

eSPC, an Online Data Analysis Platform for Molecular Biophysics

CheMelt 1.0 User Documentation

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1. Data import and processing

1.1. Input file

CheMelt can parse several types of files:

- A) The xlsx file (processed) generated by the Nanotemper Prometheus instrument that has one sheet called 'Overview' with a column called 'Sample ID' with the names of the samples (Figure 1), and four sheets called 'Ratio', '330nm', '350nm' and 'Scattering'. The first column of the signal sheet ('Ratio', '330nm', '350nm', 'Scattering') should be called 'Time [s]'. The second column should have the temperature data and all subsequent columns store the fluorescence data (Figure 2). The order of the fluorescence columns should match the order of the 'Sample ID' column in the 'Overview' sheet.

Sample ID
A1 GuHCl 0.05 M
A2 GuHCl 0.52 M
A3 GuHCl 1 M
A4 GuHCl 1.47 M
A5 GuHCl 1.95 M
A6 GuHCl 2.38 M
A7 GuHCl 2.5 M
A8 GuHCl 2.61 M
A9 GuHCl 2.73 M
A10 GuHCl 2.85 M
A11 GuHCl 2.97 M
A12 GuHCl 3.09 M
B1 GuHCl 3.21 M
B2 GuHCl 3.33 M
B3 GuHCl 3.45 M
B4 GuHCl 3.56 M
B5 GuHCl 3.68 M
B6 GuHCl 4.25 M
B7 GuHCl 4.82 M
B8 GuHCl 5.39 M

Figure 1. Example of the 'SampleID' column in the 'Overview' sheet required by MoltenProt to load the Nanotemper spreadsheet input file.

	A	B	C	D
1		Capillary	1	2
2		Sample ID	A1	
3	Time [s]	Temperature [°C]	Fluorescence [counts]	Fluorescence [counts]
4	7.0	25.000	0.940	0.934
5	24.3	25.054	0.939	0.935
6	33.3	25.108	0.943	0.933
7	40.6	25.162	0.939	0.936
8	46.8	25.215	0.942	0.933
9	52.5	25.269	0.941	0.933
10	57.4	25.323	0.942	0.934
11	62.1	25.377	0.941	0.934
12	66.7	25.431	0.942	0.934
13	71.0	25.485	0.940	0.933

Figure 2. Example of the 'Ratio' sheet required by MoltenProt to load the Nanotemper spreadsheet input file.

- B) The xls file generated by the ThermoFluor assay in a qPCR instrument. This file has one sheet called 'RFU' where the first row has the sample positions (header), the first column has the temperature data and all subsequent columns store the fluorescence data (Figure 3).

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	A01	A02	A03	A04	A05	A06	A07
5	64.79	501.82	398.53	61.91	73.26	129.38	38.53
6	63.14	513.32	416.32	63.13	72.41	130.21	40.43
7	61.52	522.98	437.17	64.34	72.21	131.14	42.45
8	59.75	529.89	459.98	64.97	72.52	131.29	42.69
9	57.78	535.95	483.14	65.89	72.30	131.90	43.18
10	55.73	540.72	504.85	67.40	71.83	131.75	42.82
11	54.00	545.15	527.02	68.86	71.27	131.86	42.98
12	52.82	549.80	549.27	70.20	71.55	131.55	42.65
13	52.14	554.45	570.59	70.37	72.86	131.79	42.15
14	51.42	558.53	589.62	70.41	74.39	132.50	41.38

Figure 3. Example of the 'RFU' sheet required by MoltenProt to load ThermoFluor data.

- C) The.xlsx file generated by a Prometheus Panta instrument. This file has one sheet called 'Overview' with a column called 'Sample ID' with the names of the samples (Figure 1), and one sheet called 'Data Export' where all the data is stored (Figure 4). The 'Data Export' sheet columns should have the following order:

Temperature capillary 1 ; Ratio capillary 1 ; ... ; Temperature capillary 1 ; 350 nm capillary 1 ; ... ; Temperature capillary 1 ; 330 nm capillary 1 ; ... ;

Temperature capillary 1 ; scattering capillary 1 ; ... ; Temperature capillary 2 ;
Ratio capillary 2; ... ; Temperature capillary *n* ; Ratio capillary *n*.

