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**Plastics — Determination of average  
molecular weight and molecular  
weight distribution of polymers using  
size-exclusion chromatography —**

**Part 2:  
Universal calibration method**

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*Plastiques — Détermination de la masse moléculaire moyenne  
et de la distribution des masses moléculaires de polymères par  
chromatographie d'exclusion stérique —*

ISO 16014-2:2019

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sis/16014-2-2019>  
*Partie 2: Méthode d'étalonnage universelle*

b238-0b3598424f64/iso-16014-2-2019



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ISO 16014-2:2019

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/19d681d4-d254-447b-b238-0b3598424f64/iso-16014-2-2019>



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Published in Switzerland

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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](http://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](http://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 of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 61, *Plastics*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Physical-chemical properties*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 16014-2:2012), which has been technically revised. The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

- publication dates of references have been removed;
- molecular mass has been change to molecular weight according to IUPAC rule.

A list of all parts in the ISO 16014 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

# Plastics — Determination of average molecular weight and molecular weight distribution of polymers using size-exclusion chromatography —

## Part 2: Universal calibration method

### 1 Scope

This document specifies a method for determining the average molecular weight and the molecular weight distribution of polymers using size-exclusion chromatography (SEC). The average molecular weight and the molecular weight distribution are calculated using a universal calibration curve instead of the conventional calibration curve.

NOTE This test method is classified as a relative method as described in ISO 16014-1, but the average molecular weights and molecular weight distributions calculated by the method are equal to, or nearly equal to, the absolute values. For details, see the [Annex A](#).

### 2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies

ISO 472, *Plastics — Vocabulary* <https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sst/19d681d4-d254-447b-b238-0b3598424f64/iso-16014-2-2019>

ISO 16014-1, *Plastics — Determination of average molecular weight and molecular weight distribution of polymers using size-exclusion chromatography — Part 1: General principles*

ISO 16014-3, *Plastics — Determination of average molecular weight and molecular weight distribution of polymers using size-exclusion chromatography — Part 3: Low-temperature method*

ISO 16014-4, *Plastics — Determination of average molecular weight and molecular weight distribution of polymers using size-exclusion chromatography — Part 4: High-temperature method*

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 472 and in ISO 16014-1 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

### 4 Principle of universal calibration method

In ISO 16014-2, the experimental SEC procedures are the same as in ISO 16014-1, ISO 16014-3 and ISO 16014-4, but the molecular weight  $M_i$  at each elution time is calculated based on the universal calibration method. According to the theory, this method provides values for the average molecular weight and the molecular weight distribution that are equal to, or nearly equal to, the absolute values.

According to theory, the size of a polymer in solution, the hydrodynamic volume,  $V_h$ , is proportional to the product of the intrinsic viscosity  $[\eta]$  and the molecular weight  $M$  as given by [Formula \(1\)](#):

$$[\eta] \propto V_h / M \rightarrow [\eta]M \propto V_h \tag{1}$$

In SEC, many random-coil polymers, regardless of their chemical structure, degree of branching, composition or tacticity, follow the same relationship, in which the retention time is proportional to the product of  $[\eta]$  and  $M$  under the specific experimental conditions, including the column system, solvent and temperature. The relationship between the logarithm of  $[\eta]M$  and the elution time is called the “universal calibration curve”, and the SEC technique for the determination of average molecular weights and molecular weight distributions using this calibration curve is called the “universal calibration method”.

As a first step, the universal calibration curve, retention time  $t$  versus the logarithm of  $[\eta]M$ , is prepared using polymer standards with narrow molecular weight distributions and the Mark-Houwink-Sakurada equation shown in [Formula \(2\)](#):

$$[\eta]_s = K_s M_s^{a_s} \tag{2}$$

where the subscript “s” denotes “polymer standard”.

Direct measurement of  $[\eta]_s$  is also possible.

In the next step, the molecular weight  $M_i$  at each retention time  $t_i$  is calculated using the universal calibration curve shown in [Formula \(3\)](#) and the Mark-Houwink-Sakurada equation shown in [Formula \(4\)](#) for the polymer sample:

$$[\eta] = KM^a \tag{3}$$

$$[\eta]_{s,i} M_{s,i} = [\eta]_i M_i = KM_i^{a+1} \tag{4}$$

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Again, direct measurement of  $[\eta]$  is possible.

Lastly, the average molecular weight and the molecular weight distribution are calculated from the molecular weight  $M_i$  and peak height  $H_i$  at each retention time, using the formulae given in [9.2](#), [9.3](#) and [9.4](#).

For additional information on the universal calibration curve and the use of a conventional calibration curve based on universal calibration theory, see [9.1](#) and [A.2.1](#).

For additional information on the intrinsic viscosity  $[\eta]$ , see [A.2.2](#).

The values of  $K$  and  $a$  in the Mark-Houwink-Sakurada equation for several polymers are given in [Annex B](#).

## 5 Reagents

According to ISO 16014-1.

## 6 Apparatus

According to ISO 16014-1.

## 7 Procedure

According to ISO 16014-1.

## 8 Data acquisition and processing

According to ISO 16014-1.

