



**International
Standard**

ISO 17973

**Surface chemical analysis —
Medium-resolution Auger electron
spectrometers — Calibration of
energy scales for elemental analysis**

*Analyse chimique des surfaces — Spectromètres d'électrons
Auger à résolution moyenne — Étalonnage des échelles d'énergie
pour l'analyse élémentaire*

Third edition

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Foreword

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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 document 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).

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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.

The committee responsible for this document is Technical Committee ISO/TC 201, *Surface chemical analysis*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Electron spectroscopies*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 17973:2016), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- NOTE added to [6.3](#) to provide example sputtering conditions for cleaning sample surface;
- text added to [6.5](#) regarding need to check detector is operating within its linear region.

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.

Introduction

Auger electron spectroscopy (AES) is used extensively for the surface analysis of materials. Elements in the sample (with the exception of hydrogen and helium) are identified from comparisons of the peak energies and peak shapes, with tabulations of peak energies and data in handbooks of spectra for the different elements. To identify the peaks, calibration of the energy scale with an uncertainty of 3 eV is generally adequate, and this document is only intended for work at that level of accuracy (for greater accuracy, see ISO 17974).

The method for calibrating kinetic energy scales specified in this document uses metallic samples of pure copper (Cu) and either aluminium (Al) or gold (Au). It does not include tests for defects in the instrument, since few defects are significant at the level of accuracy concerned.

Traditionally, kinetic energies of Auger electrons have been referenced to the vacuum level, and this reference is still used by many analysts. However, the vacuum level is ill-defined and can vary from instrument to instrument over a range of 0,5 eV. Although use of the vacuum level reference procedure will generally not cause ambiguity in elemental identification, it can cause uncertainty in measurements at high resolution relating to chemical states. Because of this, instruments designed for both Auger electron spectroscopy and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy reference the kinetic energies to the Fermi level, giving values typically 4,5 eV higher than those referenced to the vacuum level. For the purposes of this document, the user is free to choose the reference appropriate to their work.

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