



Designation: **E2373/E2373M – 14 E2373/E2373M – 19**

Standard Practice for Use of the Ultrasonic Time of Flight Diffraction (TOFD) Technique¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E2373/E2373M; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope*

1.1 This practice establishes the requirements for developing ultrasonic examination procedures using the ultrasonic technique known as Time-of-Flight Diffraction (TOFD).

1.2 Consistent with ASTM Policy, TOFD may be regarded as an ultrasonic test method whereby the qualities and characteristics of the item tested are evaluated, ~~measured and~~ measured, and, in some cases, identified. Measurements may be subject to precision and bias that may be determined statistically or as a function of some parameter(s) such as wavelength. This practice may be used for applications that would be ~~qualitative and properly addressed as~~ quantitative examinations as well as quantitative ~~and more properly addressed as~~ tests.

1.3 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. The values stated in each system are not necessarily exact equivalents; therefore, to ensure conformance with the standard, each system shall be used independently of the other, and values from the two systems shall not be combined.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate ~~safety~~ safety, health, and health environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[E164 Practice for Contact Ultrasonic Testing of Weldments](#)

[E543 Specification for Agencies Performing Nondestructive Testing](#)

[E1065 Practice for Evaluating Characteristics of Ultrasonic Search Units](#)

[E1316 Terminology for Nondestructive Examinations](#)

[E1324 Guide for Measuring Some Electronic Characteristics of Ultrasonic Testing Instruments](#)

[E1961 Practice for Mechanized Ultrasonic Testing of Girth Welds Using Zonal Discrimination with Focused Search Units](#)

2.2 ASNT Documents:³

[SNT-TC-1A Recommended Practice for Nondestructive Testing Personnel Qualification and Certification](#)

[ANSI/ASNT CP-189 Standard for Qualification and Certification of Nondestructive Testing Personnel](#)

2.3 Aerospace Industries Association AIA Document:⁴

[NAS-410 Certification and Qualification of Nondestructive Testing Personnel](#)

2.4 ISO ~~Standard~~ Standards:⁵

[ISO 9712 ~~Non-destructive~~ Non-Destructive Testing—Qualification and Certification of NDT Personnel](#)

[ISO 5577 Non-Destructive Testing—Ultrasonic Testing—Vocabulary](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E07 on Nondestructive Testing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E07.06 on Ultrasonic Method. Current edition approved June 1, 2014 Dec. 1, 2019. Published June 2014 January 2020. Originally approved in 2004. Last previous edition approved in 2009 2014 as E2373 – 09 E2373/E2373M – 14. DOI: 10.1520/E2373_E2373M-14.10.1520/E2373_E2373M-19.

² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ Available from American Society for Nondestructive Testing (ASNT), P.O. Box 28518, 1711 Arlington Ln., Columbus, OH 43228-0518, http://www.asnt.org.

⁴ Available from Aerospace Industries Association of America, Inc. (AIA), 1000 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1700, Arlington, VA 22209-3928, http://www.aia-aerospace.org.

⁵ Available from International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, CP 56, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, http://www.iso.org.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

ISO 16828 Non-Destructive Testing—Ultrasonic Testing—Time-of-Flight Diffraction Technique as A Method for Detection and Sizing of Discontinuities

2.5 ~~Other Documents: Document:~~⁶

~~Code Case 2235 ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code~~

~~EN 583-6 Non-destructive Testing: Ultrasonic Examination. Time-of-flight Diffraction Technique as a Method for Detection and Sizing of Discontinuities~~

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Related terminology is defined in Terminology **E1316**.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *B-scan display*—*display, n*—~~a sectional view of the plotted inspection data plot of Time-of-Flight vs. probe position formed by the stacking of A-scans. (Some users refer to stacked A-scans from non-parallel scans as D-scans and reserve those used with parallel scans as B-scans.)~~

3.2.1.1 *Discussion*—

~~Some users refer to stacked A-scans from non-parallel scans as D-scans and parallel scans as B-scans. D-scans are currently not defined in Terminology **E1316** and are given a different definition in ISO 5577.~~

3.2.2 *back-wall echo*—*echo, n*—a specular reflection from the back-wall of the component being examined (usually assumed to be a plate).

