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**Optics and photonics — Optical  
coatings —**

**Part 1:  
Vocabulary**

*Optique et photonique — Traitements optiques —  
Partie 1: Vocabulaire*



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ISO copyright office  
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8  
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva  
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11  
Fax: +41 22 749 09 47  
Email: [copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
Website: [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

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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 ISO/TC 172, *Optics and photonics*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Optical materials and components*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 9211-1:2010), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

- the definitions of elliptical, circular and random polarization have been aligned with ISO 11145:2018;
- in [Table 1](#), the code designation HR and PR have been added to the reflecting function;
- [Figure A.7](#) has been replaced.

A list of all parts in the ISO 9211 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).

## Introduction

The optical properties of a coated surface are characterized by spectrophotometric values. These values relate to the energy transported by electromagnetic waves (radiant or luminous) and they vary as a function of the wavelength, the angle of incidence, and the state of polarization. Additional influences can be caused by scattering.

NOTE 1 The functional spectral dependency is generally indicated by including the wavelength,  $\lambda$ , in parentheses as part of the symbol.

NOTE 2 The wavelength ( $\lambda$ ) can be replaced by the wavenumber ( $\sigma$ ) or the photon energy ( $h\nu$ ).  $h$  = Planck constant;  $\nu$  = frequency. The units recommended are the nanometre (nm) or the micrometre ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) for the wavelength, the reciprocal centimetre ( $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) for the wavenumber and the electron volt (eV) for the photon energy.

When a coating is used at an angle of incidence different from zero, its characteristics depend upon the state of polarization of the incident radiation and it can influence the polarization state of the emergent radiation. It might then be necessary to indicate the orientation of the electric field vector in relation to the plane of incidence.

The coatings are defined according to their function, i.e. according to the nature of the principal modification to the surface properties that they realize. A coating intended to realize a principal function as defined in [Table 1](#) can also include one or more secondary functions. Their relative importance with regard to the principal function shall be indicated.

A surface for visual applications can be characterized by colorimetric parameters. These depend on the reference illumination source, the reference observer, and the optical properties of the surface. Colorimetric parameters are not part of this standard.

Examples of coating imperfections are given in [Annex A](#). Test methods for the surface imperfections are described in ISO 14997.

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# Optics and photonics — Optical coatings —

## Part 1: Vocabulary

**WARNING** — The electronic file of this document contains colours which are considered to be useful for the correct understanding of the document. Users should therefore consider printing this document using a colour printer.

### 1 Scope

This document defines terms relevant to optical coatings. These terms are grouped in four classes: Terms and definitions, definition of coatings by function, definitions of common coating imperfections and other definitions.

This document identifies surface treatments of components and substrates excluding ophthalmic optics (spectacles) by the application of optical coatings and gives a standard form for their specification. It defines the general characteristics and the test and measurement methods whenever necessary, but is not intended to define the process method.

### 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 11145, *Optics and photonics — Lasers and laser-related equipment — Vocabulary and symbols*

ISO 80000-7, *Quantities and units — Part 7: Light*

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 11145 and ISO 80000-7 and the following 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/>

#### 3.1 Basic terms and definitions

##### 3.1.1 General terms

###### 3.1.1.1

###### **surface treatment of components and substrates**

application of a coating of material(s) intended to modify the optical, physical or chemical characteristics originally possessed by the surface of a component

Note 1 to entry: The substrates are considered to be geometrically perfect and optically homogeneous. In reality, an assembly made up of a substrate and a coating is identified and measured experimentally as an entity.

**3.1.1.2**

**incident medium**

medium from which the electromagnetic radiation enters the coating

**3.1.1.3**

**emergent medium**

medium into which the electromagnetic radiation exits the coating

Note 1 to entry: Besides acting as mechanical support, the substrate carrying the coating physically can constitute the incident medium and/or the emergent medium.

**3.1.1.4**

**clear aperture**

surface area to meet specifications

**3.1.1.5**

**rim**

area outside of the clear aperture

**3.1.1.6**

**witness sample**

sample that represents the actual coated component used for spectral and environmental testing

Note 1 to entry: The details of witness samples and sampling procedures (e.g. material, surface texture, dimensions, number per batch, position in the coating chamber, etc.) is subject to agreement between supplier and user.

