
**Methods for the petrographic analysis
of coals —**

**Part 1:
Vocabulary**

Méthodes d'analyse pétrographique des charbons —

Partie 1: Vocabulaire
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ISO copyright office
Ch. de Blandonnet 8 • CP 401
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel. +41 22 749 01 11
Fax +41 22 749 09 47
copyright@iso.org
www.iso.org

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 27, *Solid mineral fuels*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Methods of analysis*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 7404-1:1994), which has been technically revised.

ISO 7404 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Methods for the petrographic analysis of coals*:

- *Part 1: Vocabulary*
- *Part 2: Method of preparing coal samples*
- *Part 3: Method of determining maceral group composition*
- *Part 4: Method of determining microlithotype, carbominerite and minerite composition*
- *Part 5: Method of determining microscopically the reflectance of vitrinite*

Introduction

Petrographic analyses have been recognized internationally as important in the context of the genesis, vertical and lateral variation, continuity, metamorphism and usage of coal. The International Committee for Coal and Organic Petrology (ICCP) has made recommendations concerning nomenclature and analytical methods and has described in detail the characteristics of a wide range of coals^{[3][4][5]}. The text of this part of ISO 7404 agrees substantially with the text of the relevant ICCP publications and incorporates many useful comments made by members of the ICCP and by member bodies of ISO/TC 27, *Solid mineral fuels*.

Petrographic analyses of a single coal provide information about the rank, the maceral and microlithotype compositions and the distribution of minerals in the coal. The reflectance of vitrinite is a useful measure of coal rank and the distribution of the reflectance of vitrinite in a coal blend, together with a maceral group analysis, can provide information about important chemical and technological properties of the blend.

ISO 7404 is concerned with the methods of petrographic analysis currently employed in characterizing coal in the context of its technological and/or geological use. It establishes a system for petrographic analysis and comprises five parts, as follows:

- Part 1: Vocabulary;
- Part 2: Method of preparing coal samples;
- Part 3: Method of determining maceral group composition;
- Part 4: Method of determining microlithotype, carbominerite and minerite composition;
- Part 5: Method of determining microscopically the reflectance of vitrinite.

The definitions given are intended for use solely in connection with the generally accepted international methods of petrographic analysis of coal described in the other parts of ISO 7404.

The petrographic terms listed herein are those used by the ICCP and ISO. They do not include terms such as, for example, pseudovitrinite, semi-vitrinite and semi-inertinite which refer to types of maceral with particular properties, but which are sometimes difficult to define. Such terms may be considered important for specific applications, but their wider use is not recommended.

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Methods for the petrographic analysis of coals —

Part 1: Vocabulary

1 Scope

This part of ISO 7404 defines terms that are used in connection with both maceral and microlithotype analyses, and with the determination of the reflectance of vitrinite. It applies to the terms used in the examination of coal of all ranks.

This part of ISO 7404 is not intended to be a comprehensive glossary of coal petrographic terminology, nor does it attempt to provide sufficient information to allow recognition of all the coal components described. Further information may be obtained from the relevant ICCP publications^{[3][4][5]}.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 General terms

2.1.1 coal

combustible sedimentary rock formed from bio- and geochemically altered plant remains (peat) consolidated under superimposed strata

Note 1 to entry: The characteristics of different coals are due to differences in source plant material, in the conditions and the degree of change that the material has undergone in its geological history and in the range of impurities present. Coal composition can be characterized microscopically by maceral and microlithotype compositions.

2.1.2 coalification

process by which sedimented plant remains are transformed into *coal* (2.1.1)

Note 1 to entry: This process is characterized by an increase in the carbon content in the plant remains and a decrease in the yield of volatile matter from the plant remains. As coalification proceeds, the *reflectances* (2.2.1) of the *macerals* (2.3.1) increase. Vitrinite is used as a reference material for the determination of the *rank* (2.1.3) of coal because its reflectance increases uniformly with the extent of coalification.

2.1.3 rank

position of a *coal* (2.1.1) in the *coalification* (2.1.2) series from *low rank coal* (2.1.4) to *high rank coal* (2.1.6), indicating maturity in terms of chemical and physical properties

2.1.4 low rank coal

coals (2.1.1) of low rank that, in their natural state, are characterized by high inherent moisture content, high volatile matter content, low calorific value and a low vitrinite reflectance

Note 1 to entry: Low rank coals were formerly often referred to as lignite (now low rank A and B) and subbituminous coal (now low rank C). Regionally, also terms like brown coal were used for coals with a vitrinite reflectance below 0,5 % R_r.