3.2.3 *lateral wave*—*wave, n*—~~a compression wave that travels by the most direct route surface-skimming longitudinal wave traveling from the transmitting probe to the receiving probe in a TOFD configuration. configuration (also called a creeping wave in some applications).~~

3.2.4 *non-parallel or longitudinal scan, n*—a scan whereby the probe pair motion is perpendicular to the ultrasonic beam axis.

3.2.5 *parallel scan*—*scan, n*—a scan whereby the probe pair motion is parallel to the ultrasonic beam axis. ~~Also called a B-scan by some users.~~

3.2.6 *PCS*—*PCS, n*—~~abbreviation for probe center spacing. Refers spacing; refers to the distance between the marked exit points of a pair of TOFD probes for a specific application.~~

3.2.6 *non-parallel or longitudinal scan*—a scan whereby the probe pair motion is perpendicular to the ultrasonic beam axis.

3.2.7 *RF waveforms*—*waveforms, n*—the non-rectified A-scan.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This practice provides general principles for the application of the Time-of-Flight Diffraction Technique as a tool for detection and sizing of discontinuities.

4.2 TOFD is a nondestructive ultrasonic examination technique that is not based on amplitude response. However, sufficient sensitivity is required to identify indications for evaluation.

4.3 ~~Techniques used~~ TOFD techniques are typically applied to welded joints in carbon steel, but the principles may be applicable to other applications including other materials with suitable validation procedures agreeable to the contracting parties.

4.4 In addition to a stand-alone ultrasonic detection technique, TOFD may be used in conjunction with weld examinations such as those described in Practices **E164** and **E1961** where it may be used to improve sizing estimates of flaws detected by the manual or mechanized pulse-echo techniques and help discriminate between flaws and geometric reflectors.

4.5 The technique has proven effective on thicknesses from 9 to 300 mm [0.375 to 12 in.]. TOFD has been used on thicknesses outside of this range but special considerations are necessary. Techniques developed outside of this range of thickness shall be demonstrated as capable of meeting the required detection and sizing requirements of the specification used.

5. Basis of Application

5.1 The following items are subject to contractual agreement between the parties using or referencing this standard.

5.2 *Personnel Qualification*

5.2.1 If specified in the contractual agreement, personnel performing examinations to this standard shall be qualified in accordance with a nationally or internationally recognized NDT personnel qualification practice or standard such as ~~ANSI/ASNT-CP-189, ANSI/ASNT CP-189, SNT-TC-1A, ISO 9712, NAS-410, or a similar document and certified by the employer or certifying agency, as applicable. The practice or standard used and its applicable revision shall be identified in the contractual agreement between the using parties.~~

⁶ Available from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, ASME International, 22 Law Drive, Box 2900, Fairfield, NJ 07007-2900.

5.3 *Qualification of Nondestructive Agencies*—If specified in the contractual agreement, NDT agencies shall be qualified and evaluated as described in Specification E543. The applicable edition of Specification E543 shall be specified in the contractual agreement.

5.4 *Procedures and Techniques*—The procedures and techniques to be used shall be as specified in the contractual agreement.

5.5 *Surface Preparation*—The pre-examination surface preparation criteria shall be in accordance with 6.3 unless otherwise specified.

5.6 *Timing of Examination*—The timing of examination shall be in accordance with 6.3 unless otherwise specified.

5.7 *Extent of Examination*—The extent of examination shall be in accordance with 6.3 unless otherwise specified.

5.8 *Reporting Criteria/Acceptance Criteria*—Reporting criteria for the examination results shall be in accordance with Section 8 unless otherwise specified. Since acceptance criteria (for example, for reference radiographs) are not specified in this practice, they shall be specified in the contractual agreement.

5.9 *Re-examination of Repaired/Reworked Items*—Reexamination of repaired/reworked items is not addressed in this standard and if required shall be specified in the contractual agreement.

