

1 Investigation of thermal cut-off energy for accurate analysis of High Temperature  
2 Engineering Test Reactor

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35 **ABSTRACT**

36 *This study investigates the appropriate thermal cut-off energy for neutron transport calculations in the High*

37 *Temperature Engineering Test Reactor (HTTR). Using the Monte Carlo calculation code MVP3.0, the impact*

38 *of changing thermal cut-off energy on the multiplication factor was evaluated for the single fuel element*

39 *geometry of HTTR, focusing on variations in fuel and moderator temperatures at the beginning of life (BOL)*

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40 *and end of life (EOL). In the default model of MVP3.0, resonance scattering is approximated by the free-*  
41 *monatomic-gas model with constant cross section. Therefore, the impact of using the exact model for*  
42 *resonance scattering was additionally examined. In the free-monatomic-gas model, a thermal cut-off energy*  
43 *of 30 eV is at least required to maintain the multiplication factor error within approximately  $\pm 50$  pcm for*  
44 *both BOL and EOL. In addition, the results show that the impact of using the exact model instead of the free-*  
45 *monatomic-gas model on the multiplication factor is more than 200 pcm in the 30 to 40 eV range where U-*  
46 *238 has large resonance at 37 eV, and the impact becomes less than 50 pcm above 40 eV. These results*  
47 *indicate that a thermal cut-off energy of at least 30 eV is necessary without considering the effects of the*  
48 *exact model, and the energy range up to the 37 eV resonance needs to be considered in the case of applying*  
49 *the exact model to obtain the saturated results on multiplication factor for HTTR.*

50

## 51 **1 Introduction**

52 The thermal motion of target nuclei and the effects of bonds within molecules and  
53 lattices need to be considered in neutron scattering cross-sections for accurate neutron  
54 transport calculations. In general, the thermal cut-off energy, which is the maximum  
55 neutron incident energy for considering thermal motion, is specified in the reactor  
56 analysis.

57 The asymptotic slowing-down scattering model is generally employed for  
58 scatterings with energies higher than the thermal cut-off energy [1]. In this model, it is  
59 assumed that the target nuclide does not move during the scattering. Therefore, this  
60 model does not consider neutron up-scattering. The use of the asymptotic slowing-down  
61 scattering model can be justified at higher neutron energies since the energy gain from  
62 up-scattering can be neglected. At energies below the thermal cut-off energy, a model  
63 that considers up-scattering due to the thermal vibrations of the target nuclide is

64 employed. In the energy range, the scattering cross-section model typically uses  $S(\alpha,\beta)$   
65 data instead of the free-monatomic-gas model if  $S(\alpha,\beta)$  data are available.

66 The High-Temperature Gas-cooled Reactor (HTGR) is a highly safe reactor  
67 expected to be used as a versatile heat source for applications such as hydrogen  
68 production. In Japan, the High-Temperature Engineering Test Reactor (HTTR) [7,8], a 30  
69 MW prismatic-type HTGR with coated particle fuel, was constructed to establish this  
70 technology, and analyses have been performed to ensure its performance and safety.  
71 However, in HTGR analyses, including those for the HTTR, the thermal cut-off energy has  
72 often been set below 10 eV [2-4].

73 In our previous study [5], calculations were performed using the Monte Carlo  
74 calculation code MVP3.0 [6] to examine appropriate thermal cut-off energy using the  
75 single fuel geometry of the HTTR. As the default model of MVP3.0, the asymptotic  
76 slowing-down scattering model is used for energies above the thermal cut-off energy, and  
77 the free-monatomic-gas model with constant cross section is used for energies below the  
78 thermal cut-off energy. The free-monatomic-gas model with constant cross section  
79 assumes a constant resonance scattering cross section at 0 K when calculating the energy  
80 and angle distributions of scattered neutrons. However, it has been confirmed that this  
81 model underestimates the up-scattering probability for resonance scattering with U-238  
82 compared to the exact model [9]. Therefore, in addition to discussions using the free-  
83 monatomic-gas model with a constant cross section, it is expected to consider the impact  
84 of using the exact model.