**3.1.2 Terms for optical properties of a coated surface**

**3.1.2.1**

**spectral transmittance**

$\tau(\lambda)$

ratio of the spectral radiant or luminous flux transmitted to that of the incident radiant or luminous flux

Note 1 to entry: Spectral transmittance is related to spectral optical density  $D(\lambda)$  by the formula:  $\tau(\lambda) = 10^{-D(\lambda)}$ .

Note 2 to entry: Wherever the Greek letter  $\tau$  is mistakable  $T(\lambda)$  may be used.

[SOURCE: ISO 80000-7:2008, 7-22.3, modified — The formula has been changed into a sentence without changing the contents.]

**3.1.2.2**

**spectral reflectance**

$\rho(\lambda)$

ratio of the spectral radiant or luminous flux reflected, to that of the incident radiant or luminous flux

Note 1 to entry: Wherever the Greek letter  $\rho$  is mistakable  $R(\lambda)$  may be used.

[SOURCE: ISO 80000-7:2008, 7-22.2]

**3.1.2.3**

**spectral absorptance**

$\alpha(\lambda)$

ratio of the spectral radiant or luminous flux absorbed, to that of the incident radiant or luminous flux

Note 1 to entry: Wherever the Greek letter  $\alpha$  is mistakable  $A(\lambda)$  may be used.

[SOURCE: ISO 80000-7:2008, 7-22.1]

**3.1.2.4****spectral scattering**

change of the spatial distribution of a beam of radiation spread in many directions by a surface or a medium without any change of frequency of the monochromatic components of which the radiation is composed

Note 1 to entry: The quantities defined in 3.2.2.1 to 3.2.2.4 are interrelated as follows:

$$1 = \tau(\lambda) + \rho(\lambda) + \alpha(\lambda)$$

with

$$\tau(\lambda) = \tau_r(\lambda) + \tau_d(\lambda)$$

$$\rho(\lambda) = \rho_r(\lambda) + \rho_d(\lambda)$$

where

$\tau_r(\lambda)$  is the regular spectral transmittance (specular);

$\rho_r(\lambda)$  is the regular spectral reflectance (specular);

$\tau_d(\lambda)$  is the diffuse spectral transmittance (scattered);

$\rho_d(\lambda)$  is the diffuse spectral reflectance (scattered).

Note 2 to entry: If necessary, these values can be represented as an average over a wavelength range from  $\lambda_1$  to  $\lambda_2$  as follows:

$$\tau_{\text{ave}}(\lambda_1 \text{ to } \lambda_2) = \frac{\int_{\lambda_1}^{\lambda_2} \tau(\lambda) d\lambda}{\lambda_2 - \lambda_1} \approx \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m \tau(\lambda_i) \Delta\lambda}{\lambda_2 - \lambda_1} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m \tau(\lambda_i)}{m}$$

where

$$\Delta\lambda = (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) / m.$$

**3.1.2.5****refractive index**

$n(\lambda)$

ratio of the velocity of propagation of electromagnetic radiation in vacuum to the velocity of propagation of electromagnetic radiation in a medium

**3.1.2.6****angle of incidence**

$\theta$

angle between the normal to the surface and the incident ray

**3.1.2.7****plane of incidence**

plane incorporating the normal to the surface and the incident ray

### 3.1.3 Terms for polarization

#### 3.1.3.1

##### **linearly polarized radiation**

polarization where the orientation of the electric field vector remains constant

Note 1 to entry: S-polarization refers to linear polarization where the electric field vector is perpendicular to the plane of incidence.

Note 2 to entry: P-polarization refers to linear polarization where the electric field vector is parallel to the plane of incidence.

#### 3.1.3.2

##### **elliptical polarization**

property of electromagnetic radiation in which the electric field vector rotates about the direction of propagation at the radiation frequency and periodically oscillates in amplitude in a homogeneous optical medium

Note 1 to entry: The terminal point of the electric field vector describes an ellipse.

