps] = Average Rtn Rate [Mcps] $\times \left(1 - \frac{\text{Average range}}{\text{Target Distance}}\right)$

cross-talk [Mcps] = Rtn Rate [Mcps] \times (1 – Average range/100)

- 6. Apply offset:
 - a) Write the calculated cross talk value to SYSRANGE_CROSSTALK_COMPENSATION_RATE {0x1e}.
- Note: $\{0x1e\}$ is a 316-bit register in 9.7 format: For cross talk value of 0.4 Mcps = 0.4 x 128 = 51.2, register value to be written = 0x33.



5.1.2 Range ignore

The range ignore function in VL6180X can be enabled by setting bit 1 of SYSRANGE_RANGE_CHECK_ENABLES {0x2d}. If enabled, the ignore threshold must be specified.

We recommend setting the ignore threshold to at least 1.2x cross talk.

e.g. SYSRANGE_RANGE_IGNORE_THRESHOLD {0x26} = cross talk (Mcps) x 1.2

A range ignore error will be flagged if the return signal rate is less than the ignore threshold.



6 Device settings

6.1 **Performance tuning**

Changing the settings in this section can affect the performance of the overall system.

6.1.1 Max convergence time

The SYSRANGE__MAX_CONVERGENCE_TIME {0x1c} register sets an upper limit for the max convergence time. See *Figure 10*.

		.g	• •	
Clear Interrupt from {0x15}				
GPIO_1				
Ranging Status	System Power up	Convergnce time	Sampling period	System Power down
Max Convergence time {0x1c}	Max Convergence time			
Full ranging Cycle	Full ranging Cycle			
Interrupt from {0x18}				

Figure 10. System timing diagram for a signal ranging measurement

The max convergence time is made up of the convergence time and sampling period. By default the max convergence time is set to 49ms during device power-up.

Reducing the max convergence time will reduce the maximum time a measurement will be allowed to complete and can reduce the power consumption when no target is present. We recommend a value of 30ms for the max convergence time as a suitable starting point.

Note: Reducing the max convergence time will reduce the distance the VL6180X is able to range to.

Since the max convergence time controls maximum duration of each range measurement, it effectively controls the minimum signal rate required by the VL6180X to complete a range measurement.

During a range measurement, the signal from the return array is counted within the convergence time window. The VL6180X will only report an valid range when a threshold of 15360 has been reached. The minimum signal rate required for convergence is therefore related to the Max convergence time via the following equation.

Min signal rate [cps] = $\frac{15360}{\text{Max Conv time [s]} - \text{Sampling period [s]}}$

The sampling period is set to 4.4ms by default.

If the return signal from a target is lower than the minimum signal rate then the VL6180X will return a range output of 255 and a max convergence will be flagged.



Note: {0x1c} is a 8-bit register.

Maximum value for the Max convergence time is 63ms. Minimum value should be set to a value of 2 or higher for range measurement to be successful. 1 code = 1 ms.

6.1.2 Inter-measurement period

The SYSRANGE__INTERMEASUREMENT_PERIOD {0x1b} register sets the Intermeasurement period between each measurement when in continuous mode. The intermeasurement period needs to be set to a value that is above the maximum allowable full ranging cycle period. The following equations define the minimum inter-measurement period to ensure correct operation:

Inter-measurement period*0.9 > Full ranging cycle = Max convergence time + 5ms.

Note: {0x1b} is a 8-bit register.

A value of 0x00 for $\{0x1b\}$ equals to a inter-measurement period 10ms. Each code will add 10ms to the inter-measurement period. e.g. inter-measurement period 50ms = 0x04.

6.1.3 Readout averaging period

The READOUT__AVERAGING_SAMPLE_PERIOD {0x10a} register sets the internal readout averaging sample period. Increasing the sampling period decreases noise but increases max convergence time and power consumption. Each code corresponds to around 64.5µs additional processing time and there is a fixed 1.3ms of overhead during readout.

Sampling period = 1.3ms + 64.5µs * READOUT__AVERAGING_SAMPLE_PERIOD

By default {0x10a} is set to 0x30 which will give a sampling period of 4.4ms.

6.2 Additional error checks

VL6180X has three additional system error checks which can be enabled to help filter out invalid range results. See the VL6180X data sheet on how to set these error checks as well as enabling and disabling them.