85 Therefore, the present study discusses the thermal cut-off energy for accurate  
86 analysis of HTTR considering the difference in multiplication factor between the free-  
87 monatomic-gas model with constant cross section and the exact model. Similar to our  
88 previous research, calculations were performed using MVP3.0 with the single fuel  
89 geometry of the HTTR. Section 2 presents the calculation conditions, Section 3 shows  
90 appropriate the thermal cut-off energy estimated by the free-monatomic-gas model with  
91 constant cross section, Section 4 discusses the difference in multiplication factor between  
92 the free-monatomic-gas model with constant cross section and the exact model, and  
93 Section 5 concludes this study.

94

## 95 **2 Calculation condition**

96 MVP3.0 was used for the evaluation of the impact of changing the thermal cut-off  
97 for the analysis of a single fuel element geometry of the HTTR. The effects were evaluated  
98 by changing a parameter ETHMAX, corresponding to the thermal cut-off energy. In these  
99 calculations, the impact of changing ETHMAX was investigated by either increasing the  
100 fuel temperature or the moderator temperature independently. To account for the upper  
101 temperature limit of 1600°C during transient events in the HTTR [10], fuel temperatures  
102 were analyzed in the range of 300 to 1900 K. Considering the maximum reactor outlet  
103 coolant temperature of 950°C [7], graphite temperatures were analyzed in the range of  
104 300 to 1300 K.

105 When increasing the fuel temperature, all temperatures within the fuel compact  
106 (including the fuel kernel, coating, and matrix materials) were changed. In the case of

107 increasing the moderator temperature, the carbon outside the fuel compact (including  
108 burnable poison pellets) was changed. The graphite sleeve's temperature and the helium  
109 temperature were fixed at 1000K in these calculations. These evaluations were  
110 performed for both the Beginning Of Life (BOL) and the End Of Life (EOL).

111 The uranium enrichment at the BOL was set at 6.7 wt%. Burn-up calculations were  
112 performed using the burn-up calculation code MVP-BURN [11] to determine the fuel  
113 composition at the EOL. For these calculations, the linear power density was determined  
114 assuming a reactor core power of 30 MWth, an effective fuel length of 2.9 m, and 30 fuel  
115 elements. Since this study does not aim to evaluate the impact on power distribution, the  
116 average fuel composition is used for all fuel compacts in the calculation of EOL condition.  
117 The calculation conditions and geometry are shown in Table 1 and Fig. 1, respectively. As  
118 shown in Fig. 1, the fuel element consists of 33 fuel compacts and 2 burnable poison  
119 pellets. The boundary condition outside the system is reflective. The statistical geometry  
120 model in MVP3.0 was used for the coated fuel particles in the fuel compacts.

121 Section 3 discusses ETHMAX necessary to perform accurate calculations using the  
122 default models of MVP. However, even in the energy region below ETHMAX, the default  
123 models do not strictly account for both the thermal motion of target nuclei and the energy  
124 dependence of resonance cross sections. Therefore, Section 4 examines the impact when  
125 the exact model is used for resonance scattering.

126 In the calculations presented in Section 3, for the discussion of appropriate  
127 thermal cut-off energy, the free-monatomic-gas model with a constant cross-section was  
128 applied below ETHMAX, while the asymptotic model was employed for energies above

129 ETHMAX. These settings reflect the default model configurations in MVP. For these  
130 calculations, we used a library based on JENDL-5 [12], which is the latest JENDL library.

131 For the analyses in Section 4, focusing on the impact of the exact model, the free-  
132 monatomic-gas model with a constant cross-section was applied below ETHMAX, while  
133 the exact model was utilized above it. To utilize the exact model, a special cross-section  
134 library is required for MVP calculation since the standard MVP cross-section libraries do  
135 not contain elastic scattering data at 0 K. Special cross-section libraries for U-235, U-238,  
136 Pu-238, Pu-239, Pu-240, Pu-241, Pu-242, and Am-241 were created based on JENDL-4 [13]  
137 for implementing the exact model in MVP [9]. Therefore, the calculations using the exact  
138 model were performed with special cross-section libraries based on JENDL-4 for these  
139 heavy nuclides and with standard MVP libraries based on JENDL-4 for other nuclides.

140 While Sections 3 and 4 respectively use JENDL-4 and JENDL-5, using different  
141 evaluated nuclear data libraries is considered acceptable because it doesn't significantly  
142 affect the discussion of the energy range in which thermal motion should be treated  
143 rigorously.