6. Procedures

6.1 Introduction:

6.1.1 TOFD is an ultrasonic examination technique that can provide improved detection and sizing capabilities of discontinuities compared to standard ultrasonic pulse-echo techniques. It uses forward scattered tip diffraction and reflection of transmitted ultrasonic pulses. This document describes the requirements for TOFD equipment and procedures on flat plate surfaces. Guidance for more complex geometries is provided in the Appendix. General guidance on TOFD can also be found in EN 583-6. Acceptance criteria typical ISO 16828. Typical acceptance criteria and performance demonstration requirements that may be used with TOFD techniques are found in ASME Code Case 2235⁷.

6.1.2 Because phase inversions of signals play an important role in the evaluation of TOFD results, all procedures developed using this practice shall require that the equipment presentation use and store RF waveforms.

6.1.3 Whether motorized or manually-operated, probe motion must be encoded for position and probes held in a fixture that maintains correct PCS during scanning. Time based sampling of data collection is not acceptable.

6.1.4 Fig. 1 illustrates the typical probe configuration for a TOFD examination. The figure uses a weld for convenience of references; however, TOFD need not be restricted to just weld examinations.

6.1.5 The lateral wave and back-wall echo signals provide convenient references. For most applications, mode converted signals from flaws are not used and therefore flaw indications are usually recognized as occurring between the lateral wave and back-wall echo signals. Although it is more often the case to use the refracted compression longitudinal mode in the examination piece, some applications may produce better results when the incident angle is greater than the first critical angle, thereby providing a refracted

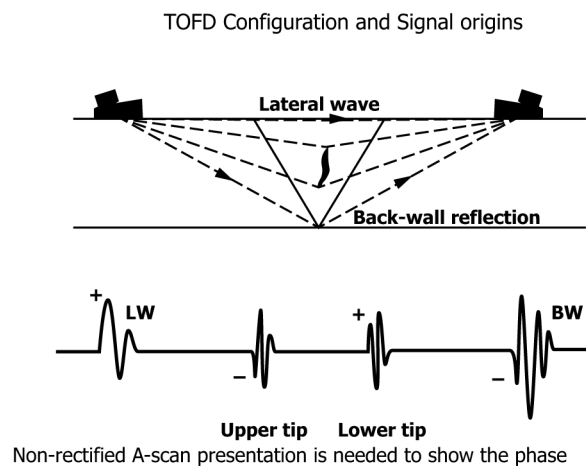


FIG. 1 TOFD Configuration and Signal Origins

⁷ Reference to ASME CC2235 is made only as an example of an existing code where the mutually agreed upon acceptance criteria allows TOFD to be applied. This does not suggest that application of ASME CC2235 would be appropriate in all cases. It should be recognized that the high sensitivity of the TOFD technique could result in indications from reflectors in plate materials that meet all plate ultrasonic specification requirements. Such indications should not be considered unacceptable unless they fail to meet the acceptance criteria agreed upon in 8.1.

transverse-shear mode in the examination piece. When using a refracted compression longitudinal mode in the examination piece, the direct shear and head waves also are generated; however, due to their lower acoustic velocities, shear waves arrive later in time than the back-wall signal.

6.1.6 Fig. 2 is a sketch of a typical presentation for a non-parallel scan of a butt weld in a plate with an imbedded flaw. The right side of Fig. 2 illustrates a waveform extracted from a B-scan display showing the lateral wave, upper tip diffracted, lower tip diffracted, and the back-wall echo signals. The left side of Fig. 2 indicates the probe placement with respect to the weld (upper left) and relative motion of the probes (a non-parallel scan is indicated).

6.1.7 Fig. 3 illustrates an actual TOFD scan with five indications (identified on the left) and an extracted A-scan from one of the indications.

6.2 *Written Procedure*—A documented examination strategy or scan plan shall be provided showing probe placement, movement, and component coverage that provides a standardized and repeatable methodology for component acceptance. The scan plan shall also include ultrasonic beam angle(s) used, beam directions with respect to some reference such as a weld centerline, and volume examined.

6.3 *Examination Materials and Surface Preparation:*

6.3.1 TOFD technique can be applied to both metals and nonmetals. Best results are had on fine-grained isotropic materials with low attenuation including some finer grained austenitic alloys and aluminum. With suitable validation procedures, agreeable to the contracting parties, coarser-grained and anisotropic materials may also be examined using TOFD. These usually require additional modifications to frequencies and digital signal processing.