Columns whose names include "Derivative" are not read.

Temperature for Cap.1 (°C)	Ratio 350 nm / 330 nm for Cap.1
24.9993991851807	0.668331980705261
25.0000820159912	0.668272197246552
25.0013084411621	0.668575644493103
25.001501083374	0.66842645406723
25.0040893554687	0.667966544628143
25.0060691833496	0.668425559997559
25.0104427337646	0.668148577213287
25.0115489959717	0.668168842792511
25.016487121582	0.668507099151611

Figure 4. Example of the 'Data Export' sheet required by MoltenProt to load the Prometheus Panta spreadsheet input file.

- D) The text file (.txt) generated by a QuantStudio™ 3 System instrument (Figure 5). Comments should be at the beginning of the file and start with '*'. The header is the first line with more than 6 words, i.e. 'Well', 'Well Position', ... , 'Target Name'. The column number 2 has the sample IDs. The columns number 4 and 5 have the signal and temperature data.

```
* Pre-read Stage/Step =
* Quantification Cycle Method = Ct
* Signal Smoothing On = true
* Stage where Melt Analysis is performed = Stage2
* Stage/ Cycle where Ct Analysis is performed = Stage0, Step0
* User Name = user
```

[Melt Curve Raw Data]							
Well	Well	Position	Reading	Temperature	Fluorescence	Derivative	Target Name
10	A10	1	24.913	4,828.486	-1,144.751	Target 1	
10	A10	2	25.028	4,951.091	-905.159	Target 1	
10	A10	3	25.142	4,722.069	-659.505	Target 1	
10	A10	4	25.257	4,786.491	-469.428	Target 1	
10	A10	5	25.371	5,124.026	-375.954	Target 1	
10	A10	6	25.486	4,948.212	-373.484	Target 1	
10	A10	7	25.601	4,832.502	-411.521	Target 1	
10	A10	8	25.715	4,961.322	-422.667	Target 1	
10	A10	9	25.830	4,779.467	-357.793	Target 1	
10	A10	10	25.944	5,039.901	-208.366	Target 1	

Figure 5. Example of the input file required by MoltenProt to load the QuantStudio™ 3 System instrument data.

- E) The.xlsx file generated by the Nanotemper Prometheus Tycho instrument. This file has one sheet called 'Results' (with 6 columns named '#', 'Capillary label',..., 'Sample Brightness') (Figure 6), and one sheet called 'Profiles_raw' where the fluorescence data is stored.

#	Capillary label	Ti#1	Ti#2	Ti#3	Initial Ratio	Δ Ratio	Sample Brightness
1	Sample1	54.2			0.6700	0.2637	763.4
2	Sample2	54.7			0.5777	0.1825	688.3
3	Sample3	89.7			0.6071	0.0950	382.1
4	Sample4				0.6230	0.0480	73.6
5	Sample5						
6	Sample6						

Figure 6. Example of the 'Results' sheet required by MoltenProt to retrieve the sample names. This example file was generated by the Nanotemper Prometheus Tycho instrument.

The 'Profiles_raw' sheet columns should have the following structure (Figure 7):

One row with information about the recorded signal, e.g., 'Ratio 350 nm / 330 nm', 'Brightness @ 330 nm', 'Brightness @ 350 nm'.

One row with the capillary numbers.

One row with the time, temperature and sample names.

The remaining rows store the temperature and signal data.

Signal:		Ratio 350 nm / 330 nm			
Capillary:		1	2	3	4
Time [s]	Temperature [°C]	Sample1	Sample2	Sample3	Sample4
81.5	35.1	0.6699	0.5774	0.6065	0.6233
81.7	35.2	0.6701	0.5781	0.6063	0.6160
81.9	35.3	0.6705	0.5774	0.6079	0.6229
82.1	35.4	0.6704	0.5772	0.6056	0.6272

Figure 7. Example of the 'Profiles_raw' sheet required by MoltenProt to load the temperature and signal data. This example file was generated by the Nanotemper Prometheus Tycho instrument.