144 The number of neutron histories per batch is 10,000, the number of effective  
145 batches is 4,000, and the number of discarded batches is 100. The standard deviation of  
146 the multiplication factor is from 7 to 14 pcm in these calculations.

147

### 148 **3 Results with free-monatomic-gas model with constant cross-section**

149 Figure 2 shows the multiplication factors at the BOL under a fuel temperature of  
150 1900K and a moderator temperature of 300K, with varying thermal cut-off energies.

151 Figure 3 presents the corresponding multiplication factors at EOL under the same  
152 temperature conditions. Figures 2 and 3 indicate that when the thermal cut-off energy is  
153 4 or 20 eV, the multiplication factor shifts significantly towards the negative side  
154 compared to cases where the thermal cut-off energy is 30 eV or higher. With a thermal  
155 cut-off energy of 10 eV, the multiplication factor approaches the values of cases with 30  
156 eV or higher, rather than those observed at 4 or 20 eV. This is due to the underestimation  
157 of capture rates near the 6.7 eV resonance of U-238 when the thermal cut-off energy is  
158 10 eV, as indicated in our previous study [5]. From these figures, it can be seen that the  
159 thermal cut-off energy needs to be 30 eV or higher to maintain the multiplication factor  
160 error within approximately  $\pm 50$  pcm under high fuel temperature conditions for both BOL  
161 and EOL.

162 Tables 2 and 3 present the comparisons of multiplication factors with varying fuel  
163 temperatures. These tables also show the differences in multiplication factors compared  
164 to the case where the thermal cut-off energy is 30 eV. The differences in multiplication  
165 factors tend to increase as fuel temperature rises because higher fuel temperatures lead  
166 to more neutron up-scattering. For both BOL and EOL, when the fuel temperature  
167 increases, it is observed that the case with a thermal cut-off energy of 10 eV is closer to  
168 the case with a thermal cut-off energy of 30 eV compared with the case with 20 eV. When  
169 the fuel temperature is 1900 K, the difference for a thermal cut-off energy of 4 eV is more  
170 negative than -200 pcm, around -50 pcm for 10 eV, and more negative than -150 pcm for  
171 20 eV.

172 Similarly, Tables 4 and 5 show comparisons for varying moderator temperatures.  
173 With an increase in moderator temperature, if the thermal cut-off energy is set above 10  
174 eV, the impact on the multiplication factor remains within approximately  $\pm 50$  pcm for  
175 both BOL and EOL. No significant difference in the effect of thermal cut-off energy is  
176 observed between BOL and EOL.

177 Based on the above results, to maintain the multiplication factor error within  $\pm 50$   
178 pcm for both BOL and EOL under high fuel or moderator temperature conditions, it is  
179 necessary to set the thermal cut-off energy to 30 eV or higher. However, since resonance  
180 scattering is approximately treated by the free-monatomic-gas model with a constant  
181 cross-section in these results, the impact of treating resonance scattering rigorously will  
182 be discussed in the next section.

183

#### 184 **4 Results with exact model**

185 This section discusses the impact on the multiplication factor when resonance  
186 scattering is rigorously considered using the exact model in MVP3.0. In MVP 3.0, the exact  
187 model applies to resonance reactions at energies above ETHMAX. Therefore, the  
188 influence of the exact model can be approximately discussed by changing ETHMAX.  
189 However, it is important to note that changing ETHMAX not only reflects the effects of  
190 applying the exact model but also includes the impact of changing the thermal cut-off  
191 energy on neutron scatterings other than resonance scattering of U-235, U-238, Pu-238,  
192 Pu-239, Pu-240, Pu-241, Pu-242, and Am-241. Section 3 shows that, if resonance  
193 scattering is approximately considered by the free-monatomic-gas model, variations in



194 the multiplication factor are within approximately  $\pm 50$  pcm when ETHMAX is 30 eV or  
195 higher. Therefore, this section discusses the impact of varying ETHMAX above 30 eV,  
196 where the impact of changing ETHMAX is primarily due to the difference in resonance  
197 scattering models.

