## **Quantification of Homogenous Samples**

The following statement is intended to summarise the essence of quantification by XPS.

An atomic concentration computed from a XPS spectrum involves isolating emission peaks, one per element (XPS data in general include multiple emission peaks for each element), then performing a sequence of corrections to these spectral intensities leading to values (normalised peak intensities) representative of the amount of substance sampled by an XPS measurement.



#### **Relative Sensitivity Factors**

Essentially, the probability of a scattering of a photon by an atom leaving the final electronic configuration with a hole in a specific core electronic shell is dependent on which core level is altered in the final state. The relative intensities for these photoemission peaks depends on these probabilities for the final state configuration and therefore the number of electrons detected are not uniformly distributed between the set of photoemission peaks in an XPS spectrum from a given element, but appear as a sequence of emission peaks with varying intensity.

The purpose of Relative Sensitivity Factors (RSF) is to correct peak intensities to account for differences resulting from the photoemission process.

Theoretical RSF, referred to as Scofield cross-sections, are used to correct for peak intensity differences due to the photoemission process.

Transition probabilities calculated using Hartree-Slater approximations are tabulated by Scofield for photons of energy corresponding to Al and Mg x-ray sources. Scofield cross-sections do not account for angular distribution variation in the effective cross-section as a consequence of instruments detecting electrons in a specific direction relative to the photon source. Angular distribution correction to these Scofield cross-sections based on a given instrument geometry are applied resulting in RSF values appropriate for a given x-ray source and the angle between the x-ray source and the direction defined by the electron energy analyser.

Scofield cross-sections are corrected for angular distribution using the factor  $1 - \frac{\beta}{4}(3\cos^2\theta - 1)$ relative to s-orbital electron configurations. The  $\beta$  value is computed for the element for which the Scofield cross-section is defined, and  $\theta$  is the x-ray source to electron analyser angle. For data from a Kratos Axis Ultra the angle between the x-ray source and the direction of the electron analyser is assumed to be 60°. For an Ulvac PHI VersaProbe the angle  $\theta$  is 45°. Magic angle instruments do not require angular distribution correction since the angle  $\theta$  is chosen such that  $3\cos^2\theta - 1 = 0$ .

#### **Instrumental Transmission Correction**

The number of electrons recorded by an instrument at a specific kinetic energy for the detected electrons deviate from the number of electrons emitted from the sample. The ratio of electrons leaving the sample to the number of electrons recorded at the detector varies as a function of the kinetic energy for the emitted electrons. To adjust for these variations in collection efficiency an instrument transmission function is measured.

Data in these examples are corrected for transmission using the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) transmission correction software. A transmission function is prepared for each operating mode for a given instrument. Differences in operating mode may include specific settings for the pass energy, electron optical lens modes, aperture settings and detector settings.



#### **Escape Depth Correction**

Inelastic scattering of electrons within solid state materials as measured by XPS results in the characteristic background to photoemission peaks obvious in survey spectra. The production of inelastic scattered electrons is modelled by an exponential decay in zero loss photoemission recorded. Intensity for electrons emerging from a layer within the surface is obtained by integrating the signal over the interval [p, q] using the exponential attenuation model  $e^{-x/a}$  for the reduction in intensity at the surface due to photoemission at a depth x beneath the surface. The value for a determines the sampling depth for photoemission from a specific material at a specific energy for a photoelectron.



The intensity emitted at the surface I from a layer of material between the depths of p and q is proportional to the integral:

$$I \propto \int_{p}^{q} e^{-x/a} dx = a \left[ e^{-p/a} - e^{-q/a} \right]$$

For p = 0 and q = 3a then 95% of photoemission signal without energy loss is accounted for from the surface layer, hence the sampling depth for XPS is often referred to a three times the effective attenuation length. When considering the upper energies for Al anode x-ray emission the value for ais between 3 and 4 nm, hence a common rule of thumb is that for Al x-rays the maximum sampling depth is in the region of 10 nm.

