**Designation: C365/C365M – 05**

# Standard Test Method for
# Flatwise Compressive Properties of Sandwich Cores[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C365/C365M; 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.

*This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the Department of Defense.*

## 1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of compressive strength and modulus of sandwich cores. These properties are usually determined for design purposes in a direction normal to the plane of facings as the core would be placed in a structural sandwich construction. The test procedures pertain to compression in this direction in particular, but also can be applied with possible minor variations to determining compressive properties in other directions. Permissible core material forms include those with continuous bonding surfaces (such as balsa wood and foams) as well as those with discontinuous bonding surfaces (such as honeycomb).

1.2 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. Within the text the inch-pound units are shown in brackets. The values stated in each system are not exact equivalents; therefore, each system must be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in nonconformance with the standard.

1.3 *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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*[2]
C271/C271M Test Method for Density of Sandwich Core Materials
C274 Terminology of Structural Sandwich Constructions
D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics
D3878 Terminology for Composite Materials

D5229/D5229M Test Method for Moisture Absorption Properties and Equilibrium Conditioning of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials
E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines
E6 Terminology Relating to Methods of Mechanical Testing
E122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process
E177 Practice for Use of the Terms Precision and Bias in ASTM Test Methods
E456 Terminology Relating to Quality and Statistics
E1309 Guide for Identification of Fiber-Reinforced Polymer-Matrix Composite Materials in Databases
E1434 Guide for Recording Mechanical Test Data of Fiber-Reinforced Composite Materials in Databases
E1471 Guide for Identification of Fibers, Fillers, and Core Materials in Computerized Material Property Databases

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Terminology D3878 defines terms relating to high-modulus fibers and their composites. Terminology C274 defines terms relating to structural sandwich constructions. Terminology D883 defines terms relating to plastics. Terminology E6 defines terms relating to mechanical testing. Terminology E456 and Practice E177 define terms relating to statistics. In the event of a conflict between terms, Terminology D3878 shall have precedence over the other terminologies.

3.2 *Symbols*:

$A$ = cross-sectional area of a test specimen

$CV$ = coefficient of variation statistic of a sample population for a given property (in percent)

$E_z^{fc}$ = flatwise compressive modulus

$F_z^{fcu}$ = ultimate flatwise compressive strength

$F_z^{fc0.02}$ = flatwise compressive strength at 2 % LVDT/compressometer deflection

$P_{max}$ = maximum force carried by test specimen before failure

$P_{0.02}$ = force carried by test specimen at 2 % LVDT/compressometer deflection

$S_{n-1}$ = standard deviation statistic of a sample population for a given property

$t$ = thickness of a test specimen

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[1] This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D30 on Composite Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D30.09 on Sandwich Construction.

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[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.

$x_1$ = test result for an individual specimen from the sample population for a given property

$\overline{x}$ = mean or average (estimate of mean) of a sample population for a given property

$\delta$ = LVDT or compressometer deflection

$\sigma_z^{fc0.02}$ = flatwise compressive stress at 2 % LVDT/compressometer deflection

## 4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 This test method consists of subjecting a sandwich core to a uniaxial compressive force normal to the plane of the facings as the core would be placed in a structural sandwich construction. The force is transmitted to the sandwich core using loading platens attached to the testing machine.

## 5. Significance and Use

5.1 Flatwise compressive strength and modulus are fundamental mechanical properties of sandwich cores that are used in designing sandwich panels. Deformation data can be obtained, and from a complete force versus deformation curve, it is possible to compute the compressive stress at any applied force (such as compressive stress at proportional limit force or compressive strength at the maximum force) and to compute the effective modulus of the core.

5.2 This test method provides a standard method of obtaining the flatwise compressive strength and modulus for sandwich core structural design properties, material specifications, research and development applications, and quality assurance.

5.3 In order to prevent local crushing at the edges of some honeycomb cores, it is often desirable to stabilize the edges with a suitable material, such as a thin layer of resin or thin facings. Flatwise compressive strength data may be generated using either stabilized specimens (reported as stabilized compression strength) or non-stabilized specimens (reported as bare compression strength). It is customary aerospace industry practice to determine compression modulus only when using stabilized specimens.

5.4 Factors that influence the flatwise compressive strength and shall therefore be reported include the following: core material, methods of material fabrication, core geometry (cell size), core density, specimen geometry, specimen preparation, specimen conditioning, environment of testing, specimen alignment, loading procedure, and speed of testing.

## 6. Interferences

6.1 *Material and Specimen Preparation*—Poor material fabrication practices and damage induced by improper specimen machining are known causes of high data scatter in composites and sandwich structures in general. A specific material factor that affects sandwich cores is variability in core density. Important aspects of sandwich core specimen preparation that contribute to data scatter include the existence of joints, voids or other core discontinuities, out-of-plane curvature, and surface roughness.