198 Table 6 shows the difference in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using  
199 the exact model at BOL when the fuel temperature is 1900 K. Table 6 shows a notable  
200 difference (-237 pcm) when ETHMAX changes from 30 eV to 40 eV. Figure 4 illustrates  
201 the total cross-sections of carbon, O-16, U-235, and U-238, showing a prominent  
202 resonance of U-238 around 37 eV within the energy range of 30 to 40 eV. The figure was  
203 generated using JANIS [14] with cross-section data at 300 K from JENDL-4. This indicates  
204 that applying the exact model has a non-negligible impact due to large resonance  
205 scattering around 37 eV of U-238, which is much larger than those of other nuclides. Table  
206 6 also shows the impact of changing ETHMAX is less than 50 pcm when ETHMAX is higher  
207 than 40 eV. It indicates that the energy range up to the 37 eV resonance needs to be  
208 considered in the case of applying the exact model to maintain the multiplication factor  
209 error less than approximately  $\pm 50$  pcm.

210 Figure 5 shows the impact of changing ETHMAX on the multiplication factor with  
211 varying fuel temperature using the exact model at BOL. As shown in Fig. 5, when ETHMAX  
212 changes from 30 eV to 40 eV, the impact on the multiplication factor increases as the fuel  
213 temperature rises, and the magnitude of difference exceeds approximately 100 pcm at  
214 1000 K. The same tendency is also shown at EOL (Fig. 6). Since the fuel temperatures

215 exceed 1000 K in typical prismatic HTGRs, this result indicates that the exact model should  
216 be applied up to the resonance scattering around 37 eV for high-accuracy analysis.

217 This study highlights the necessity of applying the exact model to resonances up  
218 to 37 eV for accurate calculations. However, since the exact model is applied only to  
219 neutron energies above ETHMAX in the calculations, the effects of applying the exact  
220 model to relatively lower-energy resonances, such as the 6.7 eV and 21 eV resonances of  
221 U-238, have not been evaluated. Addressing this limitation remains a subject for future  
222 investigation.

223

## 224 **5 Conclusion**

225 In this study, we aimed to identify an appropriate thermal cut-off energy for  
226 accurate analysis of HTTR. We evaluated the impact of varying thermal cut-off energy  
227 under conditions of various fuel and moderator temperatures at both BOL and EOL using  
228 MVP3.0.

229 First, in the analysis using the free-monatomic-gas model with constant cross-  
230 section, it was found that a higher thermal cut-off energy is required when the fuel  
231 temperature is high, compared to cases with high moderator temperature. When the fuel  
232 temperature is 1900 K, a thermal cut-off energy of at least 30 eV is required to maintain  
233 the multiplication factor error within  $\pm 50$  pcm. At BOL with a fuel temperature of 1900 K,  
234 when the thermal cut-off energy is set to 4 eV, the multiplication factor is underestimated  
235 by more than 200 pcm compared to that with a thermal cut-off energy of 30 eV, and by

236 about 150 pcm with a cut-off energy of 20 eV. There is no significant difference in the  
237 effect of the thermal cut-off energy between BOL and EOL.

238 Additionally, the calculation with exact model was performed to rigorously  
239 account for resonance scattering. At BOL with a fuel temperature of 1900 K, the impact  
240 of applying the exact model on the multiplication factor is more than 200 pcm for energy  
241 from 30 eV to 40 eV and less than 50 pcm above 40 eV.

242 The findings indicate that a thermal cut-off energy of at least 30 eV is needed if  
243 the exact model is not considered, and the energy range up to the 37 eV resonance  
244 scattering needs to be considered in the case of applying the exact model to obtain the  
245 saturated results for HTTR analysis.

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### Figure Captions List

- Fig. 1 Single fuel element geometry
- Fig. 2 Multiplication factors with varying thermal cut-off energy at BOL when fuel temperature is 1900K and moderator temperature is 300K
- Fig. 3 Multiplication factors with varying thermal cut-off energy at EOL when fuel temperature is 1900K and moderator temperature is 300K
- Fig. 4 Total cross-sections of carbon, O-16, U-235, and U-238
- Fig. 5 Change in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using the exact mode at BOL
- Fig. 6 Change in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using the exact mode at EOL

