

Table of contents

Symbols & Acronyms

Introduction	1
1 The thin-film silicon solar cell concept	5
1.1 Solar cell principle	5
1.2 Thin-film silicon solar cell	5
1.3 Characteristics of a single junction solar cell	7
1.4 Dark IV -curve	8
1.5 IV -curve under illumination	10
2 Thin-film materials	12
2.1 Thin-film silicon solar cells on glass substrate	12
2.2 Microcrystalline and amorphous silicon prepared by plasma enhanced chemical vapour deposition	12
2.3 Zinc oxide - A transparent and conductive oxide	15
2.4 Back contact silver layer	16
2.5 Up-scaling of thin-film deposition techniques	17
3 Limitation of photogeneration in thin-film solar cells	18
3.1 The Yablonovitch limit	18
4 Computational modelling	23
4.1 Optical simulations – Coherent or incoherent?	23
4.2 Near field – far field optics	24
4.3 Finite Integration Technique FIT	27
4.4 Maxwell solver	28
5 FIT simulations of thin-film silicon solar cells with 1D grating coupler	37
5.1 Grating coupler (1D) for light trapping in thin-film silicon solar cells	37
5.2 Monochromatic quantum efficiency of $\mu\text{c-Si:H}$ solar cells with integrated grating	39
5.3 Influence of silicon layer thickness on groove height dependence of light trapping	44
5.4 Influence of front TCO layer thickness on light trapping	50
5.5 Variation of the period size	53

5.6 Calculation of short circuit current under red illumination	57
5.7 Influence of front and back silicon / TCO interface	61
5.8 Antireflection effect of grating shaped interface	64
5.9 Variation of groove width to period size ratio	69
5.10 Prototype preparation of thin-film silicon solar cells with line gratings	73
6 Investigation of 2D and 3D multi-step structures	78
6.1 Microcrystalline solar cells with integrated blazed grating coupler	78
6.2 Reflection at flat interfaces	80
6.3 Comparison of blazed and rectangular structure	83
6.4 Symmetrical 2D structure	87
6.5 Multi step pyramids with variation in step size and step number	90
6.6 Investigation of blue light incoupling	94
6.7 Comparison of 2D and 3D light trapping structures	98
6.8 Comparison of inverted and upright pyramids	100
6.9 Influence of back contact design on short circuit current	104
7 Investigation of inverted 3D pyramids	109
7.1 3D square based pyramids with flat interfaces	109
7.2 Investigation of pyramid opening angles	113
7.3 Limit estimation and comparison to established limit theories	117
7.4 Comparison of 6-step pyramid and flat pyramid	118
7.5 Comparison of different back reflector designs	118
7.6 Comparison of single pyramid and multiple pyramid unit cell simulation	123
7.7 Investigation of cone type structure	126
8 Photonic Crystals as possible band filters	130
9 Quasi random light trapping structures	135
Conclusion	146
List of publications and awards	148
Acknowledgements	150