F) The text file (.txt) generated by Agilent's **MX3005P qPCR instrument**. The data format is the following:

```

Line 1: Header
Line 2: Segment 2 Plateau 1 Well 1
Line 3: ROX
Line 4: 1      1706      25.0
Line 5: 2      2581      25.8
Line n: 70      4845      93.7
Line n+1:      Segment 2 Plateau 1 Well 2
Line n+2:      ROX
Line n+3:      1          1707      25.0

```

The data of each well is separated by rows containing the sentence 'Segment No Plateau No Well No'. The rows after the line with 'ROX' contain the fluorescence and temperature data (second and third columns respectively).

G) The JSON file (.supr) exported by the SUPR-DSF instrument software from AppliedPhotophysics (<https://www.photophysics.com/product-pages/supr-dsf/>).

The JSON file should have the following structure:

- An item called 'Samples' that contains:
 - A sub-item called 'SampleName'
 - A sub-item called 'WellLocations'
- An item called 'Wells' that contains:
 - A sub-item called '_scans'
 - A sub-item called 'PhysicalLocation'
- An item called 'Wavelengths'

Additionally, within the '_scans' sub-item, there are further sub-items called:

- 'Temperature'
- 'Signal'

Below you'll find a minimal example.

```
{
  "Samples": [
    {
      "SampleName": "SampleA1",
      "WellLocations": "A1"
    }
  ],
  "Wells": [
    {
      "_scans": [
        {
          "Temperature": 20,
          "Signal": [
            7993,
            9579,
            10742
          ]
        }
      ],
      "Temperature": 30,
      "Signal": [
        8993,
        10579,
        11742
      ]
    }
  ],
  "PhysicalLocation": "A1"
},
  "Wavelengths": [
    310,
```

```

311,
312
]
}

```

After loading the file, the temperature data will be interpolated using steps of 0.5 degrees. Additionally, if there is wavelength data near 330 nm and 350 nm, the 'Ratio 350nm / 330nm' will be automatically calculated and available for further analysis.

H) A csv file with the temperature data in the first column and the signal data in the subsequent columns. The condition labels are read from the header.

	A	B	C	D
1	Temperature	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3
2	10	20	20	20
3	11	30	30	30
4	12	40	40	40
5	13	50	50	50
6	14	60	60	60
7	15	70	70	70
8	16	80	80	80
9	17	90	90	90
10	18	100	100	100
11	19	110	110	110
12	20	120	120	120
13	21	130	130	130
14	22	140	140	140

Figure 8. Example of a csv file that can be imported into MoltenProt.

I) The spreadsheet file (.xlsx) exported by the UNCLE instrument. In this file, there is one sheet per measured condition. The name of the condition is extracted from the cell located in the first row and fifth column. The second row has the temperature data in the format 'Temp: xx, Time: xx'. The signal matrix starts at the fifth row, second column. The wavelength data is in the first column.

	A	B	C	D	
1				Sample Name	1
2		Temp :25, Time:134.9	Temp :25.49, Time:18	Temp :25.99, Time:23	Temp :25.99, Time:23
3	Wavelength	Intensity	Intensity	Intensity	Intensity
4					
5	311.911193847656	1157.984	1136.362	1118.812	
6	312.387084960938	1194.752	1185.197	1162.002	
7	312.862884521484	1244.214	1232.758	1214.172	
8	313.338684082031	1299.843	1286.473	1264.072	
9	313.814392089844	1358.016	1330.473	1312.704	
10	314.290100097656	1410.235	1378.81	1368.539	
11	314.765716552734	1483.058	1447.716	1421.273	
12	315.241333007813	1525.251	1492.625	1492.752	

Figure 9. Example of one sheet from the UNCLE.xlsx file.

