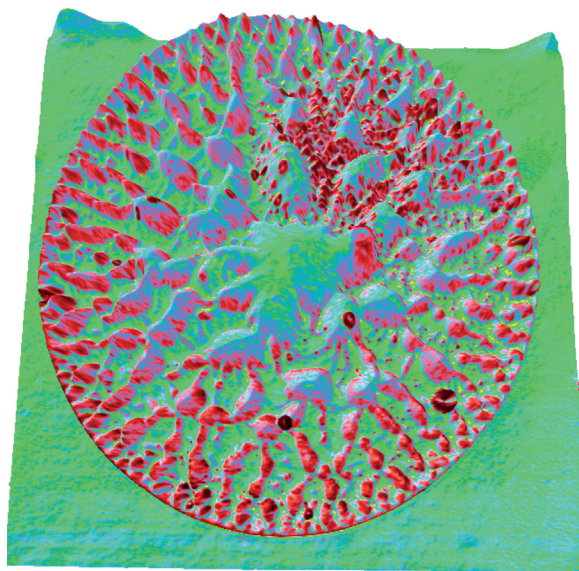




PeakForce QNM

User Guide



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Cover Image: Anti-bacterial film consisting of poly(methyl methacrylate) and silver nanoparticles. The sample was imaged on a Dimension Icon using PeakForce QNM at a scan size of 13.5 µm. The data shown is adhesion data overlaid on topography. The dark red spots correspond to the location of silver nanoparticles, which are difficult to identify using topography alone. (Sample courtesy of Mishae Khan and Daniel Bubb, Rutgers University.)

Table of Contents

	List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1	Introduction to PeakForce QNM Microscopy	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 What is in the PeakForce QNM kit?	2
	1.3 Conventions and Definitions	2
Chapter 2	PeakForce QNM Operation	3
	2.1 Introduction	3
	2.2 PeakForce QNM Principles of Operation	3
	2.2.1 Peak Force Tapping Mode.	3
	2.2.2 The “Heartbeat”.	4
	2.2.3 Force curves	4
	2.3 PeakForce QNM Probe Selection	5
	2.4 Basic PeakForce QNM Operation	5
	2.4.1 Select the Microscope	5
	2.4.2 Configure the Hardware	6
	2.4.3 Select Mode of Operation	7
	2.4.4 Head, Cantilever and Sample Preparation.	8
	2.4.5 Align Laser	9
	2.4.6 Adjust Photodetector.	9
	2.4.7 Set Initial Scan Parameters	10
	2.4.8 Engage.	12
	2.4.9 Image the sample.	12
	2.5 PeakForce QNM Channels	15
	2.5.1 DMT Modulus.	15
	2.5.2 Log DMT Modulus	16
	2.5.3 Adhesion	17
	2.5.4 Peak Force.	18
	2.5.5 Dissipation.	20
	2.5.6 Deformation	22
	2.6 PeakForce QNM Parameters	23
	2.6.1 Feedback Parameters.	23
	2.6.2 PeakForce QNM Control Parameters	26
	2.6.3 Cantilever Parameters	29

	2.6.4 PeakForce QNM Limits	30
	2.6.5 Limits Parameters	31
	2.6.6 Other Parameters	32
	2.6.7 Parameter Visibility.....	34
	2.7 Capture Buttons.....	36
	2.8 Optimizing a ScanAsyst Image.....	38
	2.9 Advanced Atomic Force Operation	40
	2.9.1 Displaying Parameters.....	40
Chapter 3	PeakForce QNM Samples	47
	3.1 PDMS-Soft-1	48
	3.2 PDMS-Soft-2	49
	3.3 Polystyrene	50
	3.4 HOPG	51
	3.5 Fused Silica.....	52
Chapter 4	Calibration	53
	4.1 Introduction to Calibrating PeakForce QNM	53
	4.2 Absolute vs. Relative Calibration Methods	53
	4.2.1 The Relative Method.....	55
	4.2.2 The Absolute Method	55
	4.3 Calibrate the Deflection Sensitivity	56
	4.4 Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning	59
	4.5 Measure the Tip Radius	62
	4.6 Calibrate Peak Force QNM.....	65
	4.6.1 Cantilever Parameters	66
	4.6.2 Feedback Parameters.....	66
Chapter 5	Offline Analysis	69
	5.1 Introduction.....	69
	5.2 Procedure	69
	5.3 Controls and Settings	74
	5.3.1 Image Line Selection.....	74
	5.3.2 Force Curve Selection	75
	5.3.3 Force Curve Type	76
	5.3.4 Exporting Force Curves.....	76
	5.4 PeakForce QNM Input Parameters	76
	5.5 Exported Force Curves	76
	5.5.1 Time Domain Plots	77
	5.5.2 Plot Units.....	78
	5.5.3 Display Mode	79

5.6 Image Math	79
Index	83

List of Figures

Chapter ii	List of Figures	vii
------------	---------------------------	-----

Chapter 1	Introduction to PeakForce QNM Microscopy	1
-----------	----------------------------------------------------	---

Chapter 2	PeakForce QNM Operation	3
-----------	-----------------------------------	---

Figure 2.2a	The “heartbeat.” Blue indicates approach while red indicates retract.	4
Figure 2.2b	Force curve	4
Figure 2.4a	Mode selector switch	6
Figure 2.4b	The PeakForce QNM in Air Select Experiment window	7
Figure 2.4c	PeakForce QNM in Air (Simple Mode) configuration	8
Figure 2.4d	PeakForce QNM in Air (SIMPLE MODE) Parameters Panel	10
Figure 2.4e	Suggested PeakForce QNM Channel Settings	11
Figure 2.4f	Undock the Force Monitor window	12
Figure 2.4g	Force Monitor window	13
Figure 2.4h	Height Image of a PS + LDPE blend	14
Figure 2.5a	Force vs. Separation plot	15
Figure 2.5b	DMT Modulus map of a PS+LDPE blend	16
Figure 2.5c	Adhesion on a PS+LDPE blend	17
Figure 2.5d	Adhesion map of a PS+LDPE blend	17
Figure 2.5e	The “heartbeat,” Force vs. Time	18
Figure 2.5f	Force curve, Force vs. distance	18
Figure 2.5g	Peak Force Error map of a PS+LDPE blend	19
Figure 2.5h	Dissipation (shaded area) in a polystyrene (PS) and Low-density polyethylene (LPDE) blend	20
Figure 2.5i	Dissipation image of a PS+LDPE blend	21
Figure 2.5j	Deformation	22
Figure 2.5k	Deformation map of a PS+LDPE blend	23
Figure 2.6a	DMT Fit regions of the Force curve	27
Figure 2.6b	DMT Fit regions of the Force curve	28
Figure 2.6c	Illustration of PeakForce QNM Limits	30
Figure 2.6d	SPM engage step	32
Figure 2.7a	CAPTURE LINE button	36
Figure 2.7b	High speed data capture is complete. However, the data is not immediately transferred to the PC	37

	Figure 2.8a The heartbeat and force curves of an image before (left) and after (right) AUTO CONFIG correction.....	38
	Figure 2.8b The AUTO CONFIG button.....	39
	Figure 2.9a The SIMPLE MODE view of the Scan Parameter List for PeakForce QNM in Air	40
	Figure 2.9b The EXPANDED MODE view of the Scan Parameter List for ScanAsyst in Air	41
	Figure 2.9c The Configure Experiment information window.....	42
	Figure 2.9d The Configure Experiment Window.....	42
	Figure 2.9e Select SHOW ALL items	43
	Figure 2.9f Enable Parameters	44
Chapter 3	PeakForce QNM Samples	47
	Figure 3.1a Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample	48
	Figure 3.1b Typical modulus image of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample	48
	Figure 3.2a Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-2 sample	49
	Figure 3.2b Typical modulus image of a PDMS-Soft-2 sample.....	49
	Figure 3.3a Typical force curve of a Polystyrene sample.....	50
	Figure 3.3b Typical modulus image of a Polystyrene sample	50
	Figure 3.4a Typical force curve of a HOPG sample.....	51
	Figure 3.4b Typical modulus image of a HOPG sample	51
Chapter 4	Calibration	53
	Figure 4.2a Modulus ranges covered by various probes. The modulus of the reference sample for each range is indicated as well. . .	54
	Figure 4.3a The PeakForce QNM in Air Select Experiment window	56
	Figure 4.3b Force Curve Cursors	58
	Figure 4.3c Deflection Sensitivity Dialogue Box.....	58
	Figure 4.4a Select Thermal Tune Frequency Range	59
	Figure 4.4b The Thermal Tune panel	60
	Figure 4.4c Median Filter Width	61
	Figure 4.4d Spring Constant Calculation Result.....	62
	Figure 4.5a Plane Fit of the Characterizer Sample.....	63
	Figure 4.5b Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample. Nominal modulus: 2.5 MPa.	64
	Figure 4.5c Tip Qualification Results.....	65
	Figure 4.6a The Cantilever Parameters panel	66
Chapter 5	Offline Analysis	69
	Figure 5.2a The QNM Hsdc Force Curve-Image window.....	70
	Figure 5.2b The HEIGHT channel of the image file	71
	Figure 5.2c Vertical cursors display X position	72
	Figure 5.2d The QNM Hsdc Force Curve-Image window	73
	Figure 5.3a PeakForce QNM Controls	74

Figure 5.3b Multiple Force Curve Selection	75
Figure 5.5a Exported force curve	77
Figure 5.5b Force vs. time	78
Figure 5.5c Force vs. separation	79
Figure 5.6a Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film before correction	80
Figure 5.6b Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film after Image Math correction	80
Figure 5.6c The Image Math interface	81
Figure 5.6d The Image Math equation	81
Chapter 6	
Index	83

List of Figures

Chapter 1 Introduction to PeakForce QNM Microscopy

1.1 Introduction

PeakForce QNM (Quantitative NanoMechanics), an extension of Peak Force TappingTM mode, enables quantitative measurement of nano-scale material properties such as modulus, adhesion, deformation and dissipation. Because Peak Force Tapping Mode controls the force applied to the sample by the tip, sample deformation depths are small and the effect of the substrate on the measured modulus is decreased.

PeakForce QNM can provide compositional mapping of a complex composite material while providing equal or higher resolution than a TappingMode image (~5nm). Peak Force Tapping Mode has high spatial resolution, relatively high speed, and can detect a large range of elasticities. PeakForce Tapping mode produces similar results to HarmoniX (see the *HarmoniX User Guide*, Bruker p/n 004-1024-000 for details) but is much easier to use and covers a wider modulus and adhesion range.

With a calibrated cantilever, Peak Force QNM is quantitative and has high spatial resolution.

Peak Force Tapping ModeTM microscopy, the core technology behind PeakForce QNM and ScanAsystTM, is a new, Bruker-proprietary, primary Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM) mode. Other primary AFM modes include Contact, Tapping, Scanning Tunnelling Microscopy (STM) and Torsional Resonance modes.