6.3.2 The scanning area shall be clear of weld spatter and other conditions which may interfere with the movement of the probes, the coupling liquid, or the transmission of acoustic energy into the material. Any surface condition such as geometry, coating, and so forth, impeding the ultrasonic examination shall be noted for corrective action prior to scanning.

6.3.3 The TOFD technique may be used with immersion, contact, or gap techniques. Single element or phased array piezoelectric probes may be used. EMAT or other non-standard probes may also be used with suitable validation procedures agreeable to the contracting parties.

6.3.4 The acoustic coupling shall be obtained by using a medium suitable for the purpose and compatible with the material being examined. Water, coupling gels or pastes, greases, and oils are typically used. Water additives such as environmentally-safe wetting agent and corrosion inhibitors may be used to enhance acoustic coupling and protect the examination piece. For examination where ambient temperatures are below 0°C [32°F] 0 °C [32 °F] methyl alcohol or similar media may be used. For examination at elevated temperatures, the examination surface or probes may require cool-down or specially designed high-temperature couplants. The coupling medium selected shall provide uniform and reliable examination in the temperature range of intended use. Couplant and scanning conditions, including temperature, used for standardization shall be the same as that used in the examination.

6.3.5 Examination should occur after welding when the surface temperature is cooled to less than 40°C [100°F] 40 °C [100 °F]. Surface preparation shall be adequate to provide surface access to examine the entire weld volume and heat affected zones.

6.4 *Qualification and Certification of Personnel*—If specified in the contractual agreement, personnel performing examinations to this practice shall be qualified in accordance with a nationally-recognized NDT personnel qualification standard and certified by the employer or certifying agency as applicable. The practice or standard used and its applicable version shall be identified in the contractual agreement between the using parties and should include a requirement for training specific to TOFD.

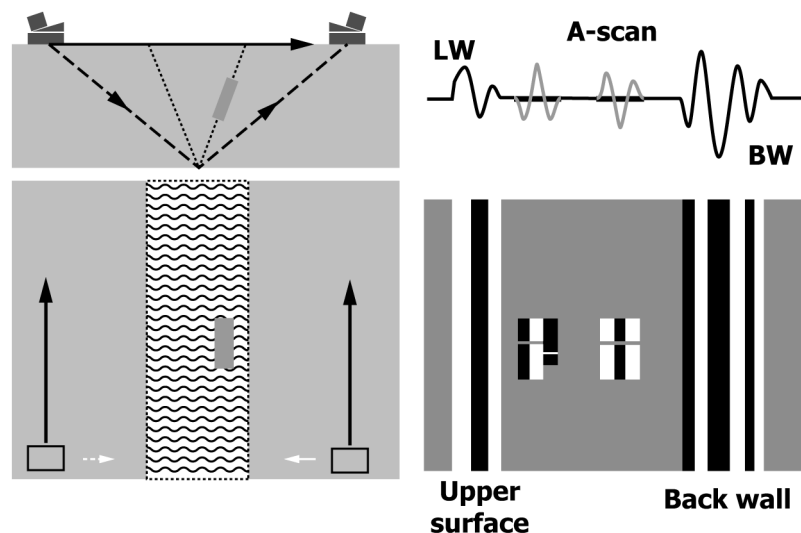


FIG. 2 Schematic Representation of TOFD Scan (Left) and Data Display (Right)

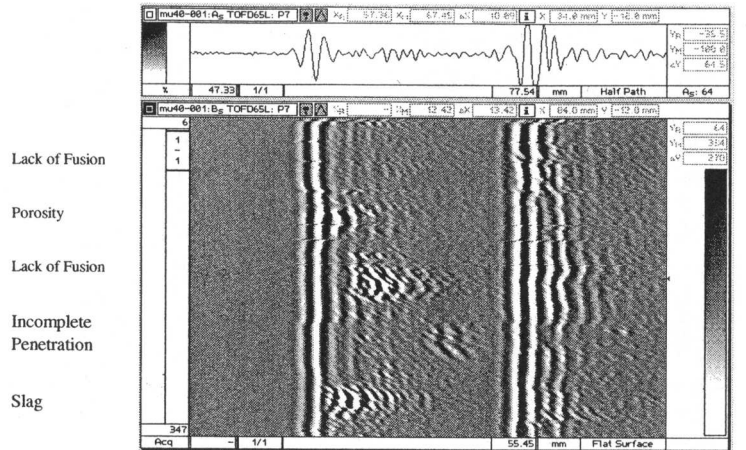


FIG. 3 Sample Display (Real Data) of a Nonparallel Scan of a Weld with Flaws Identified