1.2. Scaling

To aid the fitting algorithm, each denaturation curve S_i can be rescaled by the global maximum $S_{\max}$ as follows:

$$S_i = \frac{S_i}{S_{\max}} \cdot 100 \quad (1)$$

1.3. First derivative and apparent temperature of melting

Given a denaturation curve S_i , the derivative is taken with respect to temperature. Firstly, if the temperature step is not uniform, a new $S_{i,\text{int}}$ is calculated by linear interpolation (step of 0.1 °C). Secondly, the number of points n is calculated as:

$$n = \text{ceil}(\frac{8}{\Delta T}) // 2 * 2 + 1 \quad (2)$$

where $\text{ceil}(x)$ returns the smallest integer i such that $i \geq x$, and ΔT is the temperature step. Lastly, the derivative is calculated using the `savgol_filter` function from the *Scipy* package, with a fourth-degree polynomial and filter window of length n .

Once the first derivative has been calculated, we use a non-model approach to estimate an apparent melting temperature (T_m^{app}). Firstly, the median value of the first derivative in the interval $[\min(T) + 6; \min(T) + 11]$ and $[\max(T) - 11; \max(T) - 6]$ is calculated. Then, we obtain the mean of those two median values and add it (if it positive), or subtract it (if it is negative), to the first derivative in the interval $[\min(T) + 6; \max(T) - 6]$. This is done to shift the derivative baseline. Lastly, if the absolute value of the minimum (of the derivative) is higher than the absolute value of the maximum, we use the minimum to estimate the T_m^{app} . Otherwise, we use the maximum. If many curves are present, we always use the same option.

2. Model

2.1 Theory

2.1.1. Combined chemical and thermal denaturation

We assume that the protein is a monomer that (un)folds reversibly via a two-state process. The fraction of protein in the native (f_n) and denatured (f_u) states depend on the unfolding equilibrium constant K .

$$f_n(K) = (1 + K(T, D))^{-1} \quad (3)$$

$$f_u(K) = 1 - f_n \quad (4)$$

where T is the temperature in Kelvin units and D is the denaturant concentration in molar units. The unfolding equilibrium constant K is related to the Gibbs free energy ΔG .

$$K(T, D) = e^{-\frac{\Delta G(T, D)}{RT}} \quad (5)$$

where R is the gas constant. If only chemical denaturation is considered, ΔG can be calculated using the Linear Extrapolation Model¹.

$$\Delta G_u(D) = \Delta G_{H_2O} - m \cdot D \quad (6)$$

where m is an empirical parameter that allows modelling ΔG with a linear dependence on denaturant concentration. ΔG_{H_2O} is the free energy of unfolding in the absence of a denaturant agent. On the other hand, if thermal denaturation is considered, the free energy of unfolding can be calculated as indicated below:

$$\Delta G_u(T) = \Delta H(1 - \frac{T}{T_m}) + \Delta C_p(T - T_m - T \ln(\frac{T}{T_m})) \quad (7)$$

where ΔH is the enthalpy of unfolding, T_m is the temperature of melting, and ΔC_p is the heat capacity of unfolding. The combination of both denaturation methods results in the expression²:

$$\Delta G_u(T, D) = \Delta H(1 - \frac{T}{T_m}) + \Delta C_p(T - T_m - T \ln(\frac{T}{T_m})) - m \cdot D \quad (8)$$

2.1.2 Equation of the signal

The total signal is assumed to be a linear combination of the signal produced by the different protein states weighted by their mole fractions.

$$S(\Delta T, D) = f_n(T, D) \cdot S_n(\Delta T, D) + f_u(T, D) \cdot S_u(\Delta T, D) \quad (9)$$

¹ Greene, Raymond F., and C. Nick Pace. 1974. "Urea and Guanidine Hydrochloride Denaturation of Ribonuclease, Lysozyme, α -Chymotrypsin, and B-Lactoglobulin." *Journal of Biological Chemistry* 249 (17): 5388–5393.