Peak Force Tapping mode oscillates, but far below the cantilever resonant frequency, the vertical motion of the cantilever using the (main) Z piezo element and relies on peak force for feedback. Peak interaction force and nanoscale material property information is collected for each individual tap.

Because Peak Force Tapping mode does not resonate the cantilever, cantilever tuning is not required. This is particularly advantageous in fluids.

Peak Force Tapping Mode includes auto-optimization (called ScanAsyst) of scanning parameters, including gains, setpoint and scan rate. This enables users to rapidly obtain high quality images. ScanAsyst is intended to be the first choice imaging mode for NanoScope version 8.10 and later software.

Because Peak Force Tapping mode controls the applied force, tip wear is reduced.

Peak Force Tapping mode imaging increases the resolution by controlling the force that the tip applies to the sample thereby decreasing the deformation depths; this decreases the contact area

between the tip and sample. Because the deformation depths and lateral forces are small, there is minimal damage to the probe or sample.

1.2 What is in the PeakForce QNM kit?

The PeakForce QNM kit consists of the following items:

1. Software keys to enable PeakForce QNM in real-time and off-line operation.
2. A pack of ten each of the following probes:
 - ScanAsyst-Air
 - Tap150A, P/N MPP-12120-10
 - Tap300A (RTESPA), P/N MPP-11120-10
 - Tap525A, P/N MPP-13120-10
3. One pre-mounted DNISP-HS probe in the appropriate probe holder.
4. PeakForce QNM samples. Refer to **PeakForce QNM Samples**: [Chapter 3](#) for details.
5. One day of PeakForce QNM applications training

1.3 Conventions and Definitions

In the interest of clarity, certain nomenclature is preferred. An SPM *probe* is comprised of a *tip* affixed to a *cantilever* mounted on a *substrate*, which is inserted in a *probe holder*.

Three font styles distinguish among contexts. For example:

Window or Menu Item / **BUTTON OR PARAMETER NAME** is set to **VALUE**.

Chapter 2 PeakForce QNM Operation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how to perform a simple PeakForce QNM experiment. Later sections will discuss PeakForce QNM parameters and their influence on the measurements.

2.2 PeakForce QNM Principles of Operation

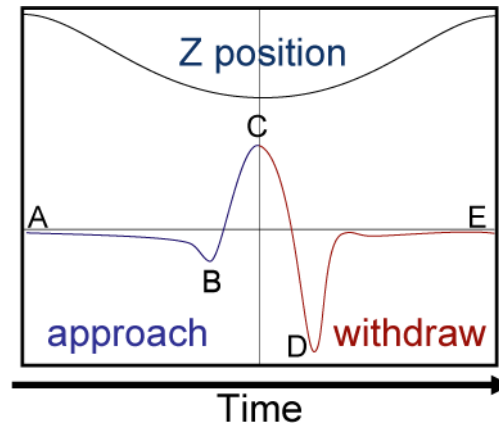
2.2.1 Peak Force Tapping Mode

Peak Force Tapping mode, the core technology behind PeakForce QNM and ScanAsyst modes, performs a very fast force curve at every pixel in the image. The peak interaction force of each of these force curves is then used as the imaging feedback signal. Peak Force Tapping mode modulates the Z-piezo at ~2 kHz (Icon, MultiMode. Catalyst operates at ~1 kHz) with a default **Peak Force Amplitude** of 150 nm (0-peak). Analysis of force curve data is done on the fly, providing a map of multiple mechanical properties that has the same resolution as the height image.

2.2.2 The “Heartbeat”

The **Force vs. Time** display, shown in [Figure 2.2a](#) is referred to as the “heartbeat.” The initial contact of the probe with the sample (B), peak force (C) and adhesion (D) points are labelled.

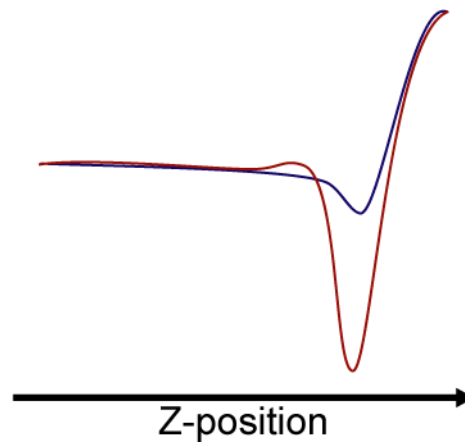
Figure 2.2a The “heartbeat.” Blue indicates approach while red indicates retract.



2.2.3 Force curves

Using the Z-position information, the heartbeat is transformed into a force curve, shown in [Figure 2.2b](#). The force curve plot is analyzed, on the fly, to produce the peak interaction force as the control feedback signal and the mechanical properties of the sample (**Adhesion**, **Modulus**, **Deformation**, **Dissipation**).

Figure 2.2b Force curve



2.3 PeakForce QNM Probe Selection

It is important to choose a probe that can cause enough deformation of the sample and still retain high force sensitivity. Therefore cantilever stiffness should be selected based on the sample stiffness. Bruker's recommendations are shown in [Table 2.3a](#).

Table 2.3a Recommended Probes

Sample Modulus (E)	Probe	Nominal Spring Constant (k)
1 MPa < E < 20 MPa	ScanAsyst-Air	0.5 N/m
5 MPa < E < 500 MPa	Tap150A, P/N MPP-12120-10	5 N/m
200 MPa < E < 2000 MPa	Tap300A (RTESPA), P/N MPP-11120-10	40 N/m
1 GPa < E < 20 GPa	Tap525A, P/N MPP-13120-10	200 N/m
10 GPa < E < 100 GPa	DNISP-HS	350 N/m

Note: The recommended spring constants are general guidelines that reflect a compromise between image resolution and modulus accuracy. E.g. a stiff cantilever will improve modulus accuracy at the expense of damaging the sample.

To reduce optical interference, probes should be coated on their back side.

You may purchase these probes from Bruker Probes, <http://www.brukerafmprobes.com>.

2.4 Basic PeakForce QNM Operation

This section describes how to perform a simple PeakForce QNM experiment. Later sections will discuss PeakForce QNM parameters and their influence on the measurements.

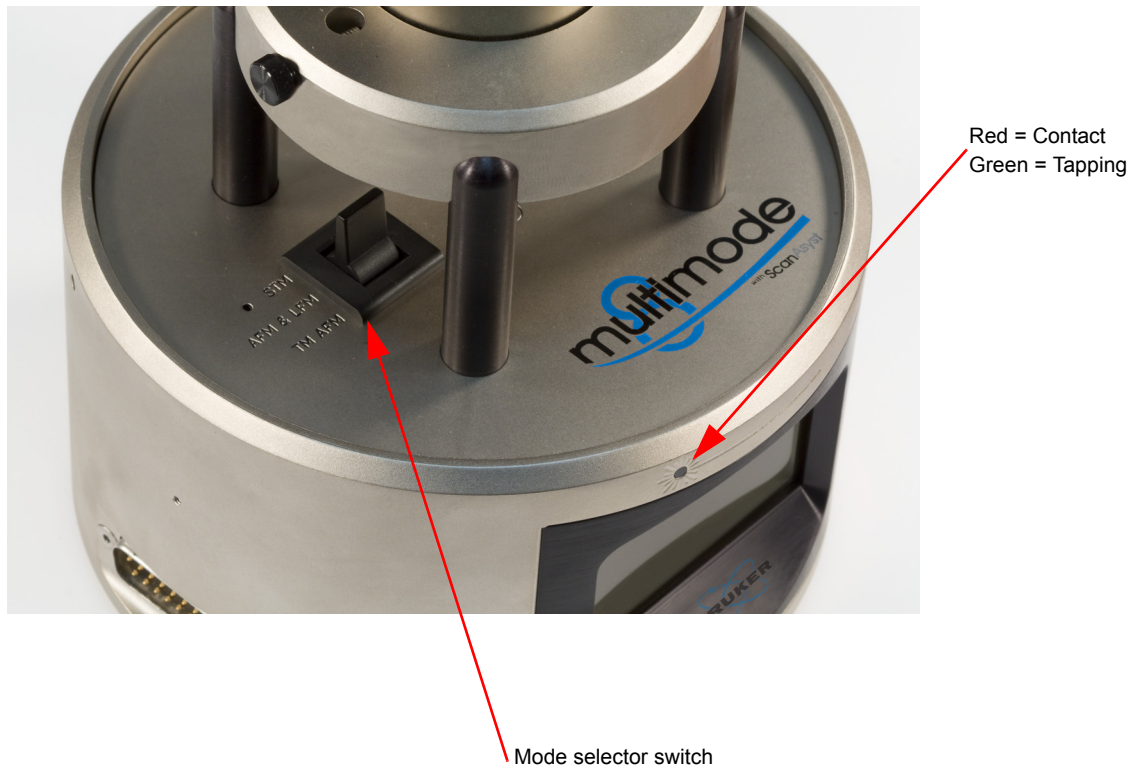
2.4.1 Select the Microscope

Follow the Select Microscope procedure described in your microscope Instruction Manual.