The value *a* for photoemission from solid state materials varies as a function of kinetic energy of the electrons detected. Even for a sample of uniform depth distribution such as gold, silver or copper, the number of electrons recorded for an emission peak reduces as the energy of the electrons decreases simply because the volume of material from which an electron can emerge without inelastic scattering reduces.

For a given analysis area, the volume of material sampled for a given kinetic energy for the emitted electrons can be modelled using the Inelastic Mean Free Path (IMFP)  $\lambda$  or Effective Attenuation Length (EAL). Martin Seah publish universal equation approximations to IMPF ( $\lambda$ ) and EAL

$$\lambda = \frac{(0.73 + 0.0095E^{0.872})}{Z^{0.3}} \quad (nm)$$
$$EAL = \frac{(0.65 + 0.007E^{0.93})}{Z^{0.38}} \quad (nm)$$

where E is the photoelectron kinetic energy and Z is the average atomic number provide a means of correcting for escape depth dependence on kinetic energy.

XPS data only offers the possibility for reporting the amount of substance when properly corrected emission peaks are used in the atomic concentration formula applied to truly homogeneous samples.

# **Quantification by XPS Illustrate using Fused Silica**



The basic tools used to assess sample chemistry are quantification regions defined for isolated photoemission peaks. In the case of fused silica photoemission peaks corresponding to Si 2p, O 1s and C 1s are isolated from any interfering photoemission peaks. As a consequence quantification regions can be used to define appropriate approximations to inelastic scattered background signal, intervals over which signal above the inelastic scatter background is integrated to yield raw counts per second eV (CPSeV) for each peak. These raw CPSeV are then scaled using relative sensitivity factors in the form of Scofield cross-sections, which are adjusted for angular distribution based on an angle of 60° between the axis of the analysers lens column and the Al anode X-ray source. Escape depth correction is performed using the EAL approximation to allow for differences between the sampling depths for O 1s and Si 2p signal. Finally instrument response to kinetic energy is corrected by making use of a transmission function computed for these data using the NPL transmission correction procedure.

In principle, the computed transmission function effectively allows recorded data to appear as if it were measured from an instrument created with ideal flat transmission response to electron photoemission energy. Only when a precise transmission correction is available is the use of Scofield cross-sections appropriate. Another way of looking at this statement is, in principle, any instrument for which relative sensitivity factors are other than Scofield cross-sections does not have an absolute and true transmission function available.

### Fused Silica Video



Quantification steps used to transform raw survey spectra into stoichiometric relationships between silicon and oxygen are explain for a sample expected to be fused silica.



Quantification results from regions are display over data by adding annotation using the Annotation Dialog Regions property page table specification and the Formula option on the Annotation Dialog Text property page.

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Annotation dialog Regions property page.



Annotation dialog Text property page making use of options for extracting the displayed text from quantification results gathered from regions.



The Quantification Parameters dialog window Regions property page allows the specification of quantification information specific to a photoemission peak (RSF, background and energy interval) and displays the currently active intensity calibration options in the form of transmission, escape depth and angular distribution corrections.



During the course of this video quantification regions are defined and intensity calibration steps are progressively added resulting in traceable quantification for a fused silica sample. Initially transmission correction based on an NPL computed transmission function is active.



Angular distribution correction is active too making use of an angle of 60° between the direction for electrons collected by the transfer lens system and the x-ray source. ADC information is used to adjust the relative sensitivity factor for a region at the time a region is created.



The element library contains an RSF for Si 2p equal to 0.817. This value for the Si 2p RSF is computed by Scofield using quantum mechanics to compute the photoionisation cross-section for Al anode x-rays exciting a Si atom initially in the ground state.



Values for the ADC angle can be adjusted using the Element Library dialog window Element Table property page.



For each region a total sensitivity factor is computed based on Scofield RSF, transmission function for the photoemission energy, escape depth for the photoemission energy and the source analyser angle instrument geometry.



Information about escape depth corrections and how escape depth can be used to understand sample composition by XPS is described in Walton et al (SIA 2016).



Quantification regions can be created by marking each element of interest using the Element Library dialog window via the Element Table and Periodic Table property pages. The Find Peaks button marks any peak with element markers for which a possible match occurs. This is a superset of elements rather than attempting to identify the most likely.