6.2 *System Alignment*—Non-uniform loading over the surface of the test specimen may cause premature failure. Non-uniform loading may result from non-uniform specimen thickness, failure to locate the specimen concentrically in the fixture, or system or fixture misalignment.

6.3 *Geometry*—Specific geometric factors that affect sandwich flatwise compressive strength include core cell geometry, core thickness, and specimen shape (square or circular). Flatwise compressive strength and modulus measurements are particularly sensitive to thickness variations over the cross-sectional area of the specimen, which can cause local loading eccentricities, as well as toe regions in the force versus displacement curves due to specimen seating.

6.4 *Environment*—Results are affected by the environmental conditions under which specimens are conditioned, as well as the conditions under which the tests are conducted. Specimens tested in various environments can exhibit significant differences in both strength behavior and failure mode. Critical environments must be assessed independently for each core material tested.

## 7. Apparatus

7.1 *Micrometers and Calipers*—A micrometer having a flat anvil interface, or a caliper of suitable size, shall be used. The accuracy of the instrument(s) shall be suitable for reading to within 1 % of the sample length and width (or diameter) and thickness. For typical specimen geometries, an instrument with an accuracy of ±12 μm [±0.0005 in.] is desirable for thickness measurement, whereas an instrument with an accuracy of ±250 μm [±0.010 in.] is acceptable for length and width (or diameter) measurement.

7.2 *Loading Platens*—Force shall be introduced into the specimen using one fixed flat platen and one spherical seat (self-aligning) platen. The platens shall be well-aligned and shall not apply eccentric forces. A satisfactory type of apparatus is shown in Figs. 1 and 2. The platen surfaces shall extend beyond the test specimen periphery. If the platens are not sufficiently hardened, or simply to protect the platen surfaces, a hardened plate (with parallel surfaces) can be inserted between each end of the fixture and the corresponding platen.

7.3 *Testing Machine*—The testing machine shall be in accordance with Practices E4 and shall satisfy the following requirements:

7.3.1 *Testing Machine Configuration*—The testing machine shall have both an essentially stationary head and a movable head.

7.3.2 *Drive Mechanism*—The testing machine drive mechanism shall be capable of imparting to the movable head a controlled velocity with respect to the stationary head. The velocity of the movable head shall be capable of being regulated in accordance with 11.5.

7.3.3 *Force Indicator*—The testing machine load-sensing device shall be capable of indicating the total force being carried by the test specimen. This device shall be essentially free from inertia lag at the specified rate of testing and shall indicate the force with an accuracy over the force range(s) of interest of within ±1 % of the indicated value.

7.4 *Crosshead Displacement Indicator*—The testing machine shall be capable of monitoring and recording the crosshead displacement (stroke) with a precision of at least ±1 %. If machine compliance is significant, it is acceptable to measure the displacement of the movable head using an LVDT, compressometer, or similar device with ±1 % precision on displacement. A transducer and rod setup, shown in Figs. 1 and
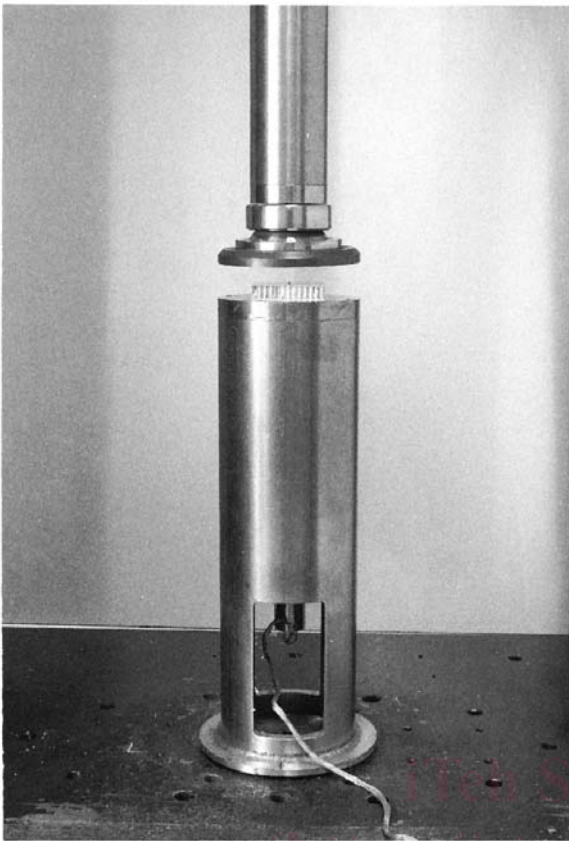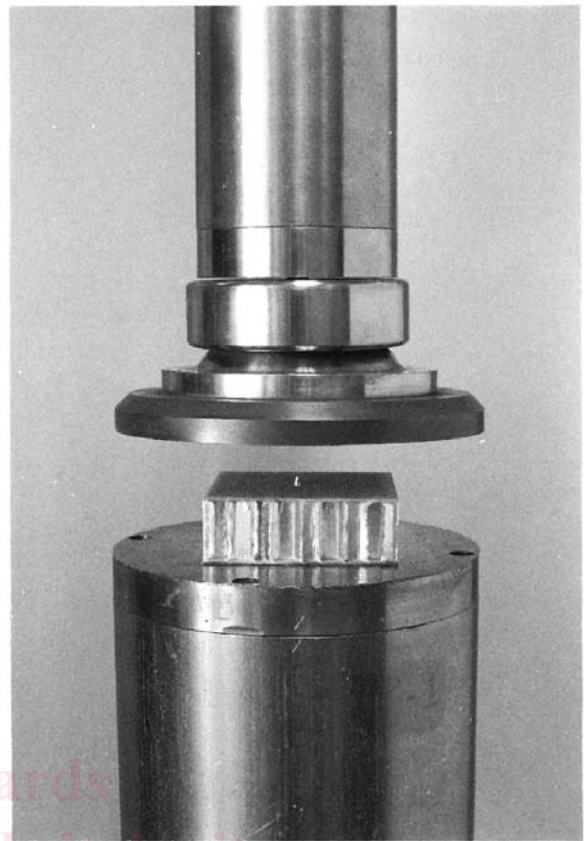
**FIG. 1 Platen, Transducer, and Rod Setup**