[SOURCE: ISO 11145:2018, 3.12.3]

#### 3.1.3.3

##### **circular polarization**

property of electromagnetic radiation in which the electric field vector is of constant amplitude and rotates about the direction of propagation at a frequency equal to the radiation frequency in a homogeneous optical medium

[SOURCE: ISO 11145:2018, 3.12.2]

#### 3.1.3.4

##### **random polarization**

state in which a beam of electromagnetic radiation is composed of two linearly polarized beams of electromagnetic radiation having orthogonal fixed polarization directions and having amplitudes that vary randomly over time with respect to each other

[SOURCE: ISO 11145:2018, 3.12.7]

#### 3.1.3.5

##### **unpolarized radiation**

radiation which has been resolved into any pair of orthogonal electric field vectors with varied phase difference where the average magnitudes of the two orthogonal vectors are the same and their phase difference change is completely random

### 3.1.4 Phase related terms

#### 3.1.4.1

##### **phase change**

$d\Phi$   
angle difference,  $\Phi - \Phi_0$ , represents the phase change between an electromagnetic wave and a reference wave with its electric field vector given by

$$E = A \cos\left(\frac{2\pi vt}{\lambda} - \Phi\right)$$

where

- $E$  is the electric field vector;
- $A$  is the amplitude vector;
- $v$  is the velocity of propagation in the medium;
- $T$  is the time;
- $\lambda$  is the wavelength in the medium;
- $\Phi$  is the phase.

The electric field at a fixed point in space due to an electromagnetic wave can be described by a periodic function given by

$$E_0 = A \cos\left(\frac{2\pi vt}{\lambda} - \Phi_0\right)$$

#### 3.1.4.2

##### phase retardation

$\Delta\Phi$

difference of phase change between the p- and s-components of the electric field vector given by

$$\Delta\Phi = d\Phi_p - d\Phi_s$$

where

$d\Phi_p$  is the phase change for the p-component

$d\Phi_s$  is the phase change for the s-component

## 3.2 Designations of coatings by principal function

### 3.2.1 Reflecting function

#### 3.2.1.1

**RE**

coating which increases the reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range

#### 3.2.1.2

**HR**

coating which creates a high reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range without defined transmittance

#### 3.2.1.3

**PR**

coating which creates a defined (partial) reflectance and a defined transmittance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.2 Antireflecting function

#### 3.2.2.1

**AR**

coating which reduces the reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range and usually increasing the transmittance

### 3.2.3 Beam splitting function

#### 3.2.3.1

##### BS

coating which separates the incident flux into two beams, one transmitted and the other reflected, the energy distribution of each beam reproducing the incident energy distribution in essentially a non-selective manner, over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.4 Attenuating function

#### 3.2.4.1

##### AT

coating which reduces the transmittance in essentially a non-selective manner over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.5 Bandpass or band rejection filtering function

#### 3.2.5.1

##### FI

which modifies the transmittance in a selective manner over a specified wavelength range

#### 3.2.5.2

##### FI-BP

coating which modifies the transmittance by passing a specified wavelength range

Note 1 to entry: If there is no ambiguity the code designation "BP" may be used.

#### 3.2.5.3

##### FI-BR

coating which modifies the transmittance by rejecting a specified wavelength range

Note 1 to entry: If there is no ambiguity the code designation "BR" may be used.

### 3.2.6 Selecting or combining function

#### 3.2.6.1

##### SC

coating which divides the incident radiation flux into two or more beams each one covering a limited spectral region and being propagated either by reflection or by transmission

Note 1 to entry: The reverse path combines beams of different spectral regions

#### 3.2.6.2

##### SC-LP (Long pass)

coating of type SC where the spectral region of longer wavelength is transmitted

Note 1 to entry: If there is no ambiguity the code designation "LP" may be used.

#### 3.2.6.3

##### SC-SP (Short pass)

coating of type SC where the spectral region of shorter wavelength is transmitted

Note 1 to entry: If there is no ambiguity the code designation "SP" may be used.