² Hamborg, Louise, Emma Wenzel Horsted, Kristoffer Enøe Johansson, Martin Willemoës, Kresten Lindorff-Larsen, and Kaare Teilum. 2020. "Global Analysis of Protein Stability by Temperature and Chemical Denaturation." *Analytical Biochemistry* 605 (September): 113863.

where $S_n(T, D)$ and $S_u(T, D)$ are functions describing the signal dependence on temperature and denaturant concentration for the native and unfolded states, respectively. Here, the background signal is negligible. The dependence on temperature can be modelled with a quadratic equation:

$$S_x(\Delta T, D = 0) = a + b\Delta T + c\Delta T^2 \quad (10)$$

where a is the intercept, b is the linear term, and c is the quadratic term. ΔT is the difference between the temperature and a reference temperature (298K). If c is zero, then the signal depends linearly on the temperature. If both b and c are zero, then there is no dependence on temperature. Alternatively, the baselines can be modelled with an exponential equation:

$$S_x(\Delta T, D = 0) = \gamma + \delta e^{-\alpha \Delta T} \quad (11)$$

where γ is the intercept, δ the pre-exponential term, and α the exponential coefficient. Lastly, the dependence on denaturant concentration can be assumed to be linear.

$$S_x(D, \Delta T = 0) = S_x(\Delta T = 0) + d \cdot D \quad (12)$$

where S_x evaluated at ΔT equal to zero implies that the intercept terms are shared. Here, d is the slope term for the dependence on denaturant concentration.

2.2. Limitations

The model presented here is based on several suppositions, which might not be true in many cases. To start with, the protein under study must be a monomer, the unfolding should be reversible and follow a two-state process, both when using a chemical agent and temperature. The heat capacity of unfolding ΔC_p and m -value are considered to be independent from temperature and denaturant concentration. The background signal is considered negligible and the folded and unfolded states should produce a different signal. In this regard, the ensemble of thermally-induced and denaturant-induced unfolded states are considered to be equal. Furthermore, the denaturant contribution to the free energy of unfolding for chemical denaturation is based on the empirical Linear Extrapolation Model, which may not adequately explain the unfolding process. Furthermore, the equations to model the baselines do not have a physical background and are based on empirical observations. Lastly, the data may not constrain the parameter space enough, turning the fitting into an ill-posed problem, where a set of unfolding curves can be explained by different sets of parameter values.

3. Fitting

3.1. Baselines

The fitting is done with global thermodynamic parameters and local or global baseline parameters. The different options are listed below, from more to less parameters.

- Local baselines and local slopes: The intercept terms are local, and the slope terms, such as a , b from Eq. 12, or γ and δ from Eq. 12 are also local. There is no dependence on denaturant concentration.
- Local baselines and shared slopes: The intercept terms are local, and the slope terms are shared. There is no dependence on denaturant concentration.
- Shared baselines and shared slopes: The slope terms are shared. There is a linear dependence on denaturant concentration that allows having shared intercept terms.
- Shared baselines and shared slopes with scaling factor: Same as before, with one extra term (scaling factor) per denaturation curve.

As a reference, to analyse ten unfolding curves with **exponential baselines**, the number of parameters for the different models is presented in the Table below.

Method	# Parameters
Local baselines and local slopes	64
Local baselines and shared slopes	28
Shared baselines and shared slopes (no scaling factor)	12
Shared baselines and shared slopes (with scaling factor)	Between 12 and 21.*

*Scaling factors that are almost equal to one are automatically removed.

3.2. Fitting algorithm

Once a model is selected, the parameters are estimated by minimizing the residual sum of squares.

3.3. Parameters errors

The default errors provided in the 'Fitted params' Table are obtained using the square root of diagonal values from the fit parameter covariance matrix. These errors are an underestimation of the true errors and assume a linear model.

