CONFOCAL APPLICATION LETTER

LAS AF APPLICATION WIZARD
FRET SENSITIZED EMISSION

reSOLUTION
FRET Sensitized Emission

Fluorescence Resonance Energy Transfer (FRET) is a technique, which allows insight into the interactions between proteins or molecules in proximities beyond light microscopic resolution.

The Principle:
An excited fluorophore, called the donor, transfers its excited state energy to a light absorbing molecule which is called the acceptor. This transfer of energy is non-radiative.

Sensitized Emission is one established method for the evaluation of FRET efficiencies. It can be applied to live cells as well as to fixed samples.

The Method:
As this method is non-invasive, it is most frequently used for live cell experiments. Because crosstalk is an important issue, controls and complex correction calculations are inherent to the method. Measurements are executed by detection of the fluorescent signals of the donor and FRET as well as acceptor in a line by line sequential scan acquisition.

Proper excitation conditions play a major role. In the first sequence, the donor must be excited to generate donor fluorescence and sensitized emission of the acceptor. In the second sequence, the selective excitation of the acceptor will create acceptor fluorescence.

FRET sample preparations must therefore include references of donor in the absence of the acceptor (donor only control) and acceptor in the absence of the donor (acceptor only control).

Ideally, all references are included in the same preparation. The donor and acceptor references are used to obtain calibration coefficients to correct for excitation and emission cross talk.

It is important to be aware that throughout the entire experiment and calibration routine, all measuring parameters such as gain, emission detection window, excitation intensities, zoom, format, scan speed, pinhole etc must remain constant.
FRET Wizards in Leica Application Suite Advanced Fluorescence (LAS AF)

Within the LAS AF menu bar you can find two wizards to perform FRET experiments: FRET AB (Acceptor Photo-Bleaching) and FRET SE (Sensitized Emission). This application note describes working with the FRET SE Wizard.

The wizard consists of 4 steps and in addition, an overview of the experimental workflow.

- Step 1: is dedicated to the imaging set-up.
- Step 2: executes control and FRET measurements.
- Step 3: guides through the calibration routine and calculates the calibration coefficients.
- Step 4: is dedicated to the execution of time-lapse experiments, evaluation of results and generation of experimental reports.
Step 1: Setting of experimental conditions

Note:
It is vital to keep all measurements under identical conditions. If your controls do not match the actual imaging conditions (saturation!) and if you have therefore to readjust, all previous measurements under the changed conditions will have to be repeated. All measurements performed under differing conditions should be discarded!

Step 2: Acquire image sequences of controls for calibration
FRET Sensitized Emission – Step by Step

Step 1: Setting of experimental conditions

Begin the imaging set-up with the FRET sample with all fluorescence information (donor, FRET and acceptor) in the same specimen. Define imaging conditions for donor, FRET and acceptor fluorescence by following the workflow. You may start your experiment with previously saved imaging conditions. Use the Load and Save options. If you want to establish imaging conditions yourself you must start out in the Beam Path Settings window.

1. Image acquisition of donor, FRET and acceptor will automatically be done in a line by line sequential scan mode, after the definition of donor, FRET and acceptor. Start defining the donor and the FRET detection (Donor + FRET) via the Beam Path Settings window. Begin by simultaneous excitation and detection of the donor and acceptor (e.g.: Donor = CFP excitation 458nm; emission 462-510nm; Acceptor = YFP excitation 514nm; emission 518-580nm). This enables you to assess the fluorescence intensities, PMT gain, and laser dose for each label. Make all adjustments by using the Live button. Check for appropriate imaging resolution. You may change the zoom factor via the control panel or with the tools under Acquisition.

2. Reduce now the laser light of the acceptor down to 0%. Re-adjust the acceptor PMT to be slightly below saturation. You are now exciting only selectively for the donor and have properly defined your conditions for the donor and FRET imaging.

3. Continue by defining the acceptor set-up via the Beam Path Settings window. Turn the donor excitation light down to 0%. Choose a new LUT for the directly excited acceptor signal (e.g.: light blue = donor; yellow = FRET; orange = acceptor) for better discrimination. Start Live Scan.

4. The images you see in the viewer are generated by means of a line by line sequential scan. The first sequence consists of donor (light blue) and FRET (yellow). The excitation wavelength is selectively chosen for donor excitation. The second sequence contains acceptor fluorescence (orange). The excitation light is selective for acceptor excitation.

5. Slowly increase the excitation light of the acceptor (in our example 514 nm) until the signal of the acceptor (orange) is just below saturation. Do not change the PMT gain or offset as this will also change the imaging conditions for the FRET (yellow) signal detection!

6. Define the number of averages for best imaging conditions. The desired acquisition mode may be chosen with the tools under Acquisition.