2.4.2 Configure the Hardware

1. If you have a MultiMode, set the mode selector switch on the MultiMode base to **AFM & LFM**.
See [Figure 2.4a](#).

Figure 2.4a Mode selector switch

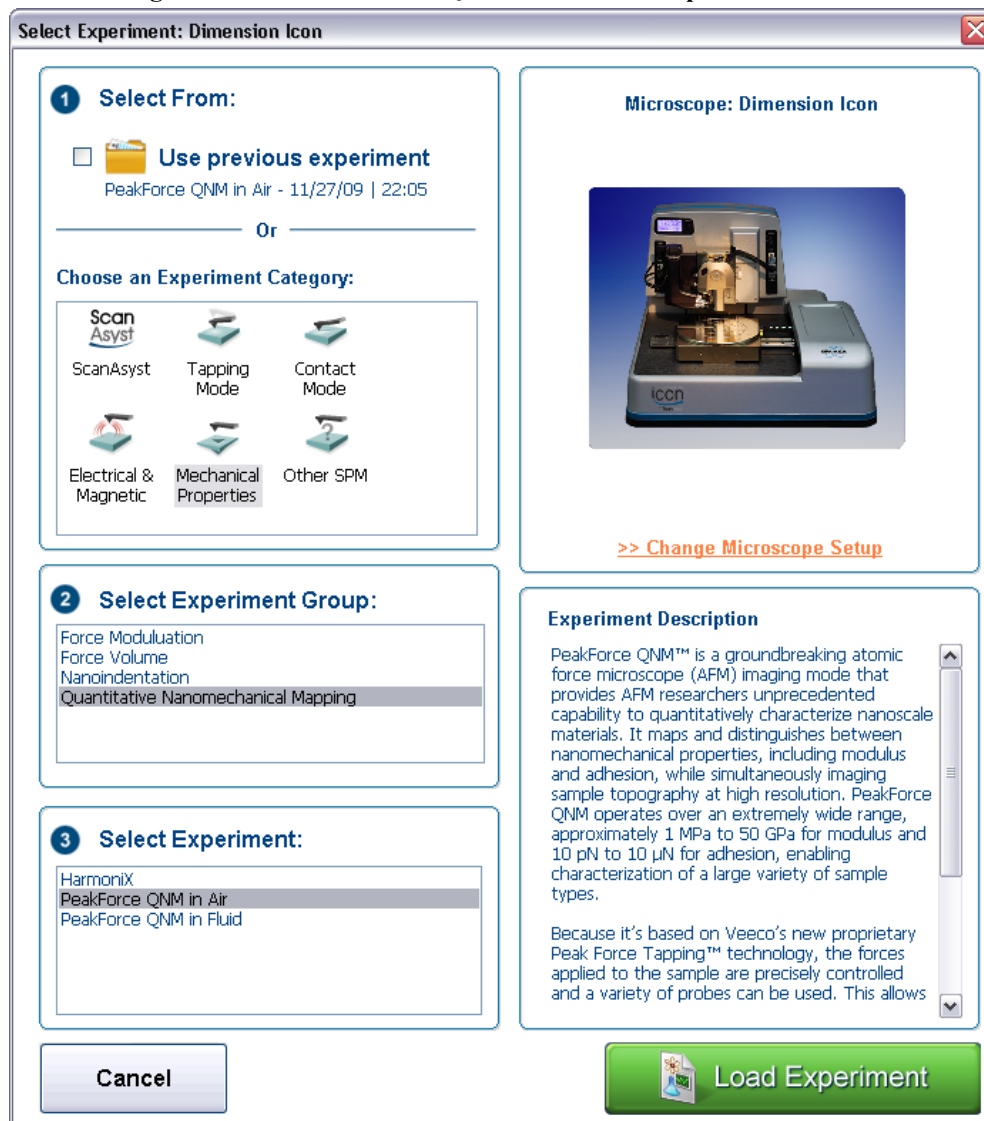


2.4.3 Select Mode of Operation



1. Click the **SELECT EXPERIMENT** icon. This opens the **Select Experiment** window, shown in [Figure 2.4b](#).

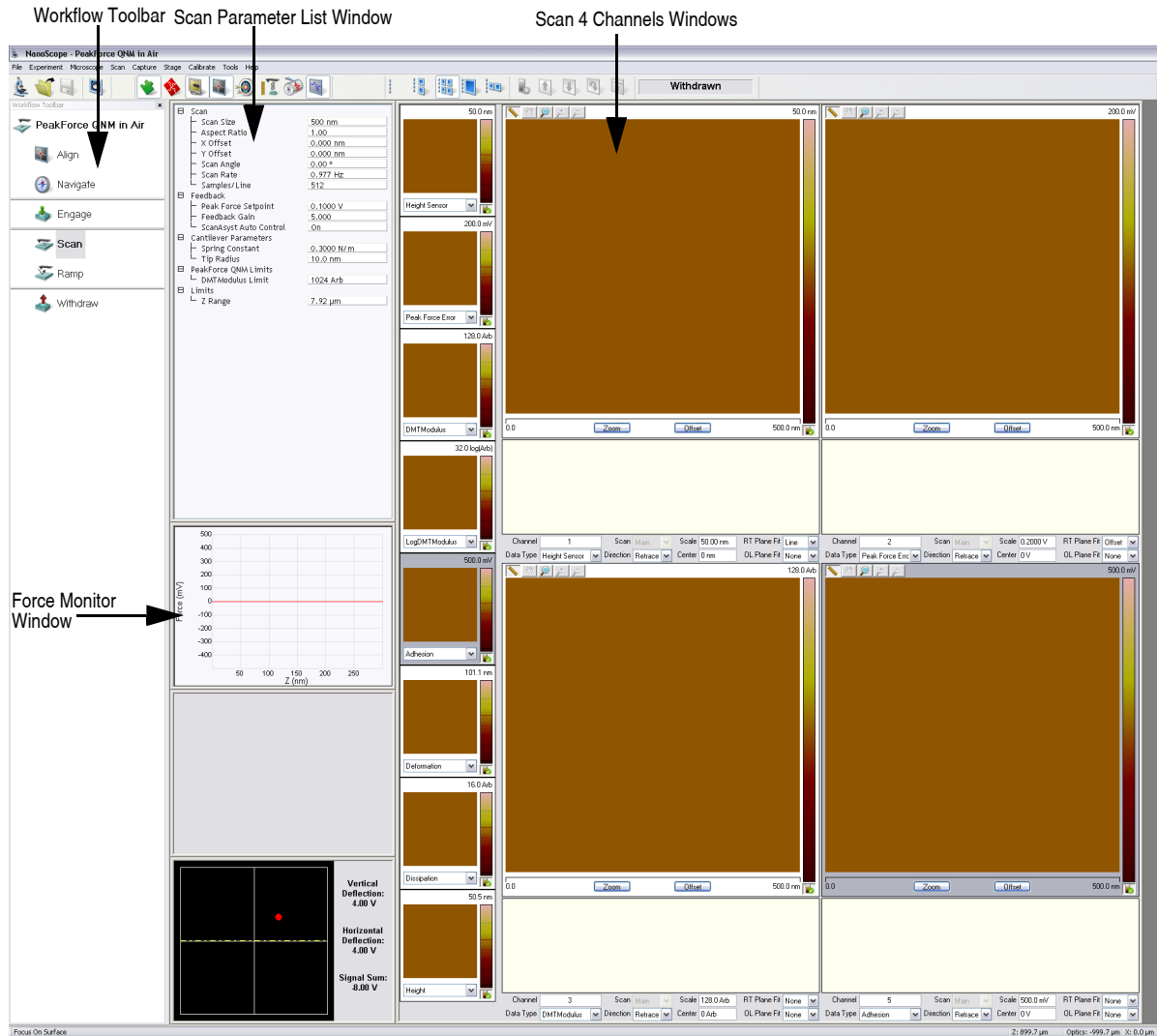
Figure 2.4b The PeakForce QNM in Air **Select Experiment** window



2. Select **MECHANICAL PROPERTIES** in the **Experiment Category** panel.
3. Select **QUANTITATIVE NANOMECHANICAL MAPPING** in the **Select Experiment Group** panel.
4. Select **PEAKFORCE QNM IN AIR** in the **Select Experiment** panel and click **LOAD EXPERIMENT**.

- This opens the **Workflow Toolbar**, the **Scan 4 Channels (Icon)** windows, the **Force Monitor** window and the **Scan Parameters List** window, shown in [Figure 2.4c](#).

Figure 2.4c PeakForce QNM in Air (Simple Mode) configuration



2.4.4 Head, Cantilever and Sample Preparation

- Install a suitable probe onto an AFM cantilever holder. See **PeakForce QNM Probe Selection**: [Section 2.3](#).
- Load the cantilever holder with installed tip into your microscope.

2.4.5 Align Laser

1. Align the laser using the laser control knobs.

Note: Coated cantilevers are strongly recommended to increase the laser sum signal and decrease interference effects.

Note: Maximize the laser sum signal to avoid optical interference.

Note: Try not to change the laser spot position during the experiment. This may change the **Deflection Sensitivity** and therefore the property measurements.

2.4.6 Adjust Photodetector

1. Adjust the photodetector.

2.4.7 Set Initial Scan Parameters

Scan Panel

In the **Scan** panel of the **Scan Parameters List**, set the following initial scan parameters (see [Figure 2.4d](#)).

1. Set the **Scan Size**.
2. Set the **Scan Angle**.

Feedback Panel

1. Set **ScanAsyst Auto Control** to **ON** (see [Figure 2.4d](#)).

Figure 2.4d PeakForce QNM in Air (SIMPLE MODE) Parameters Panel

[-] Scan	
Scan Size	500 nm
Aspect Ratio	1.00
X Offset	0.000 nm
Y Offset	0.000 nm
Scan Angle	0.00 °
Scan Rate	0.977 Hz
Samples/Line	512
[-] Feedback	
Peak Force Setpoint	0.1000 V
Feedback Gain	5.000
ScanAsyst Auto Control	On
[-] Cantilever Parameters	
Spring Constant	0.3000 N/m
Tip Radius	10.0 nm
Sample Poisson's Ratio	0.300
[-] PeakForce QNM Limits	
DMT Modulus Limit	1024 Arb
[-] Limits	
Z Range	7.42 µm
[-] Other	
Units	Metric

Channels

1. Set the **Channel 1 Data Type** to **HEIGHT SENSOR** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
2. Set the **Channel 2 Data Type** to **PEAK FORCE ERROR** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
3. Set the **Channel 3 Data Type** to **DMT MODULUS** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
4. Set the **Channel 4 Data Type** to **LOGDMT MODULUS** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
5. Set the **Channel 5 Data Type** to **ADHESION** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
6. Set the **Channel 6 Data Type** to **DEFORMATION** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
7. Set the **Channel 7 Data Type** to **DISSIPATION** (see [Figure 2.4e](#)).
8. Set **Data Scale** to a reasonable value for the sample or click the **AUTOSCALE** icon after engaging.



Note: For example, for a 200nm step height calibration sample, a reasonable **Data Scale** setting is 300nm initially.

9. Set **Line direction** to either **TRACE** or **RETRACE**.

Figure 2.4e Suggested PeakForce QNM Channel Settings

Channel	1	Scan	Main	Scale	50.00 nm	RT Plane Fit	Line
Data Type	Height Sensor	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 nm	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	2	Scan	Main	Scale	0.2000 V	RT Plane Fit	Offset
Data Type	Peak Force Error	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 V	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	3	Scan	Main	Scale	128.0 Arb	RT Plane Fit	None
Data Type	DMT Modulus	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 Arb	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	4	Scan	Main	Scale	32.00 log(Arb)	RT Plane Fit	None
Data Type	LogDMT Modulus	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 log(Arb)	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	5	Scan	Main	Scale	500.0 mV	RT Plane Fit	None
Data Type	Adhesion	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 V	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	6	Scan	Main	Scale	101.1 nm	RT Plane Fit	None
Data Type	Deformation	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 nm	OL Plane Fit	None
Channel	7	Scan	Main	Scale	16.00 Arb	RT Plane Fit	None
Data Type	Dissipation	Direction	Retrace	Center	0 Arb	OL Plane Fit	None



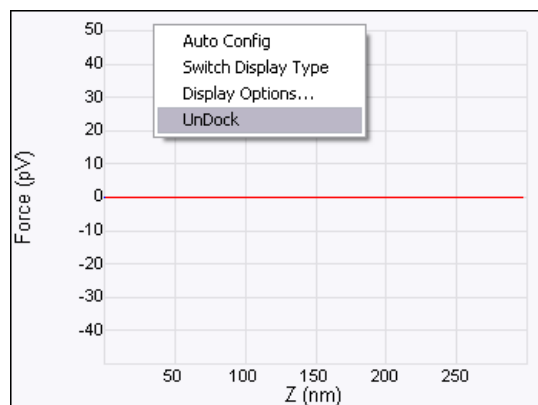
2.4.8 Engage

1. Select **Microscope > Engage** or click the **ENGAGE** icon on the Workflow Toolbar. A pre-engage check begins, followed by Z-stage motor motion.
2. To move to another area of the sample, execute a **Withdraw** command to avoid damaging the tip and scanner.

