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Plastics — Fast differential scanning calorimetry (FSC) — Chip calorimetry

Plastiques — Calorimétrie différentielle à balayage rapide (FSC) — Calorimétrie à balayage ultra-rapide

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Foreword

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

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Introduction

The development of fast scanning calorimetry (FSC) based on chip sensors with very high sensitivity using ultrathin SiN membranes was initially driven by the objective to measure thermal properties of very small amounts of sample such as thin films at very high scan rates in the order of magnitude of 10^4 K/s[1]. Shortly after, a differential scanning sensor was also introduced[2]. These quasi-adiabatic calorimeters could be used in heating mode only. The extension of sensors to fast cooling applications was achieved upon operating at non-adiabatic conditions by using gas as thermally inert cooling agent. To avoid the concomitantly strong increase of thermal lag with increasing scan rate, the sample mass is decreased accordingly. Thus, reduction of specimens and heating elements to very small size enabled sufficient temperature control upon fast cooling, see References [3] to [7]. Due to these developments, the scan rate operating window of existing commercial DSCs is extended to more than 7 orders in magnitude.

A break-through was the development of extremely fast-operating chip-calorimeters, see Table 1, based on Micro-Electromechanical-Systems (MEMS) technology, as described in various publications (see, for example, References [8], [9] and [10]). Until recently, results using chip calorimeters have been obtained by specific equipment located at universities[11],[12], however, dedicated research has also led to the development of commercially available FSC instrumentation.

For MEMS-sensor technology, power compensation-based twin-sensor microchip calorimeters, commonly known as fast scanning calorimetry (FSC), and its capabilities have received a great deal of attention in recent years[8]. The reason that FSC has become increasingly popular is because, firstly, in practice, some physical and chemical processes and processing techniques occur at much higher rates than achievable using conventional DSC. Secondly, most nano-structures in materials and substances, including polymers and pharmaceuticals, are in metastable states and these can be studied by FSC. Finally, FSC is facilitated by the world-wide availability of the first commercial FSC instrument[8],[13],[14], followed by an advanced instrument achieving even higher scan rates and higher temperatures[15].

Thermal history – specifically cooling and heating rates – and sample/product treatment can change the material behaviour drastically, leading to strongly deviating end properties. The significantly extended range of achievable scan rates, increased instrument sensitivity and reduced time constant of MEMS-sensors has resulted in strongly increased capabilities of studying the influence of thermal history.

This document describes characteristic features of commercially available non-adiabatic FSCs, calibration procedures and performance of measurements that deviate significantly from those of conventional DSC outlined in the ISO 11357 series. See Reference [16].

Table 1 — Typical characteristics of some chip calorimeters

FSC	Scan rate K/s		Achievable temperature at constant rate °C		Purge gas	
	heating	cooling[a]	heating up to	cooling down to[a]	type	ml/min
Commercial instrument [13],[14],[15],[17]	20 000	5 000	410	40	N_2	20
	20 000	5 000	410	140[b]	N_2	20
	20 000	5 000	200	-25	He	20
Commercial instrument 2[15]	50 000	20 000	950	100	N_2	20
	50 000	20 000	950	250[b]	N_2	20
University instrument [8],[11],[12],[16]	1 000 000	1 000 000	1 000	30	He	0
	1 000 000	1 000 000	1 000	-180	He	0

[a] Cooling rate is determined by the cooling device (temperature difference to base temperature), magnitude of heat flow rate, environmental conditions such as thermal conductivity of purge gas, etc.

[b] Without cooling accessory.

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1 Scope

This document specifies the characteristics of non-adiabatic fast differential scanning calorimeters, also covered by the general abbreviation FSC having an open specimen geometry in which specimens are placed directly onto active measurement areas of chip sensors based on Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MEMS) membrane technology, without encapsulation in closed crucibles and ovens.

Due to the open specimen geometry, this document is applicable to very small specimens having masses of not greater than 1 µg only. The occurrence of high temperature gradients during measurements can be prevented by keeping specimen thicknesses as small as possible.

The use of very low specimen masses enables achievement of very high scanning rates in the order of several thousand K/s, both in heating and cooling mode whereby lower specimen masses and thicknesses allow higher heating and cooling rates. Typically, low scanning rates of FSC overlap with high scanning rates of conventional DSC covered by ISO 11357-1, thus enabling connection to conventional DSC results.

NOTE 1 Due to the sensor layout FSC is also called chip calorimetry.

NOTE 2 FSC stands for Fast Scanning Calorimetry but also for Fast Scanning Calorimeter. In practice from the context the choice can be made quite easily.

FSC is suitable for thermal analysis of fast kinetic effects of polymers, polymer blends and composites, such as:

— thermoplastics (polymers, moulding compounds and other moulding materials, with or without fillers, fibres or reinforcements);

— thermosets (uncured or cured materials, with or without fillers, fibres or reinforcements);

— elastomers (with or without fillers, fibres or reinforcements).

This document specifies methods for qualitative and quantitative analysis of fast physical and chemical processes showing changes in heat flow rate. This includes measurement of characteristic temperatures as well as caloric values of both, solid and liquid materials.

This document is particularly applicable for the observation of fast kinetics of thermal effects such as:

— physical transitions (glass transition, phase transitions such as melting and crystallization, polymorphic transitions, etc.);

— metastability and related processes like reorganization, (re)crystallization, annealing, ageing, amorphization;

— chemical reactions (hydration, oxidation, polymerisation, crosslinking and curing of elastomers and thermosets, decomposition, etc.);

— isothermal measurements of fast crystallising systems or chemical reactions.

It is also applicable for the determination of heat capacity and related changes of thermodynamic functions.

FSC provides a technique to analyse material behaviour at similarly high heating or cooling rates used in industrial polymer processing.