7. Proceed to the next step Corr. Images to acquire control images of the specimen for calibration.

Step 2: Acquire image sequences of controls for calibration

1. In step 2 you may first take an image set of your FRET sample since it is already under the scope and nicely set-up. Acquire the sequence via Capture Image. The image set will be automatically named ‘FRET’.

2. Continue with the measurements of the controls (Donor only and Acceptor only). To keep track of the specimen choose the correct radio button for the according specimen.

3. If controls are on separate slides you will now change specimen. For a better field of vision you may want to go back to zoom 1 to be able to find adequate cells to properly match the intensities and to avoid saturated regions. Use the function button Search Specimen. You now have access to all the acquisition tools needed. When you exit Search Specimen you will automatically return to the zoom factor and resolution conditions of all previous measurements in the experiment.

Step 3: Calibration

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**Step 3: Calibration**

1. Ensure you have the appropriate image set active in the experiment overview to match the indication marked by the radio button in the interface ①.

2. Draw a region of interest (ROI) in the image where only donor signal is found ②. The mean intensities within the ROI are shown in the workflow interface ③. Press Accept to use values for calculation of calibration coefficients.

3. Background subtraction is optional. It is only necessary if the images show background above 0. If this is the case, draw a ROI in the image where only background signal is found and press Accept to use these values.

4. Continue likewise for acceptor only sequence.

For ease of interpretation intensity distribution check the table showing the intensity distribution for measured specimen (e.g. CFP-YFP):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen: FRET</th>
<th>Channel 1 (A)</th>
<th>Channel 2 (B)</th>
<th>Channel 3 (C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donor only</td>
<td>Signal (Donor)</td>
<td>Signal (FRET)</td>
<td>Signal (Acceptor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptor only</td>
<td>Very little to no Signal (x-excited x-talk Acceptor)</td>
<td>Signal &lt; Channel 3 (x-Excitation)</td>
<td>Signal (Acceptor)</td>
</tr>
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5. Press Calculate Factors to generate correction factors ④.

All calculated calibration factors will be applied to the existing FRET sequences (fixed sample analysis) or any time-lapse experiment to follow. Precondition: all measurements remain under unchanged imaging conditions.

6. Continue to the next step Evaluation to perform live cell measurements after calibration and to retrieve FRET efficiencies.

```
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**Calibration Factors:**

1. Donor only reference generates correction factor

   \[
   \beta = \frac{B}{A}
   \]

   \[
   \alpha = \frac{A}{C}
   \]

   \[
   \gamma = \frac{B}{C}
   \]

   \[
   \delta = \frac{A}{B}
   \]

2. The Acceptor only reference generates correction factors \( \alpha \), \( \gamma \), \( \delta \).

   \[
   \alpha = \frac{A}{C}
   \]

   \[
   \gamma = \frac{B}{C}
   \]

   \[
   \delta = \frac{A}{B}
   \]
Step 4: Calculation of FRET efficiencies and live cell measurements
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Before running a time-lapse experiment you may choose the calculation method to calculate and represent the apparent FRET efficiencies. You may also change the method after running the experiment. Method 1 is automatically applied.

If your FRET data shows a background above 0 you may run a background subtraction. Draw a ROI in the image viewer where only background signal is found. Press Accept to include the background subtraction into calculations. You may also fill in a value by yourself to match background variations more precisely.

For time-lapse experiments choose imaging conditions under Acquisition and start your series with Run Experiment.

Calculation of FRET efficiency:

EA is the apparent FRET efficiency. A, B, C correspond to the intensities of the 3 signals (donor, FRET, acceptor) and α, β, γ and δ are the calibration factors generated by acceptor only and donor only references.

Method 1:

$$E_A(i) = \frac{B - A \times \beta - C \times \gamma}{C}$$

Ref. Wouters et al., TRENDS in Cell Biology, Vol 11, No.5, May 2001: 203-211

Method 2:

$$E_A(i) = \frac{B - A \times \beta - C \times (\gamma - \alpha \times \beta)}{C \times (1 - \beta \times \delta)}$$


Method 3:

$$E_A(i) = \frac{B}{A}$$

The Ratiometric Calculation is used in samples with a fixed stochiometry (1:1) of donor and acceptor (e.g. Cameleons).
Step 4: Calculation of FRET efficiencies and live cell measurements
To see FRET and intensity values displayed in a graph during the experiment change to the tab sheet Graph. Draw one or multiple ROIs in the image viewer to see intensities displayed in the graph.

For apparent FRET efficiencies change to tab sheet Statistics.

Single FRET images (e.g. fixed specimen) can be analyzed too, but will show results only under Statistics and not in the graphical display. Change to tab sheet Statistics and use ROI functionality to choose the appropriate regions of interest in the image.

Suggested background reading:

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