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# Standard Guide for Selection of Calibrations Needed for X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) Experiments<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E2735; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This guide describes an approach to enable users and analysts to determine the calibrations and standards useful to obtain meaningful surface chemistry data with X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) and to optimize the instrument for specific analysis objectives and data collection time.

1.2 This guide offers an organized collection of information or a series of options and does not recommend a specific course of action. This guide cannot replace education or experience and should be used in conjunction with professional judgment. Not all aspects of this guide will be applicable in all circumstances.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.4 *This standard is not intended to represent or replace the standard of care by which the adequacy of a given professional service must be judged, nor should this document be applied without consideration of a project's many unique aspects. The word "Standard" in the title of this document means only that the document has been approved through the ASTM consensus process.*

1.5 *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:<sup>2</sup>

E995 Guide for Background Subtraction Techniques in Au-

ger Electron Spectroscopy and X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy

E996 Practice for Reporting Data in Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy

E1078 Guide for Specimen Preparation and Mounting in Surface Analysis

E1127 Guide for Depth Profiling in Auger Electron Spectroscopy

E1217 Practice for Determination of the Specimen Area Contributing to the Detected Signal in Auger Electron Spectrometers and Some X-Ray Photoelectron Spectrometers

E1523 Guide to Charge Control and Charge Referencing Techniques in X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy

E1577 Guide for Reporting of Ion Beam Parameters Used in Surface Analysis

E1634 Guide for Performing Sputter Crater Depth Measurements

E1636 Practice for Analytically Describing Depth-Profile and Linescan-Profile Data by an Extended Logistic Function

E1829 Guide for Handling Specimens Prior to Surface Analysis

E2108 Practice for Calibration of the Electron Binding-Energy Scale of an X-Ray Photoelectron Spectrometer

### 2.2 ISO Standards:<sup>3</sup>

ISO 10810 Surface Chemical Analysis—Depth Profiling—Measurement of Sputtered Depth

ISO 14606 Surface Chemical Analysis—Sputter Depth Profiling—Optimisation Using Layered Systems as Reference Materials

ISO 14701 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Measurement of Silicon Oxide Thickness

ISO 14976 Surface Chemical Analysis—Data Transfer Format

ISO 15470 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Description of Selected Instrumental Performance Parameters

<sup>1</sup> This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E42 on Surface Analysis and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E42.03 on Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy.

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

<sup>3</sup> Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

- ISO 15472 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectrometers—Calibration of Energy Scales
- ISO/TR 15969 Surface Chemical Analysis—Depth Profiling—Measurement of Sputtered Depth
- ISO 18115-1 Surface Chemical Analysis—Vocabulary—Part 1: General Terms and Terms Used in Spectroscopy
- ISO 18115-2 Surface Chemical Analysis—Vocabulary—Part 2: Terms Used in Scanning-Probe Microscopy
- ISO 18116 Surface Chemical Analysis—Guidelines for Preparation and Mounting of Specimens for Analysis
- ISO 18117 Surface Chemical Analysis—Handling of Specimens Prior to Analysis
- ISO 18118 Surface Chemical Analysis—Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Guide to the Use of Experimentally Determined Relative Sensitivity Factors for the Quantitative Analysis of Homogeneous Materials
- ISO/TR 18392 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Procedures for Determining Backgrounds
- ISO 18516 Surface Chemical Analysis—Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Determination of Lateral Resolution
- ISO 19318 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Reporting of Methods Used for Charge Control and Charge Correction
- ISO/TR 19319 Surface Chemical Analysis—Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Determination of Lateral Resolution, Analysis Area and Sample Area Viewed by the Analyser
- ISO 20903 Surface Chemical Analysis—Auger Electron Spectroscopy and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Methods Used to Determine Peak Intensities and Information Required when Reporting Results
- ISO 21270 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron and Auger Electron Spectrometers—Linearity of Intensity Scale
- ISO 22335 Surface Chemical Analysis—Depth Profiling—Measurement of Sputtering Rate: Mesh-Replica Method Using a Mechanical Stylus Profilometer
- ISO 24237 Surface Chemical Analysis—X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy—Repeatability and Constancy of Intensity Scale

### 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of surface analysis terms used in this guide, see ISO 18115-1 and ISO 18115-2.

### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 The purpose of this guide is assist users and analysts in selecting the standardization procedures relevant to a defined XPS experiment. These experiments may be based, for example, upon material failure analysis, the determination of surface chemistry of a solid, or the composition profile of a thin film or coating. A series of options will be summarized giving the standards that are related to specific information requirements. ISO 15470 and ISO 10810 also aid XPS users in experiment design for typical samples. ASTM Committee E42 and ISO TC201 are in a continuous process of updating and

adding standards and guides. It is recommended to refer to the ASTM and ISO websites for a current list of standards.

## 5. Procedure

### 5.1 General Sample Characterization:

5.1.1 *Sample History*—The analyst should obtain a summary of the background information of the sample, including descriptors, history, sample cleaning and handling, existing application data, bulk composition, and any prior analysis that has been conducted. The sample history, especially handling, packing and storage, can impact the approach needed to obtain the desired information. Because inadequate sample collection can sometimes destroy or minimize the ability to collect the desired information, it is often necessary to identify the needed information and establish the procedures to be used (5.2) before the surface analysis is performed.

5.1.2 *Vacuum Compatibility*—The compatibility of sample with instrument vacuum should be considered. Although some samples have inappropriately high vapor pressures for ambient temperature operation, some instruments may include a sample cooling stage, which allows these types of materials to be analyzed. Additionally, newer XPS systems often have improved vacuum pumps coupled with monochromatic X-ray sources (that do not heat the sample) and a small X-ray spot size (requiring less sample for analysis). As a result, strongly outgassing or subliming samples can often be examined.