### 3.2.7 Polarizing function

#### 3.2.7.1

##### PO

coating which determines the state of polarization of the emergent electromagnetic radiation over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.8 Phase changing function

#### 3.2.8.1

##### PC

coating which determines the phase change of the emergent electromagnetic radiation relative to the incident radiation, and/or the phase difference between s and p vectors, over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.9 Absorbing function

#### 3.2.9.1

##### AB

coating which absorbs a specified value of the incident flux over a specified wavelength range

### 3.2.10 Supplementary function

#### 3.2.10.1

##### SU

coating which provides a non-optical property

Note 1 to entry: This function is often combined with an optical function.

**Table 1 — Definitions of coatings by function**

| Principal function                                                                   | Code designation                  | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Example of application                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reflecting                                                                           | RE                                | Coating which increases the reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                                                                                               | Metal mirror                                                            |
|                                                                                      | HR                                | Coating which creates a high reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range without defined transmittance.                                                                                                                                | Laser mirror                                                            |
|                                                                                      | PR                                | Coating which creates a defined (partial) reflectance and a defined transmittance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                                                     | outcoupler, cavity ring-down mirror                                     |
| Antireflecting                                                                       | AR                                | Coating which reduces the reflectance of an optical surface over a specified wavelength range and usually increasing the transmittance.                                                                                                                        | AR coated lens                                                          |
| Beam splitting                                                                       | BS                                | Coating which separates the incident flux into two beams, one transmitted and the other reflected, the energy distribution of each beam reproducing the incident energy distribution in essentially a non-selective manner, over a specified wavelength range. | Neutral beam-splitter                                                   |
| Attenuating                                                                          | AT                                | Coating which reduces the transmittance in essentially a non-selective manner over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                                                                               | Neutral density filter                                                  |
| Filtering<br>a) Bandpass<br>b) Band rejection                                        | FI<br>FI-BP<br>FI-BR <sup>a</sup> | Coating which modifies the transmittance in a selective manner over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                                                                                              | Laser line selection filter<br>Raman notch filter                       |
| Selecting or combining<br>a) Longpass<br>b) Shortpass                                | SC<br>SC-LP<br>SC-SP <sup>b</sup> | Coating which divides the incident radiation flux into two or more beams each one covering a limited spectral region and being propagated either by reflection or by transmission. The reverse path combines beams of different spectral regions.              | Dichroic mirror<br>Beam combiner<br>Cold light mirror<br>NIR cut filter |
| <sup>a</sup> If there is no ambiguity the code designation "BP" or "BR" may be used. |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                         |
| <sup>b</sup> If there is no ambiguity the code designation "LP" or "SP" may be used. |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                         |

**Table 1** (continued)

| Principal function                                                                                                                                                           | Code designation | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Example of application                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Polarizing                                                                                                                                                                   | PO               | Coating which determines the state of polarization of the emergent electromagnetic radiation, over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                | Polarizer<br>Non-polarizing beamsplitter                     |
| Phase changing                                                                                                                                                               | PC               | Coating which determines the phase change of the emergent electromagnetic radiation relative to the incident radiation, and/or the phase difference between s and p vectors, over a specified wavelength range. | Phase retarder                                               |
| Absorbing                                                                                                                                                                    | AB               | Coating which absorbs a specified value of the incident flux over a specified wavelength range.                                                                                                                 | Light trap<br>UV absorber                                    |
| Supplementary                                                                                                                                                                | SU               | Coating which provides a non-optical property; this function is often combined with an optical function.                                                                                                        | Electrical conductivity<br>Chemical or mechanical protection |
| <sup>a</sup> If there is no ambiguity the code designation "BP" or "BR" may be used.<br><sup>b</sup> If there is no ambiguity the code designation "LP" or "SP" may be used. |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                              |

### 3.3 Terms related to common coating imperfections

#### 3.3.1 Point-like imperfections

##### 3.3.1.1 pinhole

very small hole in the thin film

##### 3.3.1.2 spatter

imperfection that results when small chunks of coating material fly on to the substrate surface and adhere there in the coating process

##### 3.3.1.3 particle

small piece of matter on/in the film

##### 3.3.1.4 fine dust

number (often numerous) of small pieces of matter on/in the film

##### 3.3.1.5 nodule

small lump (usually of coating material) in the film

#### 3.3.2 Line-like imperfections

##### 3.3.2.1 scratch

marking or tearing of a surface which looks as though it has been done by either a sharp or rough instrument

Note 1 to entry: Scratches occur on optical surfaces in all degrees from various accidental causes.