6.5 Equipment Requirements—An ultrasonic system for TOFD shall provide a means of transmitting, receiving, storing, displaying, and analyzing ultrasonic signals. As well, Additionally, it shall provide a fixed spacing between the transmitting and receiving probes and ensure that probe motion is encoded and its position maintained within prescribed tolerances with respect to a reference position such as the weld centerline.

6.5.1 Electronics:

6.5.1.1 The instrument shall provide a linear “A” scan presentation for both setting up scan parameters and for signal analysis. Instrument linearity may be determined in accordance with the procedures detailed in Guide E1324, within six months of the intended end use date. For digital-based instruments, alternative calibration methods may be used to verify amplitude and time-base output linearity. A copy of the calibration certificate shall be kept on file by the user of the equipment. Instrument linearity shall be such that the accuracy of indicated amplitude or time is within $\pm 5\%$ of the actual full-scale amplitude or time.

6.5.1.2 The ultrasonic pulser may provide excitation voltage by tone burst, uni-polar, uni-polar, or bi-polar square wave. Pulse width shall be tunable to allow optimization of pulse amplitude and duration.

6.5.1.3 The bandwidth of the ultrasonic receiver shall be at least equal to that of the nominal probe frequency and such that the -6 dB bandwidth of the probe does not fall outside of the -6 dB bandwidth of the receiver.

6.5.1.4 Receiver gain control shall be available to adjust signal amplitude in increments of 1 dB or less. Since diffracted signal amplitudes may be significantly lower than for pulse-echo techniques, it may be necessary to incorporate a pre-amplifier in the system.

6.5.1.5 Analogue to digital conversion of waveforms shall have sampling rates at least four times that of the nominal frequency of the probe. When digital signal processing is to be carried out on the raw data, this shall be increased to eight times the nominal frequency of the probe.

6.5.2 Data Display and Recording:

6.5.2.1 The data display used for TOFD shall allow the operator to view the un-rectified A-scan and position the start and length of a gate that determines the extent of the A-scan time-base that is collected.

6.5.2.2 Data collection equipment shall permit storage of all gated A-scans to a magnetic or optical storage medium. Equipment used for TOFD shall require computer software that provides a B-scan display of the collected waveforms (as illustrated in Fig. 2). The B-scan display shall have a minimum of 64 gray-scale or color levels. (Storage of just B-scan images without the underlying A-scan waveforms is not an acceptable form of data recording.)

6.5.2.3 Computer software for TOFD displays shall include algorithms to linearize cursors or the waveform time-base to permit depth and vertical extent estimations.

6.5.2.4 In addition to storage of waveform data, including amplitude and time-base details, the TOFD equipment shall also store positional information indicating the relative position of the waveform with respect to the adjacent waveform(s); that is, encoded position.

6.5.3 Probes—Ultrasonic probes used for TOFD techniques shall conform to the following minimum requirements:

6.5.3.1 Two probes shall be used in a pitch-catch arrangement (TOFD pair).

6.5.3.2 Each probe in the TOFD pair shall have the same nominal frequency.

6.5.3.3 The TOFD pair shall have the same element dimensions.

6.5.3.4 The pulse duration of the probe shall not exceed two cycles as measured to the 20 dB level below the peak response (Guide/Practice E1065 may be used to evaluate characteristics of probes).

6.5.3.5 Guide/Practice E1065, Annex A1 may be used to determine the probe bandwidth. This should be used to assess the receiver bandwidth requirements as stated in 6.5.1.

6.5.3.6 Probes may be focused or unfocused. Unfocused probes are recommended for detection and focused probes are recommended for improved resolution for sizing.

6.5.3.7 Probes may be single element or phased array. EMAT probes may be used with suitable validation procedures agreeable to the contracting parties.