For a better estimate of the parameter errors two more methods are available, namely the profile-likelihood method and the leave-one-out method. The former consists of fixing a certain parameter around the vicinity of the fitted value and reoptimizing the other parameters values until the residual-sum-of-squares changes significantly. The critical value is found using an F-test with 95 % confidence. The latter consists of performing n fits, where n corresponds to the total number of unfolding curves. For each fit, one unfolding curve is systematically excluded from the analysis. Afterwards, for each parameter, such as ΔC_p , the mean and standard deviation derived from the n fits are provided.

3.4. Statistical criteria

If the option "compare models" is used in the "Fitting" tab, several statistical criteria are provided to the User to guide the selection of the "best" model. The criteria are the Akaike information Criterion (AIC), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), and the extended Bayesian Information Criterion (eBIC) using a gamma of one. Models are ranked according to the eBIC values. The formula of each criterion is provided below:

$$\text{AIC: } 2k - 2\ln(\hat{L}) \quad (13)$$

$$\text{BIC: } k \cdot \ln(n) - 2\ln(\hat{L}) \quad (14)$$

$$\text{eBIC: } k \cdot \ln(n) - 2\ln(\hat{L}) + 2\gamma \cdot \ln\left(\frac{p!}{k!(p-k)!}\right) \quad (15)$$

where k is the number of parameters, $\hat{L}$ is the maximized value of the likelihood function, n is the number of data points, and p is the number of parameters. The value of γ is set to one in CheMelt. The value of $\hat{L}$ is estimated using a simplified version that removes a constant term shared by the different fitted models:

$$\hat{L} = \frac{\chi^2}{n} \quad (16)$$

where χ^2 is the chi-squared value of the fitting.

3.5. Interpretation

We recommend discarding a certain fit if the thermodynamic parameters have high errors, if the parameters are physically unreasonable, or if the model predicts certain

phenomena that are not observed, such as denaturation at unexpected temperatures (e.g., 15 °C). Furthermore, we recommend visualizing the fitted curves and disregarding a fit if the fitted curves do not match the experimental raw data.

Moreover, utilising the statistical criteria to select a model is no guarantee that the selected model corresponds to the truth underlying data generating process. A reasonable alternative is to report thermodynamic parameters only if the “best” two (or three) ranked models provide reasonably similar parameter values.

Contact details

For further assistance, please contact us:

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Packages

CheMelt is possible thanks to:

R language: R Core Team (2020). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL <https://www.R-project.org/>.

R package shiny: Winston Chang, Joe Cheng, JJ Allaire, Yihui Xie and Jonathan McPherson (2020). shiny: Web Application Framework for R. R package version 1.4.0.2. <https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=shiny>

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Python package pandas: Wes McKinney. Data Structures for Statistical Computing in Python, Proceedings of the 9th Python in Science Conference, 51-56 (2010)

Python package scipy: Pauli Virtanen, Ralf Gommers, Travis E. Oliphant, Matt Haberland, Tyler Reddy, David Cournapeau, Evgeni Burovski, Pearu Peterson, Warren Weckesser, Jonathan Bright, Stéfan J. van der Walt, Matthew Brett, Joshua Wilson, K. Jarrod Millman, Nikolay Mayorov, Andrew R. J. Nelson, Eric Jones, Robert Kern, Eric Larson, CJ Carey, İlhan Polat, Yu Feng, Eric W. Moore, Jake VanderPlas, Denis Laxalde, Josef Perktold, Robert Cimrman, Ian Henriksen, E.A. Quintero, Charles R Harris, Anne M. Archibald, Antônio H. Ribeiro, Fabian Pedregosa, Paul van Mulbregt, and SciPy 1.0 Contributors. (2020) SciPy 1.0: Fundamental Algorithms for Scientific Computing in Python. Nature Methods, 17(3), 261-272.

Python package xlrd: <https://xlrd.readthedocs.io/en/latest/index.html>

Python package openpyxl: <https://openpyxl.readthedocs.io/en/stable/>

Python package pychemelt: <https://github.com/osvalB/pychemelt>