**3.3.2.2****hairline scratch**

very fine, smooth scratch, usually straight

Note 1 to entry: The hairline scratch is characterized by its uniqueness and its straightness. Other scratches can be curved, or appear straight or curved, multiple, adjacent or without contact.

**3.3.2.3****crack**

fracture in the film

**3.3.2.4****crazing**

pattern of fractures in the film (usually due to differential thermal stress)

**3.3.3 Area-like imperfections****3.3.3.1****stain**

patchy, localized discoloration of the surface, e.g. caused by chemical reactions

**3.3.3.2****abrasion**

surface damage caused by rubbing against another surface

**3.3.3.3****lint mark**

remain of fabric or paper fibres on an optical surface

**3.3.3.4****void**

small uncoated portion inside the coated area

**3.3.4 Volume-like imperfections****3.3.4.1****peeling**

partial separation of thin film(s) originating from the peripheral zone of the coated area

**3.3.4.2****flaking**

partial separation of thin film(s) originating from the inner zone of the coated area

**3.3.4.3****blister****bubble**

inclusion under or within the coating, which lifts the film

## Annex A (informative)

### Micrographs of common types of coating imperfections

This annex gives micrographs of common types of coating imperfections. See [Figures A.1](#) to [A.16](#).

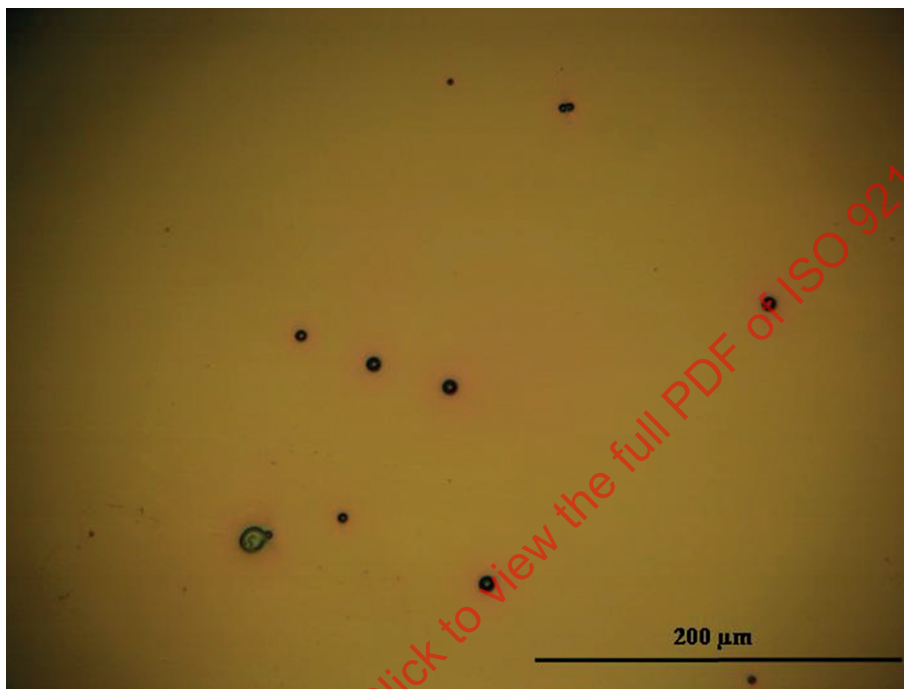


