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A Technique for Estimating the Absolute Gain of a Photomultiplier Tube

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Abstract

Detection of low-intensity light relies on the conversion of photons to photoelectrons, which are then multiplied and detected as an electrical signal. To measure the actual intensity of the light, one must know the factor by which the photoelectrons have been multiplied. To obtain this amplification factor, we have developed a procedure for estimating precisely the signal caused by a single photoelectron. The method utilizes the fact that the photoelectrons conform to a Poisson distribution. The average signal produced by a single photoelectron can then be estimated from the number of noise events, without requiring analysis of the distribution of the signal produced by a single photoelectron. The signal produced by one or more photoelectrons can be estimated experimentally without any assumptions. This technique, and an example of the analysis of a signal from a photomultiplier tube, are described in this study.

Keywords: Photomultiplier, PMT, photoelectron, photon detector

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