6.5.4 *Mechanics:*

6.5.4.1 Mechanical holders shall be used to ensure that probe spacing is maintained at a fixed distance (typically termed the “probe center spacing” or PCS in other literature). The mechanical holders shall also ensure that alignment to the intended scan axis on the examination piece is maintained to a tolerance agreed upon between contracting parties.

6.5.4.2 Probe motion may be achieved using motorized or manual means, but in all cases, the mechanical holder for the probes shall be equipped with a positional encoder that is synchronized with the sampling of A-scans.

6.5.5

6.6 *Apparatus Set-up*—Fig. 4 provides a schematic of the minimum equipment requirements for a TOFD examination.

6.7 *Probe Selection:*

6.7.1 Probe selection shall be based on the application requirements. The following tables provide initial recommended probe parameters for specified thickness ranges in ferritic steels. For austenitic or other attenuative materials, nominal frequencies normally need to be reduced and element sizes increased.

TABLE 1 For Steel Thickness Ranges up to 75 mm [3 in.]

Nominal Wall Thickness mm [in.]	Nominal Frequency (MHz)	Element Size mm [in.]	Recommended Angles
<12 [0.5]	10 to 15	2 to 6 [0.08 to 0.25]	60 to 70°
12 to <35 [0.5 to 1.4]	5 to 10	2 to 6 [0.25 to 0.5]	50 to 70°
35 to <75 [1.4 to 3]	2 to 5	6 to 12 [0.25 to 0.5]	45 to 65°

6.7.2 For thickness ranges in steel 75 to 300 mm, the beam divergence from a single element is not likely to provide sufficient intensity for good detection over the entire thickness. For thickness 75 mm [3 in.] and greater (in steel), and when required in smaller thicknesses, the examination piece shall be divided into multiple zones. For thickness 75 mm [3 in.] and greater (in steel) and when required in smaller thicknesses, zones and sensitivity targets shall be placed in a reference block at least at 25 % and 75 % through thickness in each zone to verify that there is adequate beam coverage for the multiple zone technique used.

TABLE 2 For Multiple Zones in Steel with Thicknesses Up to 300 mm [12 in.] 300 mm [12 in.]

Nominal Wall Thickness mm [in.]	Nominal Frequency (MHz)	Element Size mm [in.]	Recommended Angle
<35 [1.4]	5 to 15	3 to 6 [0.125 to 0.25]	50 to 70°
≥35 to 300 [≥1.4 to 12]	1 to 5	6 to 12.5 [0.25 to 0.5]	45 to 65°

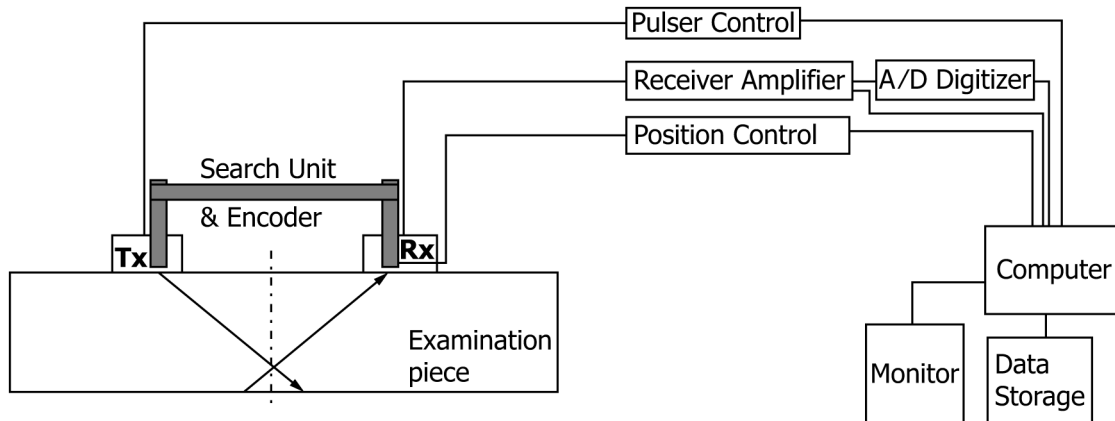


FIG. 4 Schematic of Minimum TOFD Apparatus