Figure A.1 — Pinhole

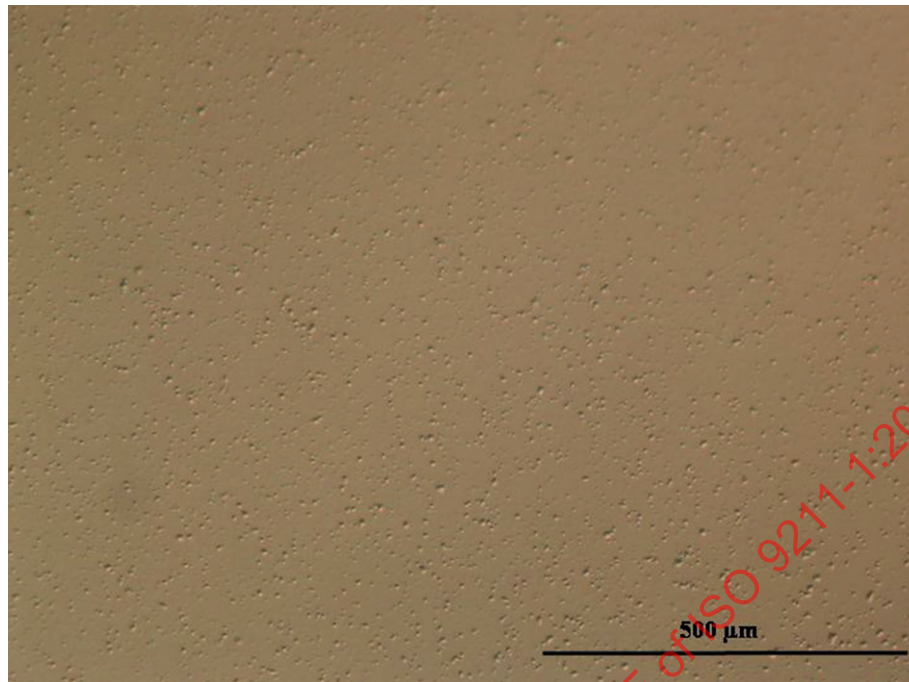


Figure A.2 — Spatter

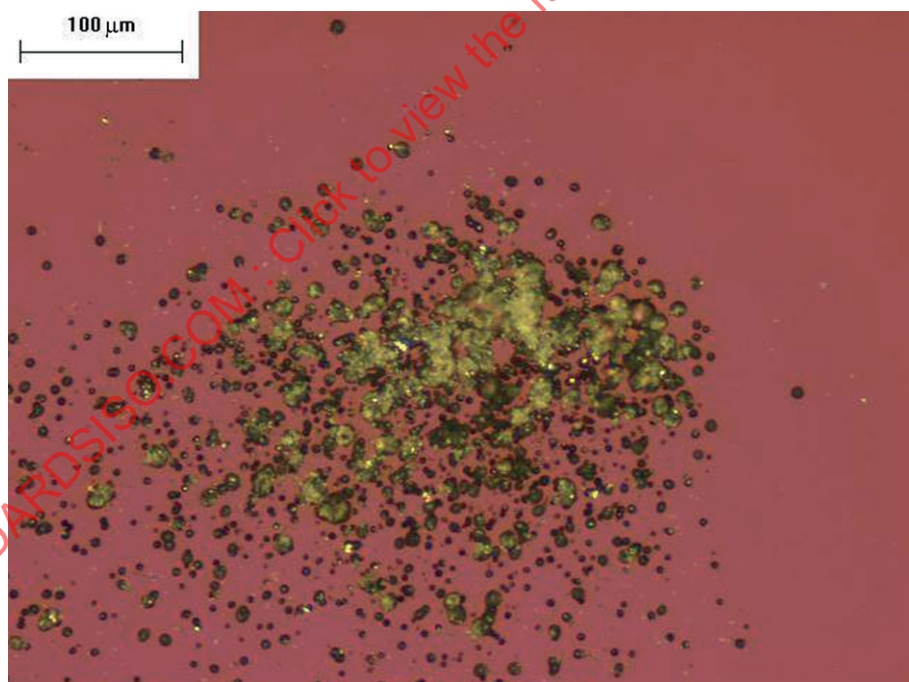


Figure A.3 — Particle



Figure A.4 — Fine dust

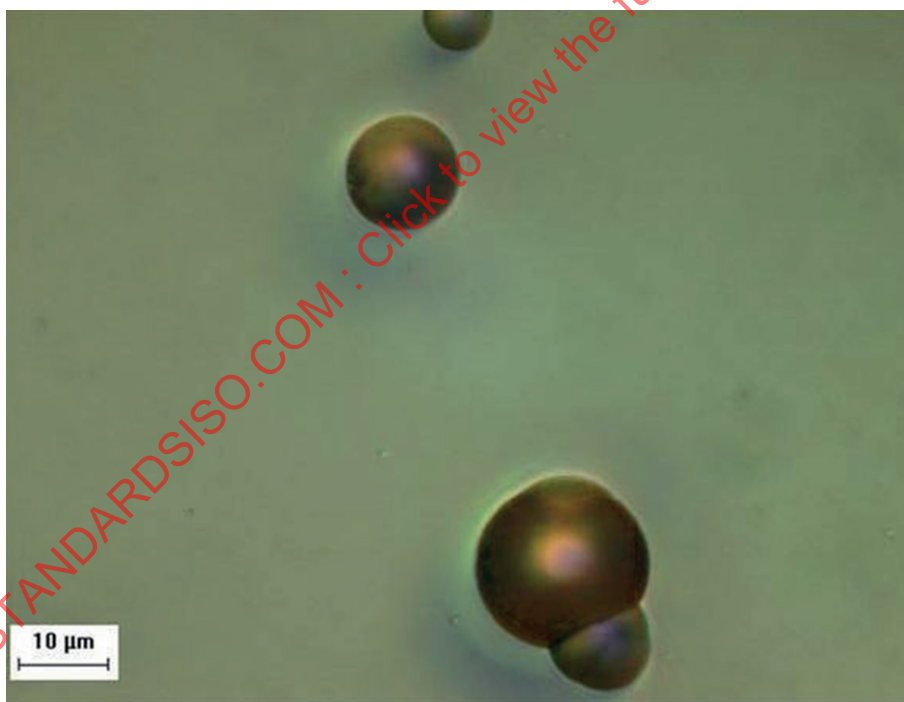


Figure A.5 — Nodule

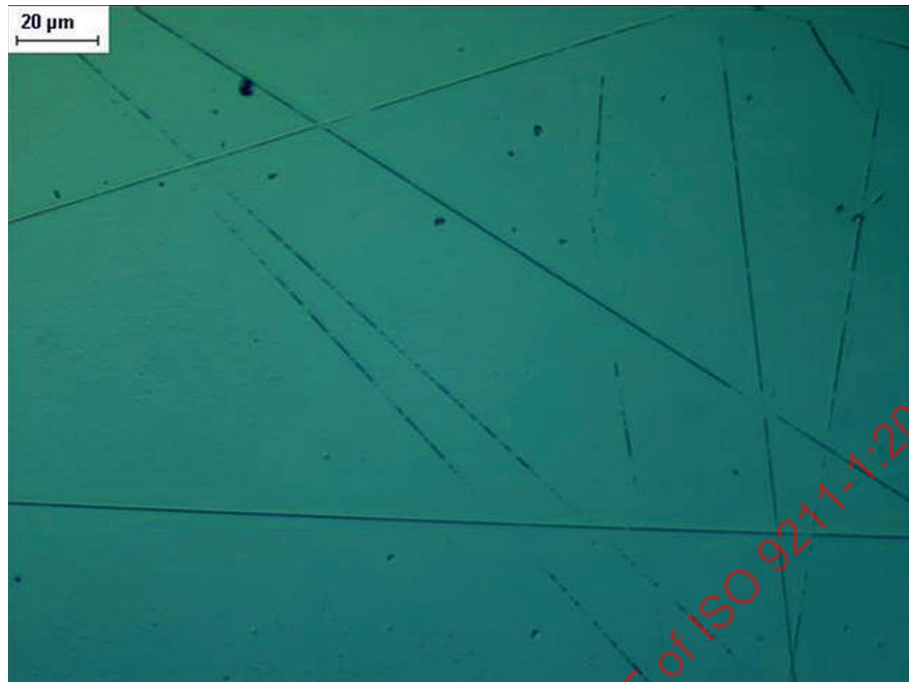


Figure A.6 — Scratches



Figure A.7 — Hairline scratch

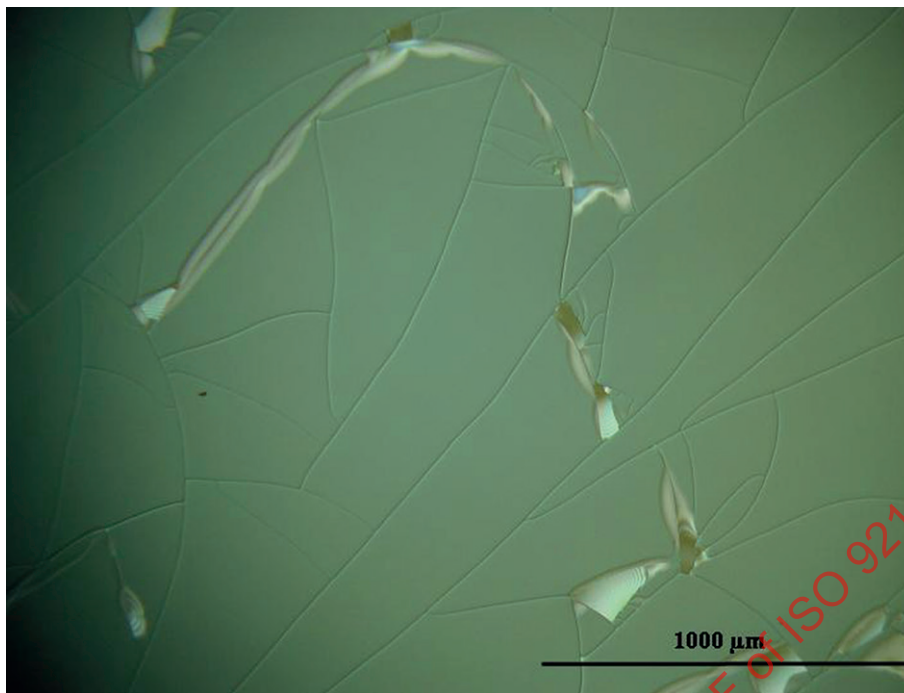


Figure A.8 — Crack

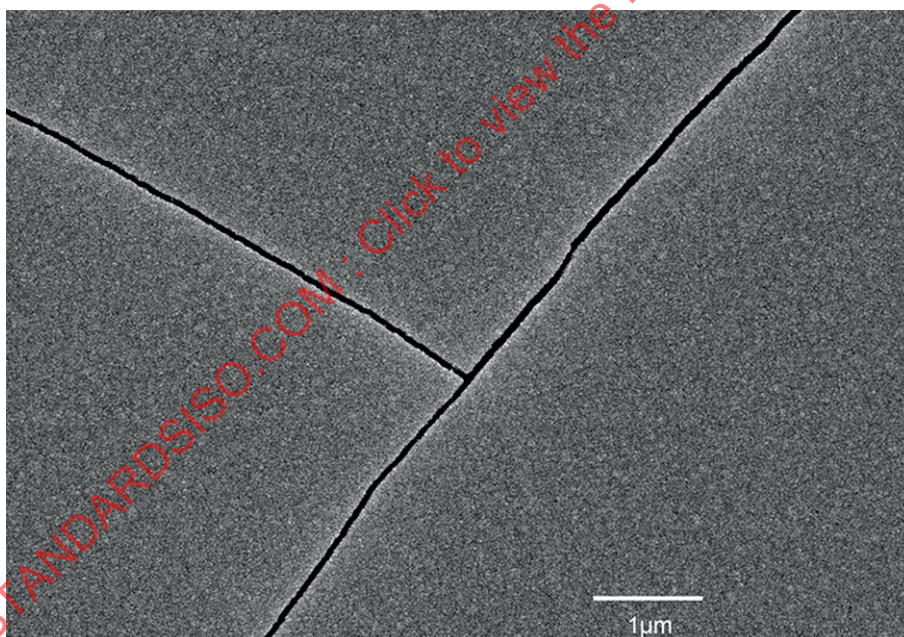


Figure A.9 — Crazing