**FIG. 2 Close-up of Specimen Between Loading Platens**

2, has been found to work satisfactorily. In the example shown, a small hole is drilled in the center of the core specimen and in the bottom loading platen, and a transducer rod is inserted through the hole, such that it contacts the upper loading platen.

NOTE 1—Bonded resistance strain gages are not usually considered satisfactory for measuring strain in this application because of their stiffness. The reinforcing effect of bonding gages to some cores can lead to large errors in measurement of strain.

7.5 *Conditioning Chamber*—When conditioning materials at non-laboratory environments, a temperature/vapor-level controlled environmental conditioning chamber is required that shall be capable of maintaining the required temperature to within ±3°C [±5°F] and the required relative humidity level to within ±3 %. Chamber conditions shall be monitored either on an automated continuous basis or on a manual basis at regular intervals.

7.6 *Environmental Test Chamber*—An environmental test chamber is required for test environments other than ambient testing laboratory conditions. This chamber shall be capable of maintaining the gage section of the test specimen at the required test environment during the mechanical test.

## 8. Sampling and Test Specimens

8.1 *Sampling*—Test at least five specimens per test condition unless valid results can be gained through the use of fewer specimens, as in the case of a designed experiment. For statistically significant data, consult the procedures outlined in Practice E122. Report the method of sampling.

8.2 *Geometry*—Test specimens shall have a square or circular cross-section not exceeding 10 000 mm$^2$ [16.0 in.$^2$], and shall be equal in thickness to the sandwich core thickness. Minimum specimen cross-sectional areas for various types of core materials are as follows:

NOTE 2—The specimen's cross-sectional area is defined in the facing plane, in regard to the orientation that the core would be placed in a structural sandwich construction. For example, for a honeycomb core the cross-sectional area is defined in the plane of the cells, which is perpendicular to the orientation of the cell walls.

8.2.1 *Continuous Bonding Surfaces (for example, Balsa Wood, Foams)*—The minimum facing area of the specimen shall be 625 mm$^2$ [1.0 in.$^2$].

8.2.2 *Discontinuous Cellular Bonding Surfaces (for example, Honeycomb)*—The required facing area of the specimen is dependent upon the cell size, to ensure a minimum number of cells are tested. Minimum facing areas are recommended in Table 1 for the more common cell sizes. These are intended to provide approximately 60 cells minimum in the test specimen. The largest facing area listed in the table (5625

**TABLE 1 Recommended Minimum Specimen Cross-Sectional Area**

| Minimum Cell Size (mm [in.]) | Maximum Cell Size (mm [in.]) | Minimum Cross-Sectional Area (mm$^2$ [in.$^2$]) |
|---|---|---|
| ... | 3.0 [0.125] | 625 [1.0] |
| 3.0 [0.125] | 6.0 [0.250] | 2500 [4.0] |
| 6.0 [0.250] | 9.0 [0.375] | 5625 [9.0] |