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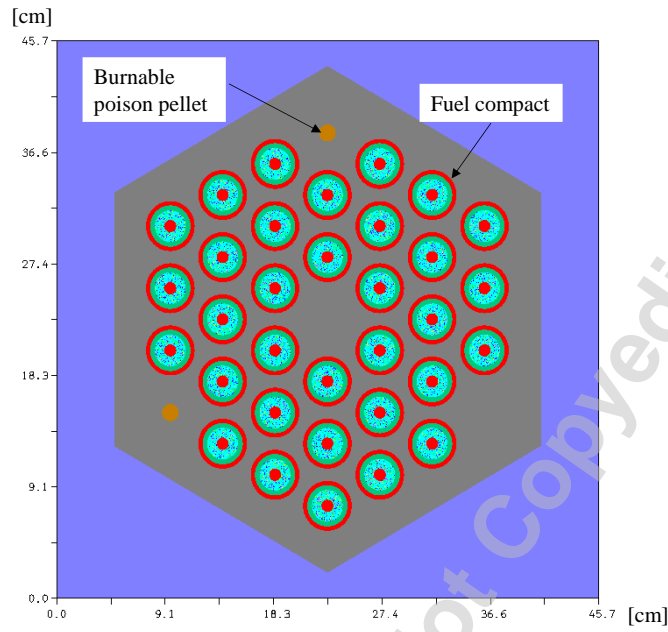
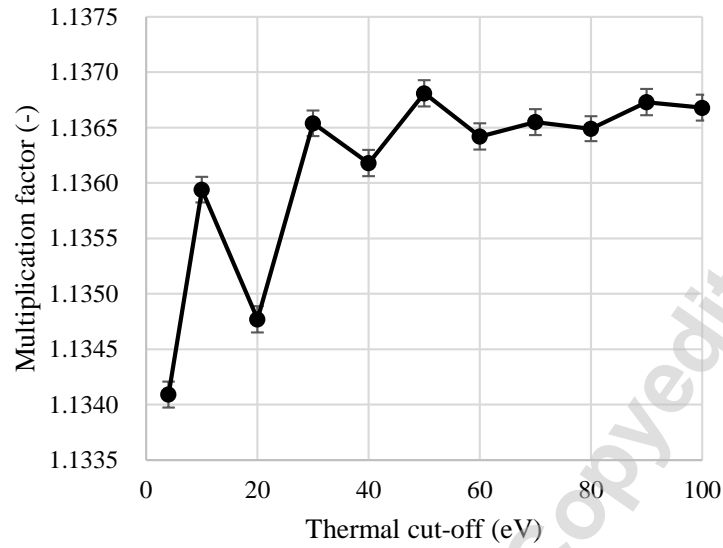


Fig. 1 Single fuel element geometry

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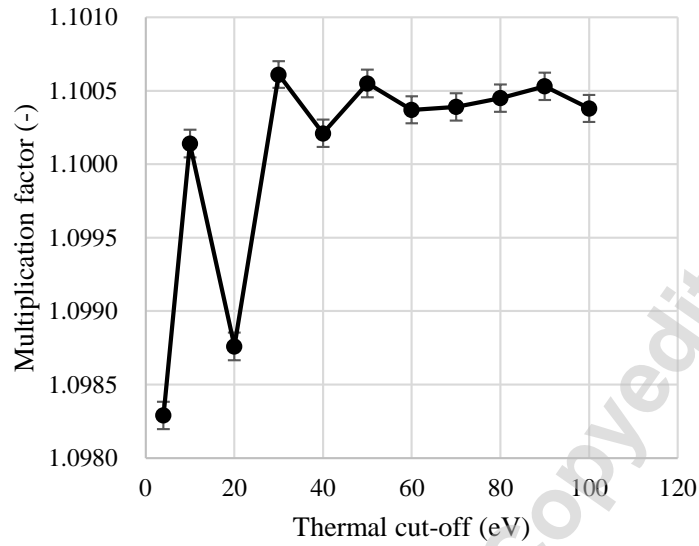




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Fig. 2 Multiplication factors with varying thermal cut-off energy at BOL when fuel temperature is 1900K and moderator temperature is 300K