7 Example code

Below is example code on how to perform ranging with VL6180X using single shot mode. The code is based on the STM32 F401 Nucleo board and can be compiled using the mbed Compiler.

```
// Beginning of code
#include "mbed.h"
Serial pc(SERIAL TX, SERIAL RX); // set-up serial to pc
I2C i2c(I2C SDA, I2C SCL); // Set up I<sup>2</sup>C on the STM32 NUCLEO-401RE
           (0x52) // I²C address of VL6180X shifted by 1 bit
#define addr
                //(0x29 << 1) so the R/W command can be added
// Split 16-bit register address into two bytes and write
// the address + data via I^{2}C
void WriteByte(wchar t reg,char data) {
   char data_write[3];
  data write[0] = (reg >> 8) & 0xFF;; // MSB of register address
  data write[1] = reg & 0xFF; // LSB of register address
  data write[2] = data & 0xFF;
   i2c.write(addr, data write, 3);
}
// Split 16-bit register address into two bytes and write
// required register address to VL6180X and read the data back
char ReadByte(wchar_t reg) {
  char data_write[2];
  char data_read[1];
  data write[0] = (req >> 8) & 0xFF; // MSB of register address
  data write[1] = reg & 0xFF; // LSB of register address
  i2c.write(addr, data write, 2);
  i2c.read(addr, data_read, 1);
  return data read[0];
}
```



```
int VL6180X Init() {
  char reset;
  reset = ReadByte(0x016);
  if (reset==1) {
             // check to see has it be Initialised already
// Added latest settings here - see Section 8
WriteByte(0x016, 0x00); //change fresh out of set status to 0
  }
  return 0;
}
// Start a range measurement in single shot mode
int VL6180X Start Range() {
  WriteByte(0x018,0x01);
  return 0;
}
// poll for new sample ready ready
int VL6180X Poll Range() {
  char status;
  char range status;
  // check the status
  status = ReadByte(0x04f);
  range status = status & 0x07;
  // wait for new measurement ready status
  while (range status != 0x04) {
    status = ReadByte(0x04f);
    range status = status & 0x07;
    wait ms(1); // (can be removed)
     }
  return 0;
}
```



```
int range;
  range=ReadByte(0x062);
  return range;
}
// clear interrupts
int VL6180X Clear Interrupts() {
  WriteByte(0x015,0x07);
  return 0;
}
// Main Program loop
int main()
{
  int range;
  // load settings onto VL6180X
  VL6180X Init();
  while (1)
     // start single range measurement
     VL6180X_Start_Range();
     // poll the VL6180X till new sample ready
     VL6180X Poll Range();
     // read range result
     range = VL6180X Read Range();
     // clear the interrupt on VL6180X
     VL6180X Clear Interrupts();
     // send range to pc by serial
     pc.printf("%d\r\n", range);
     wait(0.1);
     }
}
To change the example above to continuous mode:
```

- 1. In the VL6180X_Start_Range() function change the data written to VL6180X from 0x01 to 0x03.
- 2. In the while loop, move the function call for VL6180X_Start_Range() to outside the while loop, immediately after the VL6180X_Init() call.



8 Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/ abbreviation	Definition	
AMB	Ambient	
Convergence	When the VL6180X have detected a target and "converged" or acquired the target distance	
GPIO	General Purpose Input/Output	
NVM	Non Volatile Memory	
Mcps	Unit for measuring the signal rate from the return/reference array. Mega-counts per second.	
SNR	Signal-to-Noise Ratio	
SR	Standard Ranging settings	
SPAD	Single Photon Avalanche Diode	
VHV	Very High Voltage	

Table 2. Acronyms and abbreviations



9 SR03 settings

Below are the recommended settings required to be loaded onto the VL6180X during the initialisation of the device (see Section 1.3).

// Mandatory : private registers
WriteByte(0x0207, 0x01);
WriteByte(0x0208, 0x01);

```
WriteByte(0x0096, 0x00);
WriteByte(0x0097, 0xfd);
WriteByte(0x00e3, 0x00);
WriteByte(0x00e4, 0x04);
WriteByte(0x00e5, 0x02);
WriteByte(0x00e6, 0x01);
WriteByte(0x00e7, 0x03);
WriteByte(0x00f5, 0x02);
WriteByte(0x00d9, 0x05);
WriteByte(0x00db, 0xce);
WriteByte(0x00dc, 0x03);
WriteByte(0x00dd, 0xf8);
WriteByte(0x009f, 0x00);
WriteByte(0x00a3, 0x3c);
WriteByte(0x00b7, 0x00);
WriteByte(0x00bb, 0x3c);
WriteByte(0x00b2, 0x09);
WriteByte(0x00ca, 0x09);
WriteByte(0x0198, 0x01);
WriteByte(0x01b0, 0x17);
WriteByte(0x01ad, 0x00);
WriteByte(0x00ff, 0x05);
WriteByte(0x0100, 0x05);
WriteByte(0x0199, 0x05);
WriteByte(0x01a6, 0x1b);
WriteByte(0x01ac, 0x3e);
WriteByte(0x01a7, 0x1f);
WriteByte(0x0030, 0x00);
```



WriteByte(0x002e, 0x01); // perform a single temperature calibration
<pre>// of the ranging sensor</pre>
Optional: Public registers - See data sheet for more detail
WriteByte(0x001b, 0x09); // Set default ranging inter-measurement
// period to 100ms
WriteByte(0x003e, 0x31); // Set default ALS inter-measurement period
// to 500ms
WriteByte(0x0014, 0x24); // Configures interrupt on 'New Sample
<pre>// Ready threshold event'</pre>



10 Revision history

Table 3. Documer	nt revision history
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Date	Revision	Changes
19-Jun-2014	1	Initial release.



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