### 5.2 Design of Experiment:

5.2.1 The goal of the experiment should be defined. Experimental goals may include data relating to the surface chemical composition and chemical state, surface segregation, quantification, layer thickness, nanostructures, and so forth. The identification of the specific analysis objectives influences sample handling, instrument setup, the approach to data collection, and finally the methods of data analysis.

5.2.1.1 **Table 1** is a summary of possible experiments along with different calibrations required to obtain meaningful data or to optimize the instrument for the best data in the time available.<sup>4</sup> Also included are the ASTM and ISO standards for checking the parameter. In the table, an X indicates applications where a calibration is required. Additionally, the calibrations are ranked with X = generally important and XX = generally very important calibrations for a given task.

5.2.2 *General System Check*—The analyst should perform a general system health check (including mechanical components, sample holders, vacuum level, and performance check) as recommended by the instrument manufacturer. Many analysts have also developed their own methods to verify the general operational health of an instrument. This might be done, for example, by testing a specimen commonly analyzed by the instrument to quickly verify the binding energies of few photoelectron peaks and overall count rates. Based upon the experiment to be performed, the relative importance of the parameters in **Table 1** should be assessed, including calibration of the binding-energy scale, intensity repeatability and

<sup>4</sup> Castle, J. E., Powell, C. J., Report on the 34th IUVSTA Workshop, XPS: From Spectra to Results—Towards an Expert System, *Surface and Interface Analysis*, Vol 26, 2004, pp. 225–237.

**TABLE 1 Recommended XPS Calibrations for Defined Experiments**

NOTE 1—The X indicates applications where a calibration is required. X = generally important, XX = generally very important. Local methods<sup>A</sup> are procedures developed by an individual laboratory or the instrument manufacturer. NPL software for the calibration of the intensity scales of XPS instruments is available from the UK National Physical Laboratory.<sup>B</sup> BCR 261<sup>C</sup> is a certified reference tantalum oxide/tantalum foil calibration sample and NIST SRM 2135c<sup>D</sup> is a certified nickel/chromium thin-film depth profile standard.

Instrument Calibrations and Checks	ASTM Standard	ISO Standard	Additional Sources	Elemental Composition	Chemical State	Low Level Detection	Quantification	Layer Thickness	Nano-structures
General System Check			Local Method	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Sample Preparation	<b>E1829</b> <b>E1078</b>	18116 18117		X	X	X	X	XX	X
Binding Energy	<b>E2108</b> <b>E1523</b>	15472 19318		XX	XX		X		X
Intensity Repeatability and Constancy		24237		X	X	XX	XX	X	X
Intensity/Energy Response Function			NPL Software				XX	X	XX
Linearity of Intensity Scale		21270 18118		X	X		XX	X	XX
Peak Intensities	<b>E995</b>	18392 20903	Local Method	X	X	XX	X	X	X
Ion Gun and Sputter Rate	<b>E1577</b> <b>E1127</b> <b>E1634</b>	15969 22335 14606 14701	BCR 261					XX	XX
Depth Resolution	<b>E1577</b> <b>E1127</b> <b>E1634</b> <b>E1636</b>	14606	BCR 261 NIST SRM 2135c					XX	XX
Analysis Area	<b>E1217</b>	19319		X			X	X	XX
Lateral Resolution		18516		X			X	X	X
Data Reporting	<b>E996</b>	14979		X	X	X	X	X	X

<sup>A</sup> Manual from the system manufacturer.

<sup>B</sup> National Physical Laboratory (NPL), <http://www.npl.co.uk/science-technology/surface-and-nanoanalysis/services/calibration-software-and-reference-materials-for-electron-spectrometers>.

<sup>C</sup> European Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements, BCR261, certified reference material.

<sup>D</sup> National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST-SRM 2135c Ni/Cr Thin Film Depth Profile Standard, <http://www.nist.gov>.

constancy, intensity/energy response function (IERF), linearity test of the intensity scale, energy resolution for the desired intensity, lateral resolution, charge compensation, depth resolution, and depth profile rate calibration.

5.2.3 *Sample Transport and Preparation*—As a surface analysis technique, X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) is sensitive to the outermost few atomic layers of the sample being characterized. Specimens should be transported to the analyst in a container that does not come into direct contact with the surface of interest. In most cases, the analysis will be performed on the as-received specimen; therefore, the goal must be to preserve the state of the surface so that the analysis remains representative of the original surface. Care must then be taken to ensure that no outside agents come in contact with the surface to be investigated. These agents include: fingers, solvents or cleaning solutions, gases (including compressed air) or vapors, metals, tissue or other wrapping materials, tape, cloth, tools, packing materials or the walls of containers.

Handling of the surface to be analyzed should be eliminated or minimized whenever possible.

5.2.3.1 Proper preparation and mounting of specimens is particularly critical for surface analysis. Improper preparation of specimens can result in alteration of the surface composition and unreliable data. In addition, specimen mounting techniques have the potential to affect the intended analysis. Guides **E1078** and **E1829** and/or ISO 18116 and ISO 18117 describe methods the surface analyst may need to minimize the effects of specimen preparation when using any surface-sensitive analytical technique. Also described are methods to mount specimens so as to ensure that the desired information is not compromised. Because of the wide range of types of specimens and desired information, only broad guidelines and general examples are included in the standards. The optimum handling procedures will be dependent on the particular specimen and the needed information. It is recommended that the specimen supplier consult the surface analyst as soon as possible with