2.4.9 Image the sample

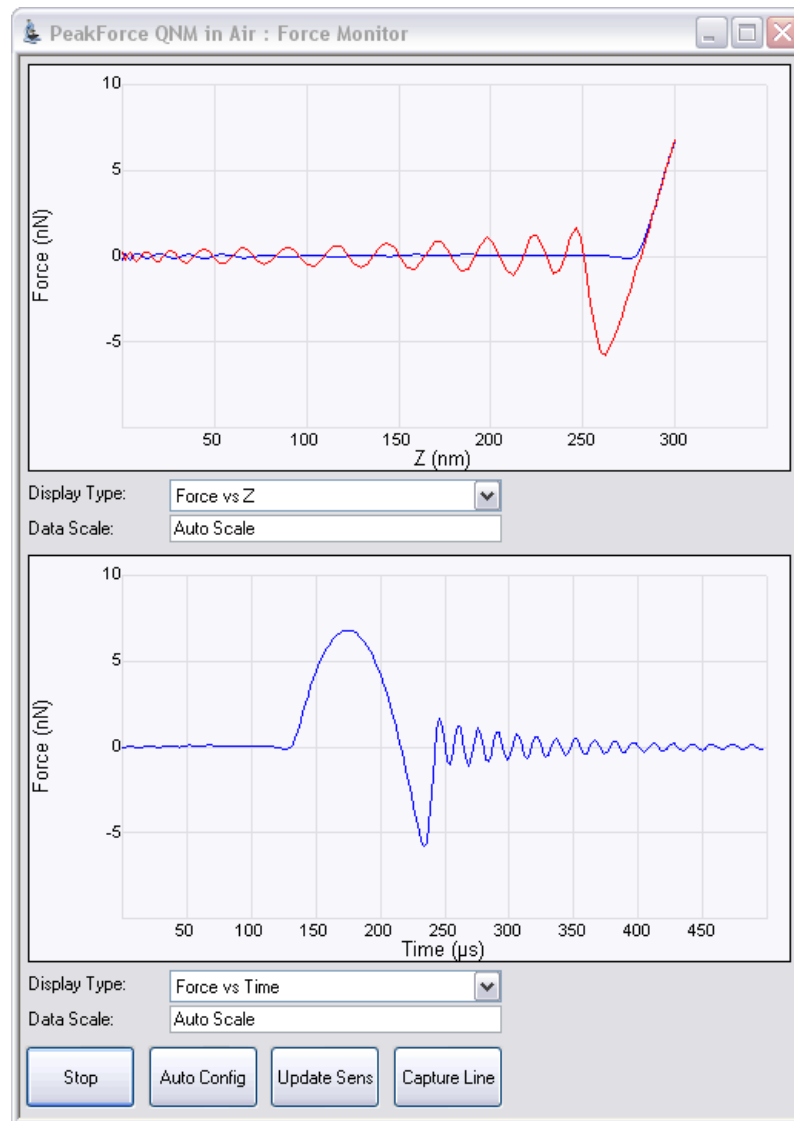
1. If needed, right-click in the **Force Monitor** window and click **UNDOCK**. See [Figure 2.4f](#). You may **DOCK** the undocked **Force Monitor** window by right-clicking in it and clicking **DOCK**.

Figure 2.4f Undock the Force Monitor window



2. Select one plot to be **FORCE VS. TIME** and the other to be **FORCE VS. Z**.
3. Once scanning, the **Force Monitor** window, shown in [Figure 2.4g](#), should display a **Force vs. Z** plot and a “heartbeat” (**Force vs. Time**) plot.

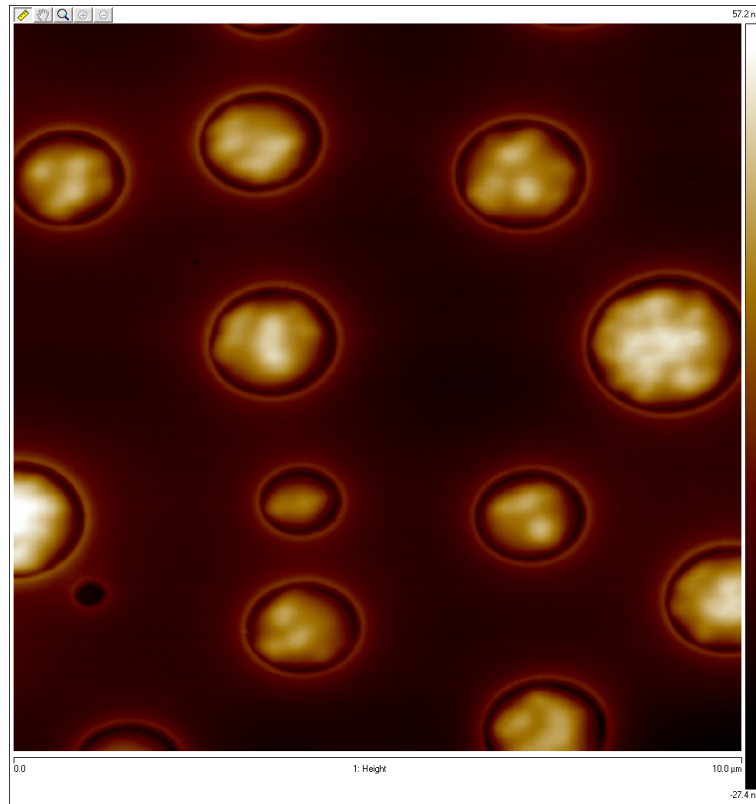
Figure 2.4g Force Monitor window



Note: The cantilever oscillation after it snaps off the sample surface, shown in [Figure 2.4g](#), is normal. On occasion this oscillation will continue until the probe tip again contacts the sample surface. This oscillation will be heavily damped by this contact. Even if the oscillation is not fully damped, the remaining oscillation at the force peak will be small and will merely add a small amount of noise to the feedback.

4. The **HEIGHT** channel in the **Scan** window, shown in [Figure 2.4h](#), will display a topographical image of your sample.

Figure 2.4h Height Image of a PS + LPDE blend.



2.5 PeakForce QNM Channels

This section discusses channels that are specific to PeakForce QNM mode. Mechanical properties can be extracted from the calibrated (see [Chapter 4](#)) force curves.

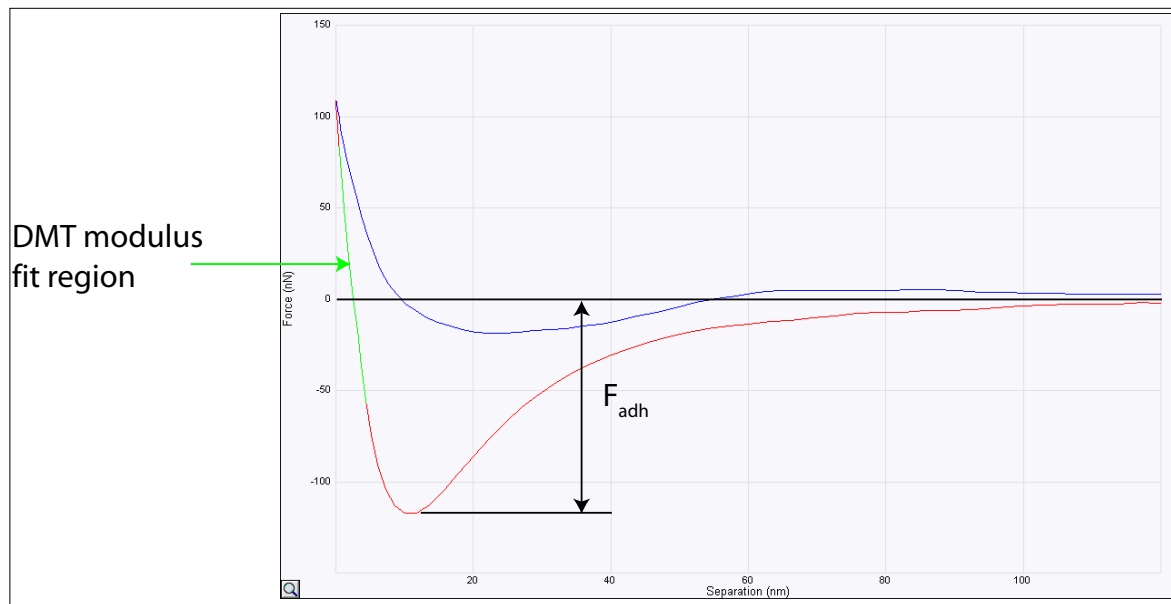
2.5.1 DMT Modulus

The reduced Young's Modulus, E^* , is obtained by fitting the retract curve (green line in [Figure 2.5a](#)) using the Derjaguin, Muller, Toropov (DMT) model¹ given by

$$F_{tip} = \frac{4}{3}E^* \sqrt{Rd^3} + F_{adh}$$

Where F_{tip} is the force on the tip, F_{adh} is the adhesion force, R is the tip end radius and d is the tip-sample separation.

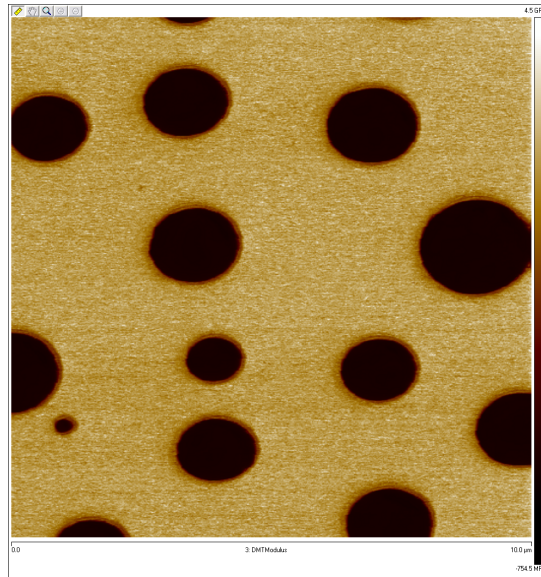
Figure 2.5a Force vs. Separation plot



1. Derjaguin B.V., Muller V.M., Toropov Yu.P., J. Colloid. Interface Sci. 53, 314 (1975).

Figure 2.5b shows a DMT Modulus map of PS+LDPE blend.

Figure 2.5b DMT Modulus map of a PS+LDPE blend



2.5.2 Log DMT Modulus

The logarithm of the elastic modulus of the sample based on the DMT model.