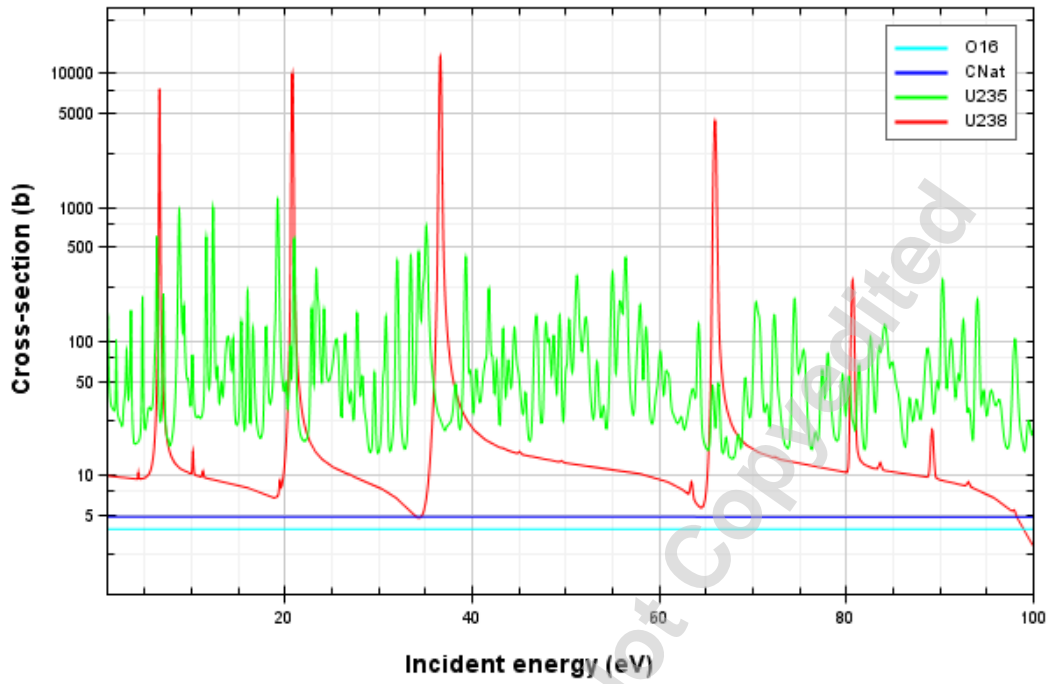
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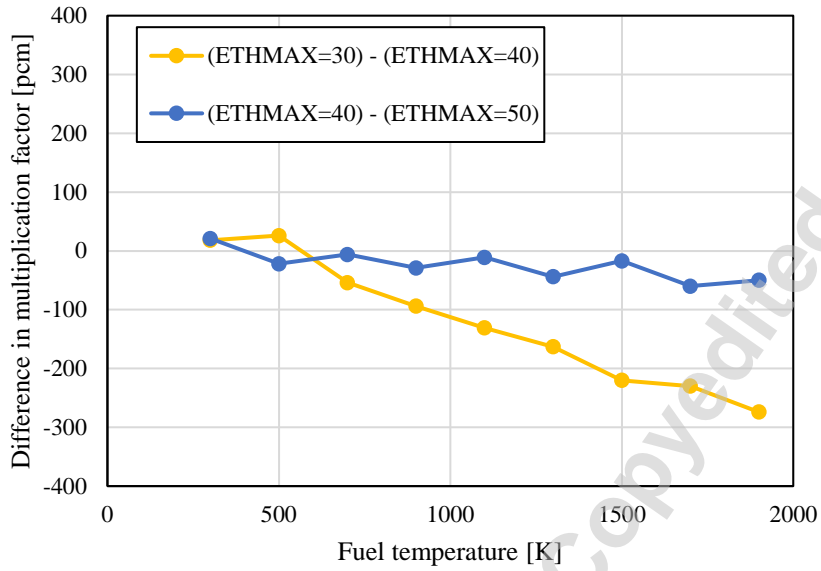
Fig. 3 Multiplication factors with varying thermal cut-off energy at EOL when fuel temperature is 1900K and moderator temperature is 300K