## 9 Expression of results

### 9.1 Preparation of universal calibration curve

The universal calibration curve is prepared by plotting the logarithm of  $[\eta]_s M_s$  against the elution time for a number of polymer standards. The value of  $[\eta]_s$  for each polymer standard may be calculated using the Mark-Houwink-Sakurada equation or measured directly under the specific elution conditions.

For information on the molecular weights of commercially available polymer standards, see ISO 16014-1.

For the expression of the universal calibration curve, polynomials containing terms up to  $t^3$  are widely used. The addition of subsequent higher-power terms might improve the fit of the calibration curve. See [Formulae \(5\)](#) and [\(6\)](#).

$$\lg([\eta]_s M_s) = A_0 + A_1 t \quad (5)$$

$$\lg([\eta]_s M_s) = A_0 + A_1 t + A_2 t^2 + A_3 t^3 \quad (6)$$

where

$[\eta]_s$  is the intrinsic viscosity of the polymer standard eluting at time  $t$ ;

$M_s$  is the molecular weight of the polymer standard eluting at time  $t$ ;

$A_0, A_1, A_2, A_3$  are the coefficients;

$t$  is the elution time.

An example of a universal calibration curve is shown in [Figure 1](#). Elution time can be replaced by elution volume  $V_e$  ( $V_e = t \cdot Q$  where  $Q$  is the flow rate).

### 9.2 Calculation of average molecular weight

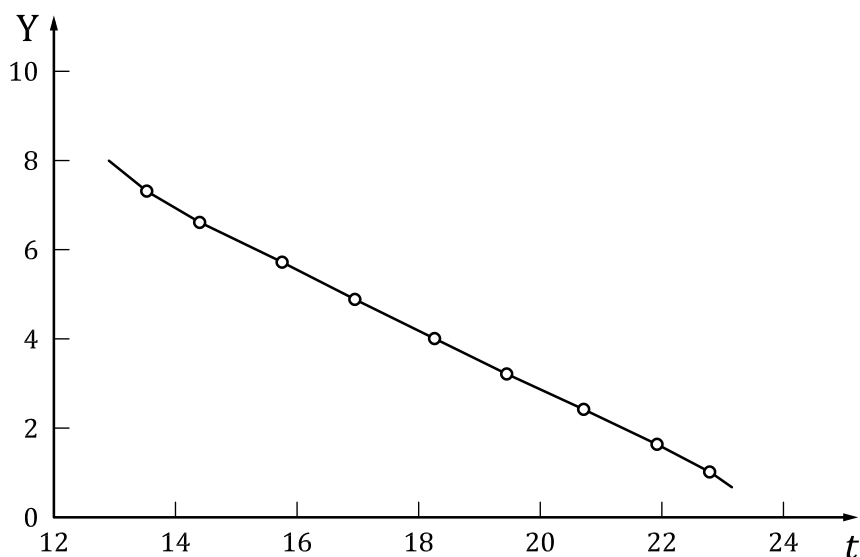
Calculate the molecular weight  $M_i$  of the polymer sample at elution time  $t_i$  using  $[\eta]_{s,i} M_{s,i}$  at elution time  $t_i$  and  $K$  and  $a$  in the Mark-Houwink-Sakurada equation or  $[\eta]$  determined for the polymer sample from [Formula \(9\)](#).

$$[\eta] = KM^a \text{ (polymer sample)} \quad (7)$$

$$[\eta]_{s,i} M_{s,i} = [\eta]_i M_i = KM_i^{a+1} \quad (8)$$

$$M_i = \left( [\eta]_{s,i} M_{s,i} / K \right)^{1/(a+1)} = ([\eta]_{s,i} M_{s,i}) / [\eta]_i \quad (9)$$

Calculate the signal intensity,  $H_i$ , at each elution time,  $t_i$ , using the corrected test sample chromatogram for which the baseline and the calculation range have been determined as specified in ISO 16014-1.



**Key**

$t$  elution time (min)

$Y$   $\lg([\eta] \cdot M)$

**Figure 1 — Universal calibration curve**

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The average molecular weight and the polydispersity can be calculated from the values of molecular weight,  $M_i$ , and signal strength,  $H_i$  (see ISO 16014-1).

**9.3 Differential molecular weight distribution curve**

According to ISO 16014-1. <https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/19d681d4-d254-447b-b238-0b3598424f64/iso-16014-2-2019>

**9.4 Cumulative molecular weight distribution curve**

According to ISO 16014-1.

**10 Precision**

As the slope of the calibration curve for the sample polymer is almost equal to that of the calibration curve for the polymer standards, the precision of this test method is expected to be almost the same as that given in ISO 16014-3 and ISO 16014-4.

**11 Test report**

**11.1 General**

According to ISO 16014-1.

**11.2 Apparatus and measurement parameters**

According to ISO 16014-1.



### **11.3 Calibration of the system**

#### **11.3.1 Information on the molecular weight standards**

According to ISO 16014-1.

#### **11.3.2 Calibration curve**

Include a copy of the universal calibration curve itself or, if a conventional calibration curve was prepared based on the universal calibration curve, a copy of the conventional calibration curve.

### **11.4 Results**

According to ISO 16014-1.

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