2.5.3 Adhesion

The peak force below the baseline, shown in Figure 2.5c. Figure 2.5d shows an adhesion map of a PS+LDPE blend.

Figure 2.5c Adhesion on a PS+LDPE blend

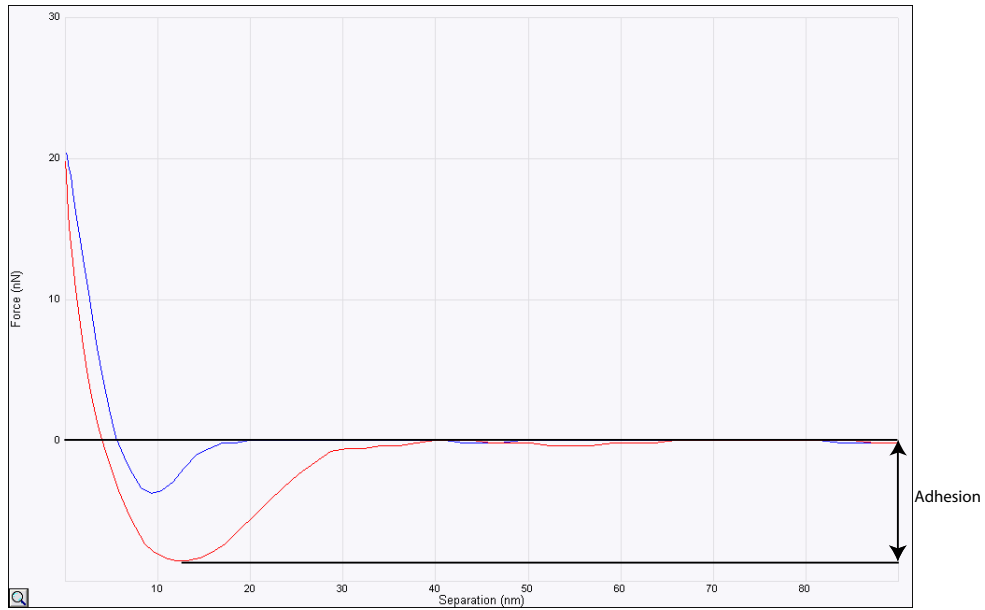
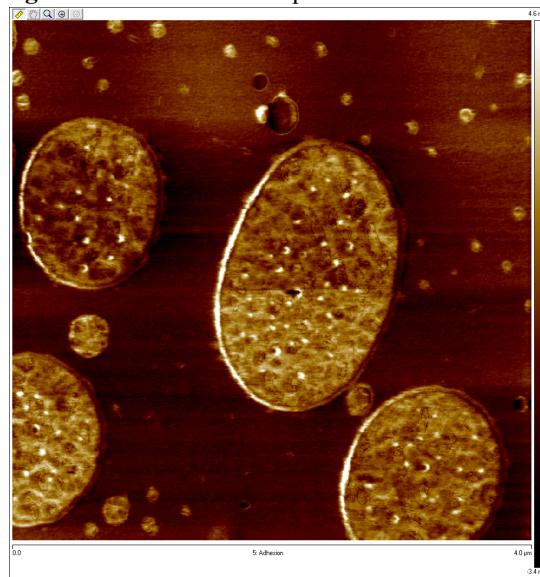


Figure 2.5d Adhesion map of a PS+LDPE blend



2.5.4 Peak Force

This channel produces a map of the peak force (see [Figure 2.5g](#)) measured during the scan. Because the PeakForce QNM mode uses peak force as the feedback signal, this channel is essentially the **Peak Force Setpoint** plus the error. [Figure 2.5e](#) and [Figure 2.5f](#) illustrate the peak force location.

Figure 2.5e The “heartbeat,” Force vs. Time

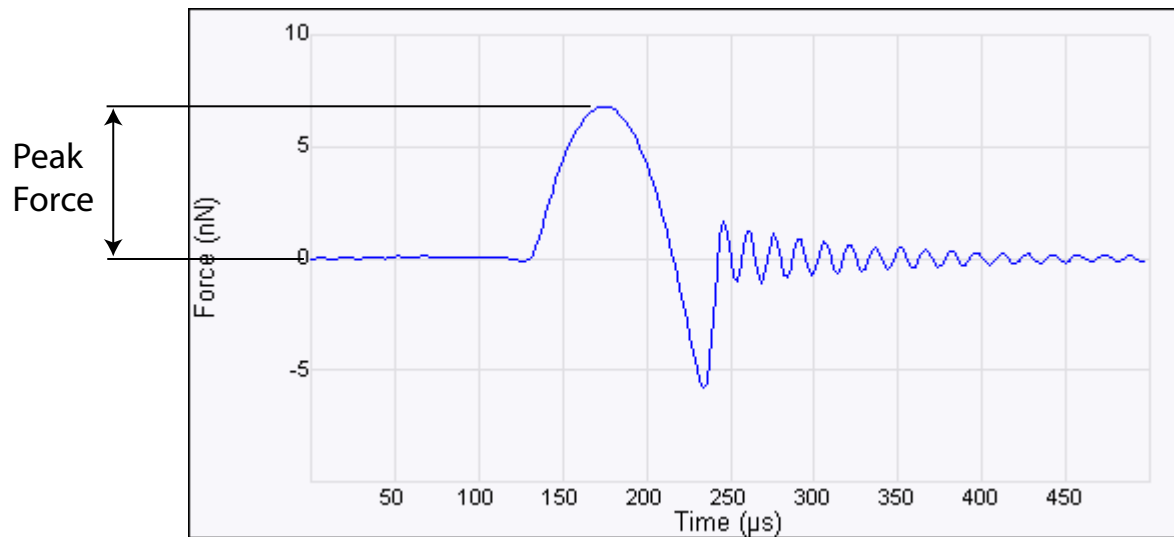


Figure 2.5f Force curve, Force vs. distance

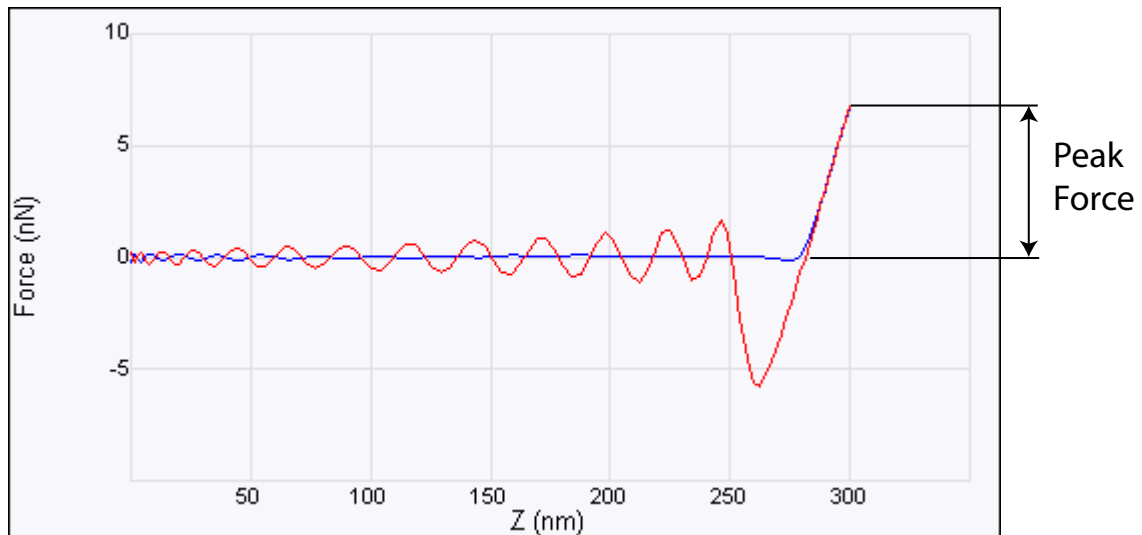
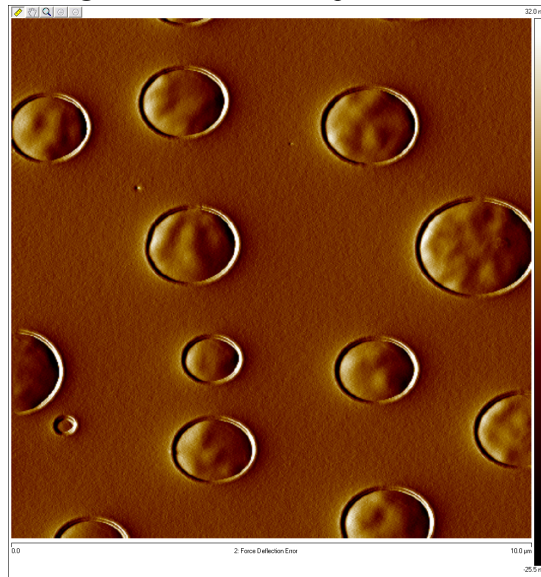


Figure 2.5g Peak Force Error map of a PS+LDPE blend



2.5.5 Dissipation

Energy Dissipation (W) is given by the force times the velocity integrated over one period of the vibration:

$$W = \int_0^T \vec{F} \cdot \vec{v} dt = \int \vec{F} \cdot d\vec{Z}$$

F is the interaction force vector and dZ is the displacement vector. Because the Z motion and the velocity reverse direction in a half cycle, the integral is zero if the load and unload curves coincide. The dissipation is therefore the hysteresis between the load and unload curves. Pure elastic deformation has no hysteresis which corresponds to very low dissipation. Energy dissipated is displayed in electron volts as the mechanical energy lost per tapping cycle.

The **Dissipation** channel plots the dissipated energy in each cycle by integrating the area between the Trace (load or extend) and Retrace (unload or retract) curves as shown in the blue area in [Figure 2.5h](#).