Note 2 to entry: They are non-agglomerating.

Note 3 to entry: See ISO 11760.

2.1.5

medium rank coal

general descriptive term for *coal* (2.1.1) between *high rank coal* (2.1.6) and *low rank coal* (2.1.4)

Note 1 to entry: The vitrinites in all coals of medium rank melt and form semi-coke when coal is heated in the absence of oxygen above 360 °C to 380 °C. Medium rank coals were formerly referred to as bituminous coals. Their vitrinite reflectance, R_r %, lies between 0,5 % and 2 %.

Note 2 to entry: See ISO 11760.

2.1.6

high rank coal

coal (2.1.1) of high rank, with a low volatile matter content and a semi-metallic lustre, and which does not soften or swell when heated

Note 1 to entry: High rank coals were formerly referred to as anthracites. Their vitrinite reflectance, R_r %, lies between 2 % and 6 %^[1].

2.2 Optical microscopy terms

2.2.1

reflectance

percentage of the near-normal incident light reflected from a polished surface of a coal maceral

Note 1 to entry: For the purpose of this part of ISO 7404, reflectance refers to measurements made on coal under oil immersion.

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2.2.2

maximum reflectance

highest value of *reflectance* (2.2.1) obtained when any polished section of a particle or lump of *coal* (2.1.1) is rotated in its own plane in linearly polarized light

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2.2.3

random reflectance

reflectance (2.2.1) of any polished section of a particle or a lump of *coal* (2.1.1) when determined in non-polarized light without rotation of the specimen

Note 1 to entry: The term “random reflectance” has replaced the old terms “mean reflectance” and “average reflectance” to avoid confusion, mainly with the use of “mean” for data presenting the mean of the required number of reflectance readings as in, for example, “mean random reflectance”.

2.2.4

parasitic reflection

percentage of the incident light reaching the measuring device from lens boundary faces and other reflecting surfaces in the microscope

2.2.5

reflectance standard

polished surface of an isotropic material of known *reflectance* (2.2.1) which is used for calibrating reflectance measuring equipment

2.2.6

zero standard

non-reflecting standard used for calibrating reflectance-measuring equipment

2.2.7**particulate block**

solid block consisting of particles of crushed *coal* (2.1.1) representative of the sample when prepared accordingly, bound in resin, cast in a mould and with one face ground and polished

Note 1 to entry: See Reference [4].

2.2.8**lump section**

piece of *coal* (2.1.1) of size suitable for polishing and examination under the microscope

Note 1 to entry: One face of the lump section, usually that perpendicular to the bedding plane, is ground and polished.

2.2.9**point**

area overlain by the intersection of the cross hair in the eyepiece graticule or on the computer monitor during microscopical analysis

2.3 Petrographic terms**2.3.1****maceral**

microscopically recognizable organic constituent of *coal* (2.1.1) analogous to the minerals of inorganic rocks, but differing from them in that macerals have no characteristic crystal form and are not constant in chemical composition

Note 1 to entry: The macerals are distinguished from one another microscopically on the basis of their differences in such properties as *reflectance* (2.2.1), colour, fluorescence, morphology, size and hardness. They originate from the remains of different tissues of plants and their physical and chemical properties change as *coalification* (2.1.2) proceeds. Macerals are grouped into maceral groups and sub-groups and can be further differentiated into maceral varieties (see Table 3).

2.3.2**microlithotype**

naturally occurring *maceral* (2.3.1) or association of macerals with a minimum layer width of 50 µm

Note 1 to entry: See also 3.2.

2.3.3**minerals in coal**

natural inorganic constituents visible during microscopical examination

Note 1 to entry: Minerals are determined on a volume basis as part of a maceral analysis.

2.3.4**mineral matter in coal**

inorganic material, except moisture

Note 1 to entry: Mineral matter is calculated on a mass basis either from a direct determination at low temperature or from the ash yield at high temperature.

2.3.5**carbominerite**

collective term for intergrowths of minerals and *macerals* (2.3.1)

Note 1 to entry: See also 3.3.

2.3.6**minerite**

collective term for intergrowths of minerals with *macerals* (2.3.1) in which the proportion of minerals is more than 60 % by volume, or in which more than 20 % by volume of sulfide minerals is present