Once the user assesses the superset of elements and limits the element markers to the most likely elements (in this case C 1s, O 1s and Si) regions are created using element markers by pressing the Create Regions button on the Periodic Table or Element Table property pages.



Regions are created and can be edited using the Quantification Parameters dialog Regions property page.



Note the Si 2p is the only region with an ADC corrected RSF. RSFs in the Scofield library are relative to C 1s sensitivity and ADC for electrons with s orbital angular momentum the correction is identical for all elements. Differences occur in ADC for p, d, f orbital angular momentum therefore the Si 2p RSF is the only RSF out of C 1s, O 1s and Si 2p that requires ADC adjustments.



Each time a zoom action occurs the dimensions for the display in terms of energy and intensity intervals is added to a zoom list. Toolbar buttons allow the zoom states to be used to view data in

sequence. When regions are defined on a VAMAS block and the Reset zoom list toolbar button is pressed the energy intervals defined by the current set of regions is used to initialise the zoom list. Cycling through the zoom list allows each region to be viewed in turn.



Zoom In toolbar button creates a new zoom state using a box drawn

using the mouse and the left mouse button to drag a box over the left hand display tile. The new zoom state is added to the current zoom list.



Zoom Out toolbar button steps through the zoom states currently

active for the left hand display tile. The set of current zoom state are cycled through repeatedly by pressing the Zoom Out toolbar button.



Reset Zoom List toolbar button will empty the zoom list or if regions are defined on the active spectrum in the active display tile, energy intervals defined by these



BG Type refers to the type of approximation used to remove inelastic scattered background signal from intensity due to primary zero-loss photoemission signal used to quantify sample composition. There are many background types available including basic linear, Shirley and Universal Tougaard backgrounds, however there are more sophisticated backgrounds for materials such as fused silica established by Tougaard. These can be viewed and selected via a dialog window associated with the BG Type field within a region specification.



New features in CasaXPS 2.3.22 invoke the Background Type dialog window by selecting a BG Type field for an existing region before left clicking on the BG Type label within the Regions property page table of region parameters.



After a specific Tougaard background type is selected, the cross-section field is updated with four parameters defined by Tougaard. The values for U SiO2 Tougaard are entered in the cross-section field. The cross-section functional form for the U 3 Tougaard background type is identical to the U SiO2 Tougaard cross-section however when the background type is set to U 3 Tougaard the cross-

section fields can be manually adjusted, if required, and the B cross-section parameter is automatically computed for the specific interval of spectra defined by the region.



When the BG Type is changed from U SiO2 Tougaard to U 3 Tougaard a dialog window asks if the cross-section coefficients should be initialised. Since the U SiO2 Tougaard cross-section values are already appropriate for these data, the reply is to select the No button.



Inelastic scattering of photoelectrons depends on the material through which these electrons must pass en route to the vacuum. Photoemission from a surface contamination layer may experience different scattering events to those from a substrate. We assume for fused silica carbon is an overlay to SiO<sub>2</sub> and therefore only Si and O signal experiences scattering by Si and O electrons bond to these elements. C 1s signal is predominantly scattered by carbon atoms so may require a different background to Si 2p and O 1s peaks.



Backgrounds for these data are not important as both SiO<sub>2</sub> and carbon contamination result in relatively flat backgrounds beneath photoemission peaks. The significance of the background becomes more apparent when heterogeneous materials are analysed such as a layer of plasmapolymerised hexane on SiO<sub>2</sub>.





An alternative perspective to atomic concentration when viewing sample composition based on regions is the use of an option on the Annotation dialog window Text property page. The Formula option allows text to be displayed using subscripts and other formatting defined by expressions involving element symbols explicitly entered on the property page.





Formatting of elemental symbols is extended by the option labelled Display Live Formula from Quant Table. When active the annotation displayed over data is generated automatically from information gathered from quantification results.