Figure 2.5h Dissipation (shaded area) in a polystyrene (PS) and Low-density polyethylene (LPDE) blend

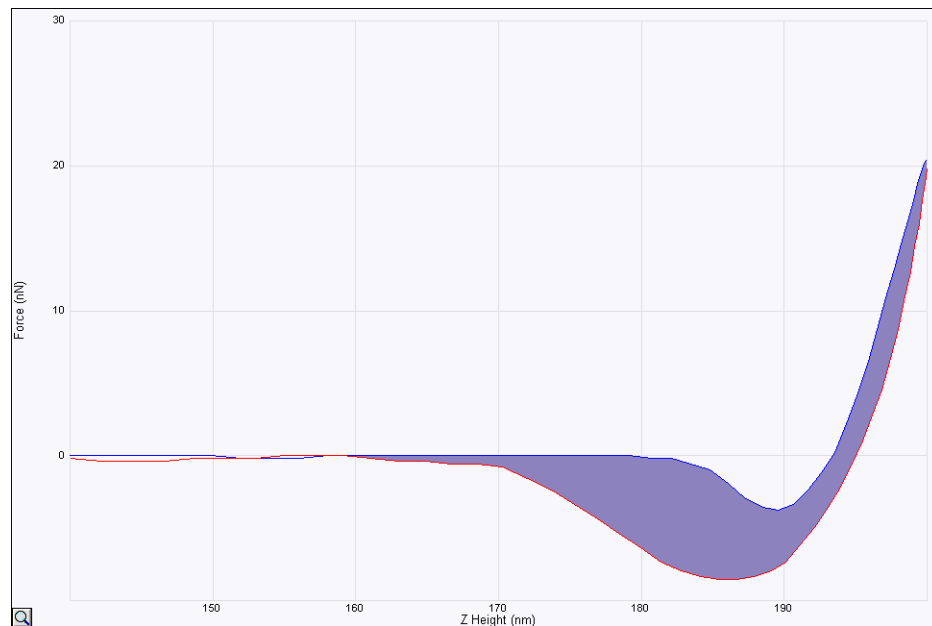
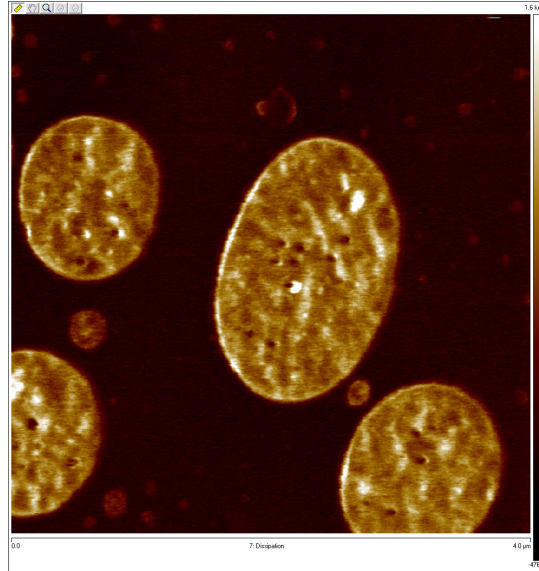


Figure 2.5i shows the dissipation image of a PS+LDPE blend.

Figure 2.5i Dissipation image of a PS+LDPE blend



2.5.6 Deformation

The maximum deformation of the sample (defined as the distance from the base of the **Deformation Fit Region** position to the peak interaction force position) caused by the probe. See [Figure 2.5j](#). [Figure 2.5k](#) shows a deformation map of a PS+LPDE blend.

Note: The total deformation will be slightly larger than the displayed deformation because the default **Deformation Fit Region** is 85% of the full deformation. See **Deformation Fit Region:** [Page 28](#).

Figure 2.5j Deformation

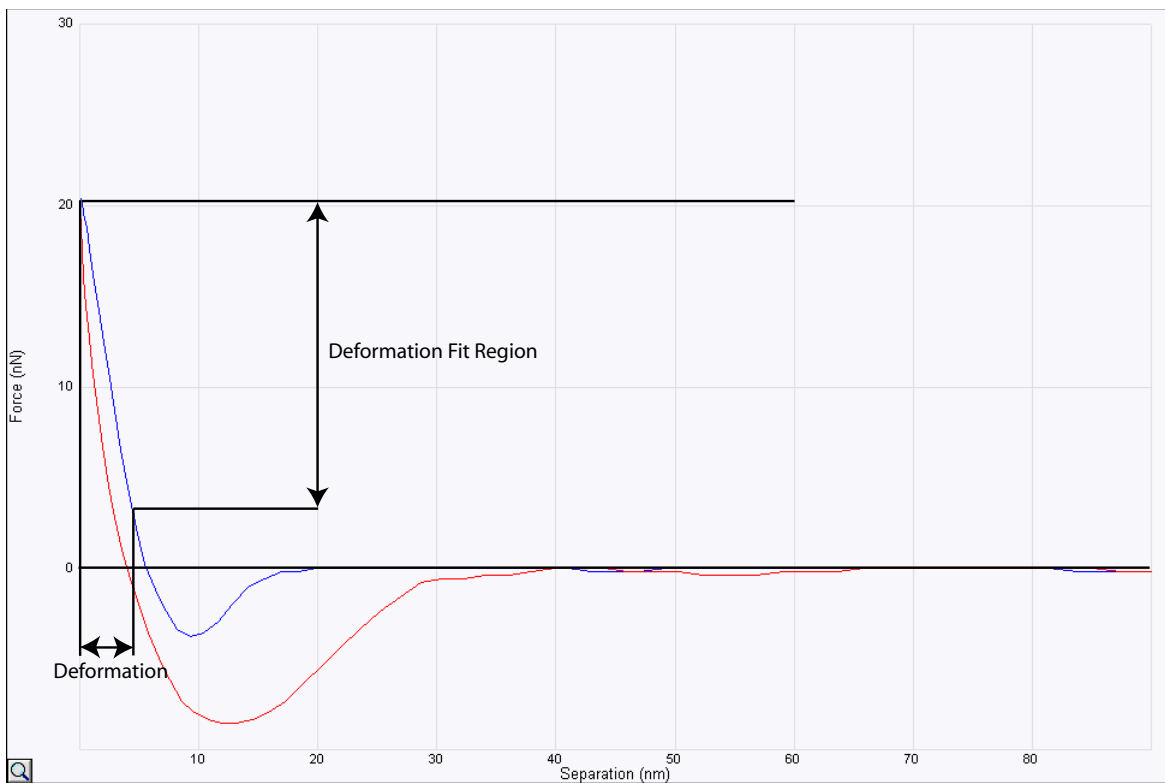
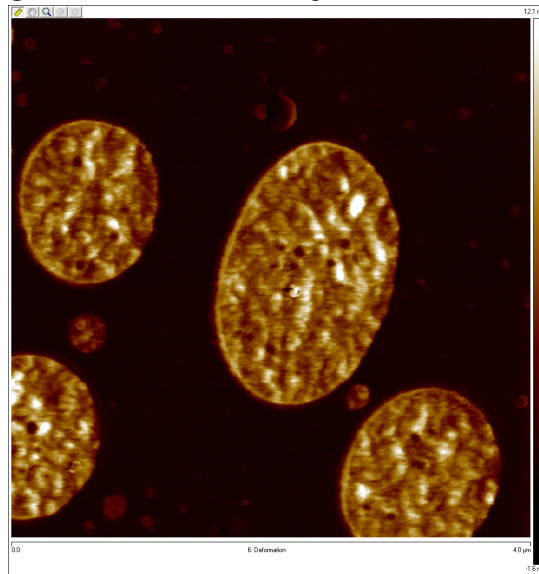


Figure 2.5k Deformation map of a PS+LDPE blend



2.6 PeakForce QNM Parameters

2.6.1 Feedback Parameters

Peak Force Setpoint

The setpoint for peak force. If the deflection sensitivity is calibrated, the force (in Newtons) will be displayed.

When the **ScanAsyst Setup** is **ON**, **Peak Force Setpoint** is automatically controlled by NanoScope software. Under some conditions, you may desire to control the **Peak Force Setpoint** manually. A **Peak Force Setpoint** that is too high can either damage the sample or wear the tip. It is generally desirable to reduce the **Peak Force Setpoint** to as small a value as is possible. However, in order to achieve accurate Elastic modulus measurement, sufficient sample deformation is needed. If the deformation is less than 2nm, increase the **Peak Force Setpoint** to achieve sufficient sample deformation.

Note: When performing **AUTO CONFIG** operations with a small **Peak Force Setpoint** (less than ~20mV), the tip may drift out of contact with the surface and will be unable to return and track the surface. It is therefore recommended using a relatively large **Peak Force Setpoint** while performing **AUTO CONFIG** operations and reducing the **Peak Force Setpoint** later if necessary.

Feedback Gain

The gain of the Peak Force Tapping feedback control loop.

Note: Both **Peak Force Setpoint** and **Feedback Gain** are dynamically and automatically controlled when **ScanAsyst Auto Control** is set to **ON**.

Note: A **Feedback Gain** that is too large will cause oscillation of the system and increase noise, while too small a **Feedback Gain** will result in poor sample tracking.

Low Pass Deflection Bandwidth

The low pass filter is used to reduce deflection noise. Lower bandwidths will reduce noise but will distort the force curve and introduce errors in quantitative nanomechanical property measurements.

Range and Settings: 10 kHz - 65.56 kHz (*Default value:* 40 kHz).

ScanAsyst Setup

Range and Settings: **NEVER:** Does not allow ScanAsyst Auto Control.

ALLOW: Allows ScanAsyst Auto Control.

Note: **SHOW ALL**, discussed in the *NanoScope Software Version 8 User Guide*, must be enabled to view and edit this parameter

ScanAsyst Noise Threshold

ScanAsyst Noise Threshold is linked to the **Feedback Gain** and is used to tune it. Larger **ScanAsyst Noise Thresholds** will result in better sample tracking but increased oscillation noise. Lower **ScanAsyst Noise Thresholds** will result in a cleaner image but the sample tracking will suffer.

Range and Settings: 0.5 nm is appropriate for most samples while 1 nm is appropriate for rough samples and 0.05 nm may be appropriate for very flat samples.

Note: When **ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit** control is turned **ON**, the **ScanAsyst Noise Threshold** parameter is automatically set by the program and cannot be changed.

ScanAsyst Auto Config Frames

At the end of every N frames, an **AUTO CONFIG** operation is performed.

Range and Settings: 0 - 100. If **ScanAsyst Auto Config Frames** = 0, periodic **AUTO CONFIG** operations are not performed.

ScanAsyst Auto Control

Range and Settings: **OFF:** Turns ScanAsyst Auto Control **OFF**.

ON: Turns ScanAsyst Auto Control **ON**.

INDIVIDUAL: Allows individual control of **ScanAsyst Auto Gain**, **ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint**, **ScanAsyst Auto Scan Rate** and **ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit**.

ScanAsyst Auto Gain

ScanAsyst Auto Gain allows NanoScope to dynamically control **Feedback Gain**.

Range and Settings: **OFF:** Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Gain OFF**.

ON: Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Gain ON**.

ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint

ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint allows NanoScope to dynamically control the **Peak Force Setpoint**.

Range and Settings: **OFF:** Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint OFF**.

ON: Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint ON**.

Note: This option is very useful for users who want to change the **Peak Force Setpoint** manually to achieve adequate deformation on the sample while leaving **ScanAsyst Auto Gain ON**.

ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate

ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate allows NanoScope to control the **Scan Rate**.

Range and Settings: **OFF:** Turns **ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate OFF**.

ON: Turns **ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate ON**.

ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit

ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit allows NanoScope to control the **Z Limit**. The **ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit** function will detect if the surface is sufficiently smooth to allow reduction of the **Z Limit** and thus avoid bit noise in the **Height** and **Height Sensor** channel. This will be effective after a whole frame of the image is scanned. If the **Z Limit** needs to be reduced, the **ScanAsyst Noise Threshold** will automatically be reduced to 0.15 times the original **ScanAsyst Noise Threshold** to reduce the oscillation noise for smooth samples.

