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Ellipsometry — Principles

Ellipsométrie — Principes

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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.

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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.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 107, *Metallic and other inorganic coatings*.

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Introduction

The ellipsometry measuring method is a phase-sensitive reflection technique using polarized light in the optical far-field. Over a long time, ellipsometry has been established as a non-invasive measuring method in the field of semiconductor technology — especially within the integrated production — in the first instance as a single-wavelength, then as a multiple-wavelength and later as a spectroscopic measuring method.

By means of ellipsometry, optical or dielectric constants of any material as well as the layer thicknesses of at least semi-transparent layers or layer systems can be determined. Ellipsometry is an indirect measuring method, the analysis of which is based on model optimization. The measurands, which differ according to the procedural principle, are converted into the ellipsometric factors Ψ (Psi, amplitude information) and Δ (Delta, phase information), based on which the physical target figures of interest (optical or dielectric constants, layer thicknesses) will then be determined by means of a parameterized fit.

Ellipsometry shows a high precision regarding the ellipsometric transfer quantities Ψ and Δ, which can be equivalent to a layer thickness sensitivity of 0,1 nm for ideal layer substrate systems. As a result, the measuring method can verify even the slightest discrepancies in the surface characteristics. This is closely linked to the homogeneity and the isotropy of the material surface. In order to achieve high precision, carrying out measurements at the exact same measuring point is a prerequisite for inhomogeneous materials. The same applies to the orientation of the incident plane relative to the material surface for anisotropic materials.

The absolute accuracy, e.g. of layer thickness values, substantially depends on the quality of the chosen model for describing the material surface. For ideal layer substrate systems, such as SiO_2 (ideal transparent layer) on a Si wafer (nearly atomically smooth substrate surface with homogeneous and isotropic material properties), the accuracy of the layer thickness can indeed reach the precision values, since the model describes the reality of the layer substrate system in an ideal manner. For inhomogeneous, anisotropic, contaminated, multi-component, damaged, imperfect or rough surfaces or layers, the accuracy of the layer thickness determination can be significantly lower and generally depends on the quality of the chosen model.

Despite these limitations, ellipsometry is a powerful procedure, which either enables material fingerprints (without modelling) or which allows a model-based determination of optical and dielectric constants (to the nearest 0,001) or of layer thicknesses (to the nearest 0,1 nm) within a broad layer thickness range of approximately 0,1 nm up to approximately 10 µm (in special cases exceeding 100 µm).

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Ellipsometry — Principles

1 Scope

This document specifies a method for determining optical and dielectric constants in the UV-VIS-NIR spectral range as well as layer thicknesses in the field of at-line production control, quality assurance and material development through accredited test laboratories.

It is applicable to stand-alone measuring systems. The presentation of the uncertainty of results conforms to ISO/IEC Guide 98-3.

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/IEC Guide 98-3, *Uncertainty of measurement — Part 3: Guide to the expression of uncertainty in measurement (GUM:1995)*

3 Terms, definitions, symbols and abbreviated terms

3.1 Terms and definitions

No terms and definitions are listed in this document.

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/

3.2 Symbols and abbreviated terms

Symbol or abbreviated term	Description
P	polarizer
C	compensator
S	sample
A	analyzer
POI	plane of incidence of light, formed by the normal to the surface and the direction of propagation of the incident light
POP	plane of polarization of light, formed by the electric field vector and the direction of propagation of the incident light
Ψ, Δ	ellipsometric transfer quantities Psi and Delta, which serve as raw data to be stored, e.g. in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025
φ	angle of incidence between the incident light wave and the axis of incidence
d	layer thickness

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