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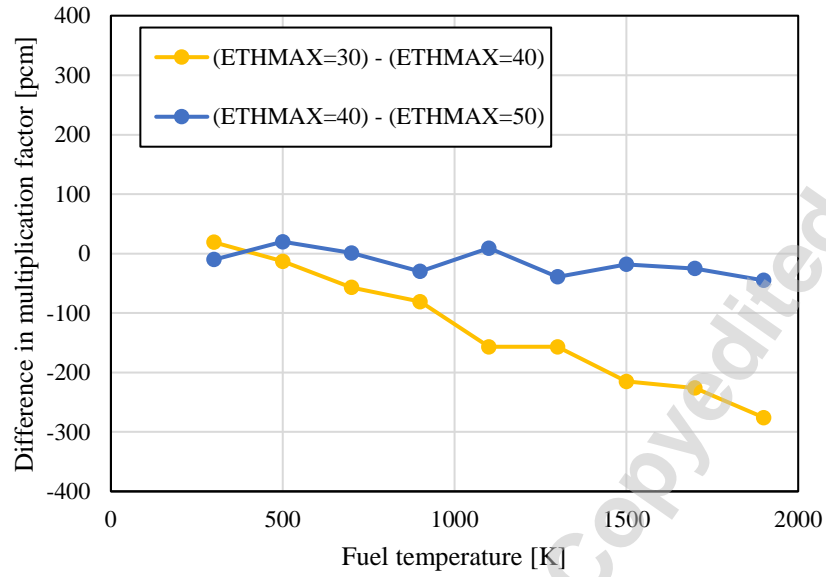
Fig. 4 Total cross-sections of carbon, O-16, U-235, and U-238



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Fig. 5 Change in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using the exact mode at BOL

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Fig. 6 Change in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using the exact mode at EOL

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### Table Caption List

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Table 1	HTTR conditions.
Table 2	Comparison of multiplication factors with varying fuel temperatures at BOL when moderator temperature is 300K.
Table 3	Comparison of multiplication factors with varying fuel temperatures at EOL when moderator temperature is 300K.
Table 4	Comparison of multiplication factors with varying moderator temperatures at BOL when fuel temperature is 300K.
Table 5	Comparison of multiplication factors with varying moderator temperatures at EOL when fuel temperature is 300K.
Table 6	Difference in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using exact model at BOL when fuel temperature is 1900K.

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Table 1 HTTR conditions.

ITEMS	VALUES
Core power [MWth]	30
Effective fuel length [m]	2.9
Fuel element pitch [cm]	36
Fuel compact cell pitch [cm]	5.1
Uranium enrichment [wt%]	6.7
Number of fuel element [-]	30
Linear power density [MW/cm]	$3.4 \times 10^{-3}$
Core cycle [day]	660

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328 Table 2 Comparison of multiplication factors with varying fuel temperatures at BOL  
 329 when moderator temperature is 300K.

Fuel temp. [K]	Multiplication factor with different ETHMAX [-]				Diff. [pcm]		
	[I] 4 eV	[II] 10 eV	[III] 20 eV	[IV] 30 eV	[I] -[IV]	[II] -[IV]	[III] -[IV]
400	1.23874	1.23835	1.23819	1.23866	8	-31	-47
500	1.22928	1.22895	1.22864	1.22929	-1	-34	-65
600	1.22009	1.22013	1.21955	1.22033	-24	-20	-78
700	1.21180	1.21176	1.21136	1.21214	-34	-38	-78
800	1.20357	1.20388	1.20333	1.20441	-84	-53	-108
900	1.19617	1.19645	1.19595	1.19680	-63	-35	-85
1000	1.18842	1.18922	1.18848	1.18967	-125	-45	-119
1100	1.18163	1.18231	1.18164	1.18252	-89	-21	-88
1200	1.17495	1.17578	1.17487	1.17631	-136	-53	-144
1300	1.16827	1.16941	1.16875	1.17011	-184	-70	-136
1400	1.16224	1.16350	1.16252	1.16388	-164	-38	-136
1500	1.15612	1.15746	1.15639	1.15830	-218	-84	-191
1600	1.15050	1.15186	1.15073	1.15254	-204	-68	-181
1700	1.14490	1.14639	1.14517	1.14689	-199	-50	-172
1800	1.13962	1.14131	1.13975	1.14196	-234	-65	-221
1900	1.13409	1.13594	1.13477	1.13654	-245	-60	-177

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 331



332 Table 3 Comparison of multiplication factors with varying fuel temperatures at EOL  
 333 when moderator temperature is 300K.