Range and Settings: **OFF:** Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit OFF**.

ON: Turns **ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit ON**.

2.6.2 PeakForce QNM Control Parameters

Peak Force Amplitude

The zero-to-peak amplitude of the cantilever drive in the Z axis (Z modulation). Increasing **Peak Force Amplitude** will reduce the contact time during each tip tapping cycle on the sample and help tracking the rough and/or sticky sample by avoiding a situation where the tip is unable to pull off from the sample. Reduced **Peak Force Amplitude** is desired in liquid on flat samples. Less **Peak Force Amplitude** results in less hydrodynamic force disturbance.

Lift Height

The distance that the Z-piezo is retracted from the sample during an **AUTO CONFIG** operation.

Note: Changing the **Lift Height** will automatically start the **AUTO CONFIG** function (see **Optimizing a ScanAsyst Image: Page 38**) and retract the Z piezo to the specified **Lift Height**. Clicking **AUTO CONFIG** will automatically calculate the **Lift Height** and perform an **AUTO CONFIG** operation.

Top Fit Region

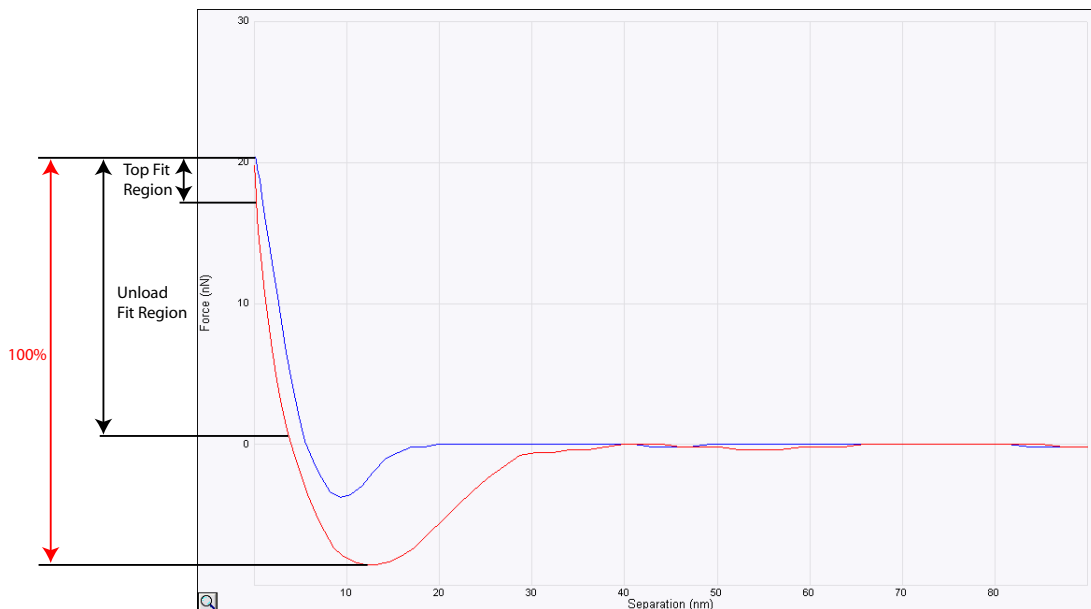
The **Top Fit Region** of the unload force curve, shown in [Figure 2.6a](#), is excluded from the DMT Modulus calculations.

Note: A smaller **Top Fit Region** means that less region of the force curve is excluded from the DMT modulus calculations.

Range and Settings: 0 - 94%.

Typical: 10%.

Figure 2.6a DMT Fit regions of the Force curve



Unload Fit Region

The **Unload Fit Region** of the force curve, shown in [Figure 2.6a](#), is included in the DMT Modulus calculations.

Range and Settings: 0 - 100%. 100% is defined as the force between the adhesion point and the peak force.

Typical: 70%.

The portion of the force curve between the **Top Fit Region** and the **Unload Fit Region** is included in the DMT Modulus calculations. For typical numbers discussed here, the region between 10% and 70% of the unload force curve will be included in the DMT modulus calculations.

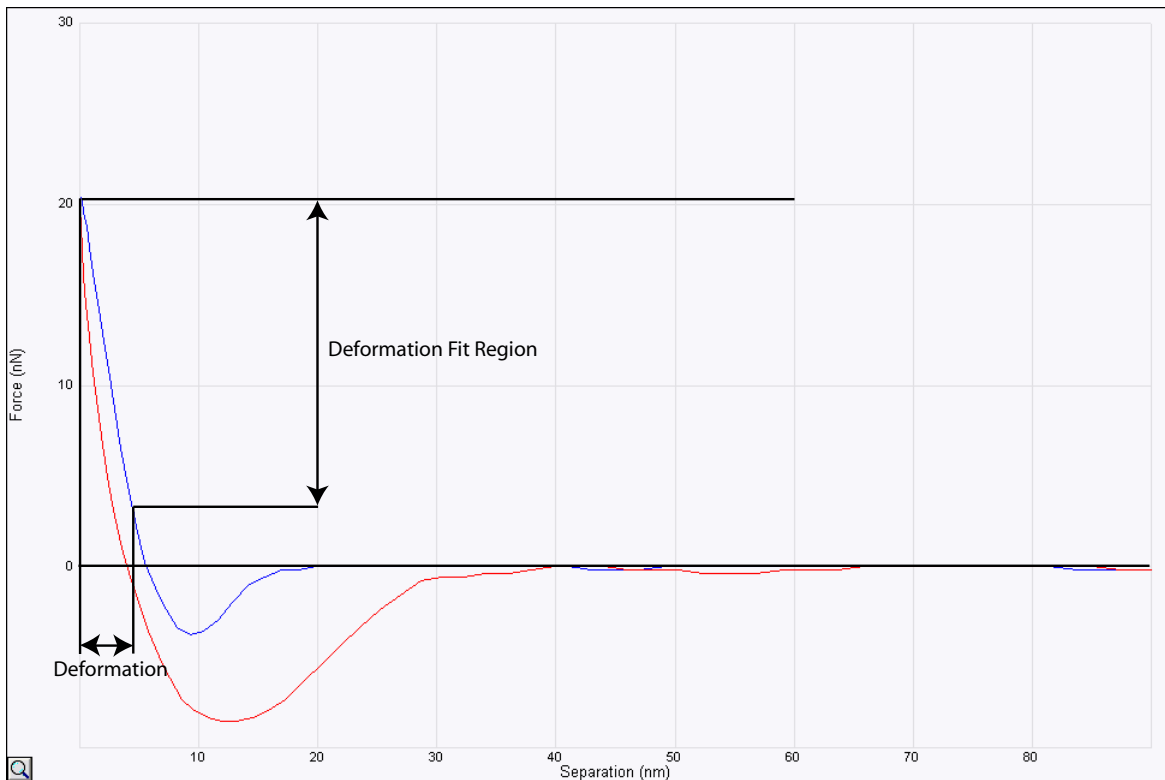
Deformation Fit Region

The **Deformation Fit Region** of the load force curve, shown in [Figure 2.6b](#), is excluded from the **Deformation** channel display. This parameter is used to reduce the effect of baseline noise.

Range and Settings: **50 - 100%**. 100% is defined as the force between the zero force point and the peak force in the load curve.

Typical: **85%**. The portion of the force curve above the 85% point is displayed in the Deformation channel.

Figure 2.6b DMT Fit regions of the Force curve



2.6.3 Cantilever Parameters

The following parameters are needed to calibrate PeakForce QNM.

Spring Constant

Measure the spring constant of the probe and input that value into this panel. Spring constant may be measured using the Thermal Tune function in NanoScope software. Refer to **Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning**: [Section 4.4](#) for details.

Tip Radius

Measure the tip radius and input the value in this panel. Tip radius may be measured using a tip characterizer sample and the Tip Qualification function in NanoScope software. Refer to **Measure the Tip Radius**: [Section 4.5](#) for details.

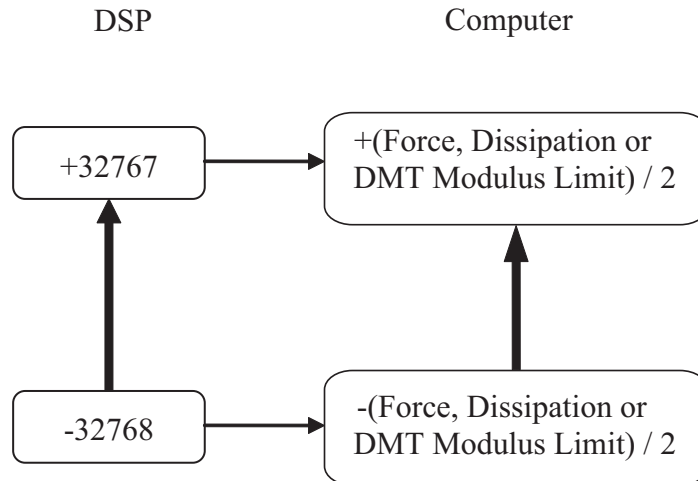
Poisson's Ratio

Poisson's ratio of the sample. This is used to calculate the sample modulus, E_s , from the measured reduced modulus, E^* : Refer to **Calibrate Peak Force QNM**: [Section 4.6](#) for details.

2.6.4 PeakForce QNM Limits

These parameters work like other limits in the NanoScope software. Numbers in the NanoScope software are represented using 16 bits and thus various quantities are represented as illustrated in [Figure 2.6c](#).

Figure 2.6c Illustration of PeakForce QNM Limits



As with other limits, setting the limit too high increases the bit noise. Setting the limit too low can result in wrapped data and inverted contrast. The limits of the following parameters can be set by the user:

- Force Limit: affects the **Peak Force** and **Adhesion** channels.
- Dissipation Limit: affects the **Dissipation** channel.
- DMT Modulus Limit: affects the **DMT Modulus** channel.
- LogDMT Modulus Limit: affects the **LogDMT Modulus** channel.
- LogDMT Modulus Offset: affects the **LogDMT Modulus** channel.

2.6.5 Limits Parameters

Z Limit

Permits attenuation of maximum allowable Z voltage and vertical scan range to achieve higher resolution (smaller quantization) in the Z direction.

Range or Settings:

- Dimension Icon: 8.33 V (~0.241 μm) to 309.3 V (~9 μm).
- MultiMode 8: 11 V (~0.1375 μm) to 416 V (~5 μm).
- BioScope Catalyst: 1 V (~0.1252 μm) to 145 V (~18 μm).

Note: **SHOW ALL**, discussed in the *NanoScope Software Version 8 User Guide*, must be enabled to view and edit this parameter.

Z Range

Permits attenuation of the range of the Z piezo as measured by the Z sensor to achieve higher resolution (smaller quantization) in the Z direction.