The most general form of quantification results derives from the selection made for VAMAS blocks in the right hand pane. Regions and components in a peak model are combined to create quantification tables. Both the Quantification Parameters dialog window Report Spec property page

and the Annotation dialog window Quantification property page display tabulated results based on selected VAMAS blocks in the right hand pane. There is however an option on the Annotation dialog window Text property page that allows quantification from only the active VAMAS block in the active display tile. The radio button labelled Use Active VB enables gathering of quantification results based on the Active VAMAS block displayed in the active display tile.



Text strings used to by formula based annotation text are the strings entered in the TAG fields for regions. TAG string and the use of \* character allow changes to the order and numerical values associated with labels entered into the TAG field for each region.



Initially the formula is constructed assuming O appears with a multiplicity of unity, hence the formula is constructed with  $O_1$ . If it is preferred to display the formula using the number of silicon atoms is indicated as unity then the TAG field for Si 2p can be adjusted by entering Si \* 1.



As indicated in the Regions property page Intensity Calibration section, the results so far include transmission correction, relative sensitivity corrected for angular distribution but not escape depth correction. Escape depth correction is an important part of quantification and without the correct adjustments for escape depth the correct stoichiometry of two oxygen and one silicon for silica is not returned.



Escape depth correction is introduced via selecting VAMAS blocks in the right hand pane then invoking the Edit VAMAS Identifiers dialog window from the toolbar button. For fused silica it will be assumed the material is bulk in nature and therefore EAL (effective attenuation length) correction is appropriate.



Since regions and annotation text are defined using data collected from quantification regions, once the EAL correction is applied both the atomic concentration table and text are updated.



The expected ratio for silicon and oxygen is returned for these data. It should be noted that survey data can be misleading when quantified in isolation. For example the carbon contamination may also include carbon bonded to oxygen so one might expect more oxygen than silicon given the amount of carbon measured by XPS. An alternative argument might be made where it is assumed the contamination by carbon is not uniformly spread over the fused silica but appears as islands of thickness about 10nm. If islands of carbon exist then silicon signal from beneath the contamination would be attenuated less than O 1s signal so one might conceive as scenario where silicon appears more intense than oxygen. It is also possible elemental silicon is involved and this too could shift the composition measure by XPS towards silicon. High energy resolution spectra for Si 2p would remove this possibility.

These fused silica data represented a control experiment for a set of samples prepared with films of plasma polymerised hexane (ppHex) on  $SiO_2$ . These samples of interest to the paper by Walton et al also provide some insight into the influence of escape depth on general quantification by XPS. By considering how these quantification steps applied to fused silica, when applied to samples with known films alter quantification for a substrate of similar composition to fused silica, it is clear quantification of samples of less well defined origin requires careful consideration.



A thick film of ppHex greater than the sampling depth for Si 2p and O 1s the influence of SiO<sub>2</sub> substrate on XPS data is only visible in shapes observed in the inelastic scattered background. That is to say, almost all electrons from Si 2p and O 1s undergo energy loss events therefore these photoemission peaks are absent from the spectrum.



A sample prepared with ppHex depth less than the sampling depth for Si 2p and O 1s electrons, peaks are evident within the spectrum and background shapes indicate an overlayer that does not contain silica.



For very thin ppHex on SiO<sub>2</sub> it is difficult by-eye to see the difference from as received fused silica.



Note how the background to the C 1s overlay of ppHex is very different from background to lower kinetic energy for Si 2p and O 1s photoemission.



Regions and annotation previously defined for the fused silica VAMAS block are transferred to the ppHex spectra making use of the Browser Operations dialog window.



VAMAS blocks selected in the right hand pane receive regions and annotation from data displayed in the active tile.



Quantification propagated from fused silica includes all the intensity corrections used to quantify fused silica. Therefore these ppHex samples are quantified making an assumption that is false, namely, the samples are homogeneous in lateral and depth distribution.



Since these ppHex samples are layers of ppHex on silicon dioxide when the ratio of oxygen to silicon is reported by the annotation the expected ratio for silicon and oxygen is not achieved.

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There is an option for correcting a substrate signal for an overlayer. The overlayer ppHex is a CH film so correcting signal from the  $SiO_2$  substrate provides a measure for the film thickness of ppHex.

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