Fuel temp. [K]	Multiplication factor with different ETHMAX [-]				Diff. [pcm]		
	[I] 4 eV	[II] 10 eV	[III] 20 eV	[IV] 30 eV	[I] -[IV]	[II] -[IV]	[III] -[IV]
400	1.18487	1.18418	1.18420	1.18452	35	-34	-32
500	1.17626	1.17618	1.17574	1.17618	8	0	-44
600	1.16842	1.16822	1.16803	1.16845	-3	-23	-42
700	1.16117	1.16143	1.16084	1.16166	-49	-23	-82
800	1.15455	1.15486	1.15437	1.15509	-54	-23	-72
900	1.14825	1.14848	1.14806	1.14901	-76	-53	-95
1000	1.14233	1.14284	1.14207	1.14316	-83	-32	-109
1100	1.13666	1.13718	1.13647	1.13784	-118	-66	-137
1200	1.13133	1.13203	1.13120	1.13240	-107	-37	-120
1300	1.12623	1.12687	1.12612	1.12729	-106	-42	-117
1400	1.12100	1.12195	1.12102	1.12256	-156	-61	-154
1500	1.11634	1.11736	1.11626	1.11788	-154	-52	-162
1600	1.11177	1.11276	1.11172	1.11334	-157	-58	-162
1700	1.10699	1.10851	1.10724	1.10910	-211	-59	-186
1800	1.10255	1.10408	1.10299	1.10477	-222	-69	-178
1900	1.09829	1.10014	1.09876	1.10061	-232	-47	-185

334

335 Table 4 Comparison of multiplication factors with varying moderator temperatures at  
 336 BOL when fuel temperature is 300K.

Moderator temp. [K]	Multiplication factor with different ETHMAX [-]				Diff. [pcm]		
	[I] 4 eV	[II] 10 eV	[III] 20 eV	[IV] 30 eV	[I] -[IV]	[II] -[IV]	[III] -[IV]
400	1.24583	1.24516	1.24498	1.24554	29	-38	-56
500	1.24257	1.24201	1.24176	1.24186	71	15	-10
600	1.23939	1.23846	1.23833	1.23870	69	-24	-37
700	1.23606	1.23533	1.23506	1.23525	81	8	-19
800	1.23304	1.23219	1.23190	1.23179	125	40	11
900	1.23007	1.22902	1.22886	1.22918	89	-16	-32
1000	1.22720	1.22602	1.22572	1.22593	127	9	-21
1100	1.22471	1.22345	1.22313	1.22351	120	-6	-38
1200	1.22215	1.22072	1.22019	1.22067	148	5	-48
1300	1.21968	1.21828	1.21795	1.21796	172	32	-1

337

338 Table 5 Comparison of multiplication factors with varying moderator temperatures at  
 339 EOL when fuel temperature is 300K.

Moderator temp. [K]	Multiplication factor with different ETHMAX [-]				Diff. [pcm]		
	[I] 4 eV	[II] 10 eV	[III] 20 eV	[IV] 30 eV	[I] -[IV]	[II] -[IV]	[III] -[IV]
400	1.19385	1.19329	1.19321	1.19334	51	-5	-13
500	1.19411	1.19330	1.19335	1.19348	63	-18	-13
600	1.19474	1.19396	1.19355	1.19391	83	5	-36
700	1.19535	1.19425	1.19410	1.19450	85	-25	-40
800	1.19599	1.19496	1.19462	1.19503	96	-7	-41
900	1.19628	1.19511	1.19476	1.19503	125	8	-27
1000	1.19678	1.19524	1.19500	1.19532	146	-8	-32
1100	1.19681	1.19542	1.19495	1.19522	159	20	-27
1200	1.19643	1.19473	1.19465	1.19474	169	-1	-9
1300	1.19584	1.19387	1.19368	1.19413	171	-26	-45

340

341 Table 6 Difference in multiplication factor with varying ETHMAX using exact model at  
342 BOL when fuel temperature is 1900K.

ETHMAX Difference	Multiplication Factor Change [pcm]
(ETHMAX=30) - (ETHMAX=40)	-237
(ETHMAX=40) - (ETHMAX=50)	-24
(ETHMAX=50) - (ETHMAX=60)	-7
(ETHMAX=60) - (ETHMAX=70)	-38
(ETHMAX=70) - (ETHMAX=80)	31
(ETHMAX=80) - (ETHMAX=90)	-24
(ETHMAX=90) - (ETHMAX=100)	-2

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