Range or Settings:

- Dimension Icon: 0.2 nm to ~10 microns
- BioScope Catalyst: 0.2 nm to ~28 microns

Note: The **Z Range** parameter does not apply to the MultiMode because it does not incorporate a Z sensor.

Deflection Limit

Use this parameter to attenuate the maximum allowable deflection signal to achieve higher resolution. If this value is too small, saturation of the **Deflection** channel will occur.

Range or Settings: 4.096V - 24.58V.

2.6.6 Other Parameters

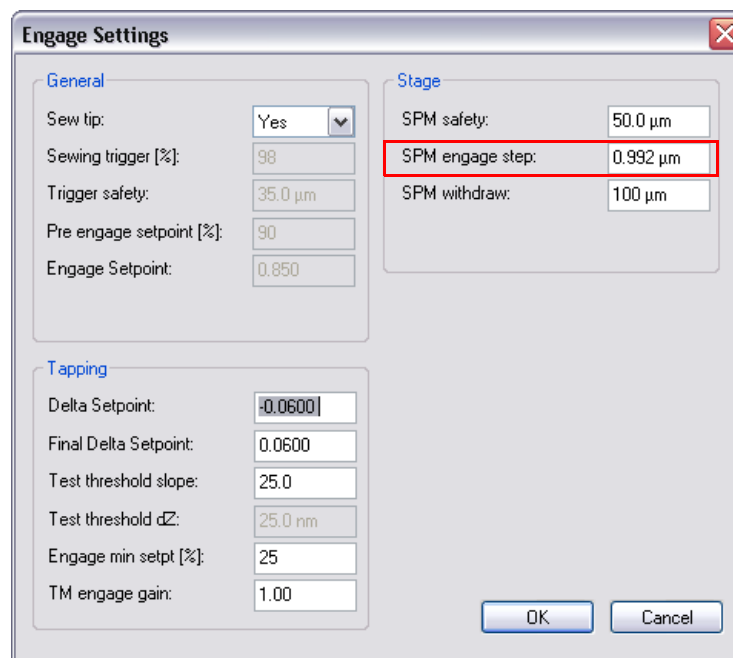
Peak Force Engage Setpoint

Laser interference from reflective samples can cause a “false engage” which can be avoided by using a large **Peak Force Engage Setpoint**. This is why a relatively large and conservative **Peak Force Engage Setpoint** default value is used. But large **Peak Force Engage Setpoints** can damage samples and probes, particularly cantilevers with high spring constants. To reduce the engage force, reduce the **Peak Force Engage Setpoint**. When you reduce **Peak Force Engage Setpoint**, you should also reduce **SPM engage step**, found in **Microscope > Engage Settings > General**, shown in [Figure 2.6d](#).

Range or Settings:

- Dimension Icon: 0.001 V - 1.229 V (*Default value: 0.15 V*).
- MultiMode 8: 0.001 V - 1.229 V (*Default value: 0.15 V*).
- BioScope Catalyst: 0.001 V - 1.229 V (*Default value: 0.3 V*).

Figure 2.6d SPM engage step



Medium

The medium surrounding the sample and probe. This parameter is selected when you select either PeakForce QNM in Air

Range and Settings: **AIR.**

FLUID.

Note: **SHOW ALL**, discussed in the *NanoScope Software Version 8 User Guide*, must be enabled to view and edit this parameter

2.6.7 Parameter Visibility

The visibility of various parameters depends on the selected mode. [Table 2.6a](#) shows parameter visibility as a function of microscope mode.

Table 2.6a Parameter Visibility

Panel	Parameter	Simple Mode	Expanded Mode	Show All	Other Dependencies
Feedback	Peak Force Setpoint	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Feedback Gain	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Low Pass Deflection Bandwidth	No	Yes	Yes	
	ScanAsyst Setup	No	No	Yes	
	ScanAsyst Noise Threshold	No	Yes	Yes	
	ScanAsyst Auto Config Frames	No	No	Yes	
	ScanAsyst Auto Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	ScanAsyst Auto Gain	Yes	Yes	Yes	ScanAsyst Auto Control
	ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint	Yes	Yes	Yes	ScanAsyst Auto Control
	ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes	ScanAsyst Auto Control
	ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit	Yes	Yes	Yes	ScanAsyst Auto Control

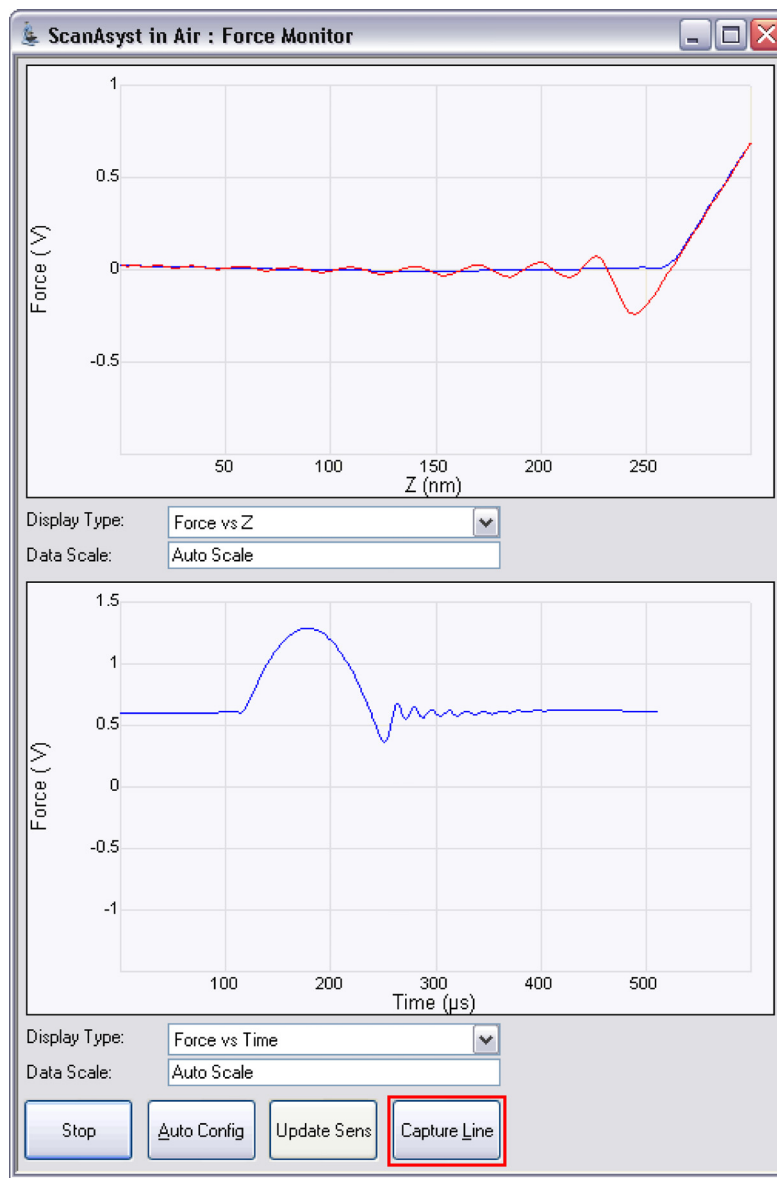
Panel	Parameter	Simple Mode	Expanded Mode	Show All	Other Dependencies
Peak Force QNM Control	Peak Force Amplitude	No	Yes	Yes	
	Lift Height	No	Yes	Yes	
	Top Fit Region	No	No	Yes	
	Unload Fit Region	No	No	Yes	
	Deformation Fit Region	No	No	Yes	
Cantilever Parameters	Spring Constant	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Tip Radius	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Poisson's Ratio	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Peak Force QNM Limits	Force Limit	No	Yes	Yes	
	Dissipation Limit	No	Yes	Yes	
	DMT Modulus Limit	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	LogDMT Modulus Limit	No	No	Yes	
	LogDMT Modulus Offset	No	No	Yes	
Limits	Z Limit	No	No	Yes	
	Z Range	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Deflection Limit	No	Yes	Yes	

2.7 Capture Buttons

The capture buttons in the **Force Monitor** window allow you to collect data for use with the NanoScope Analysis off-line analysis software.

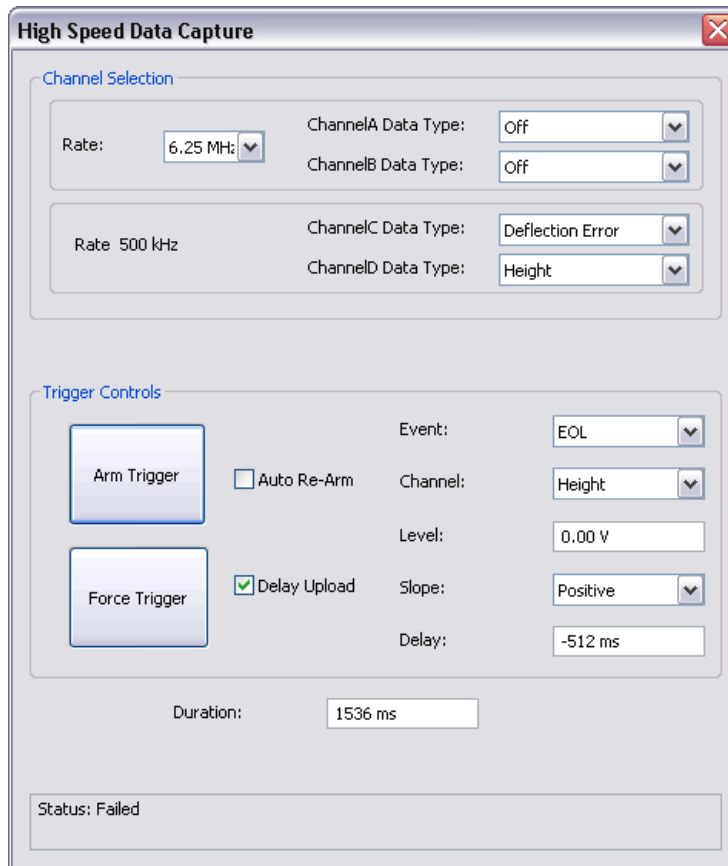
1. Start to collect a ScanAsyst/Peak Force Tapping image.
2. When you are in a region of interest, click the **CAPTURE LINE** button, shown in [Figure 2.7a](#), to capture a scan line.

Figure 2.7a CAPTURE LINE button



- The **High Speed Data Capture** window, shown in [Figure 2.7b](#), will open and the **Status** will change when the data has been captured. **UPLOAD DATA** to the PC when the capture is complete. When **CAPTURE LINE** is used this way, the off-line NanoScope Analysis software will correctly associate the capture line of the high speed data capture with the line in the image.

Figure 2.7b High speed data capture is complete. However, the data is not immediately transferred to the PC.



- Click the **UPLOAD DATA** button to transfer the captured data to the computer. While the data transfer process takes place, the scan data will look corrupted because the DSP time is shared between PeakForce QNM properties computation and data transfer.

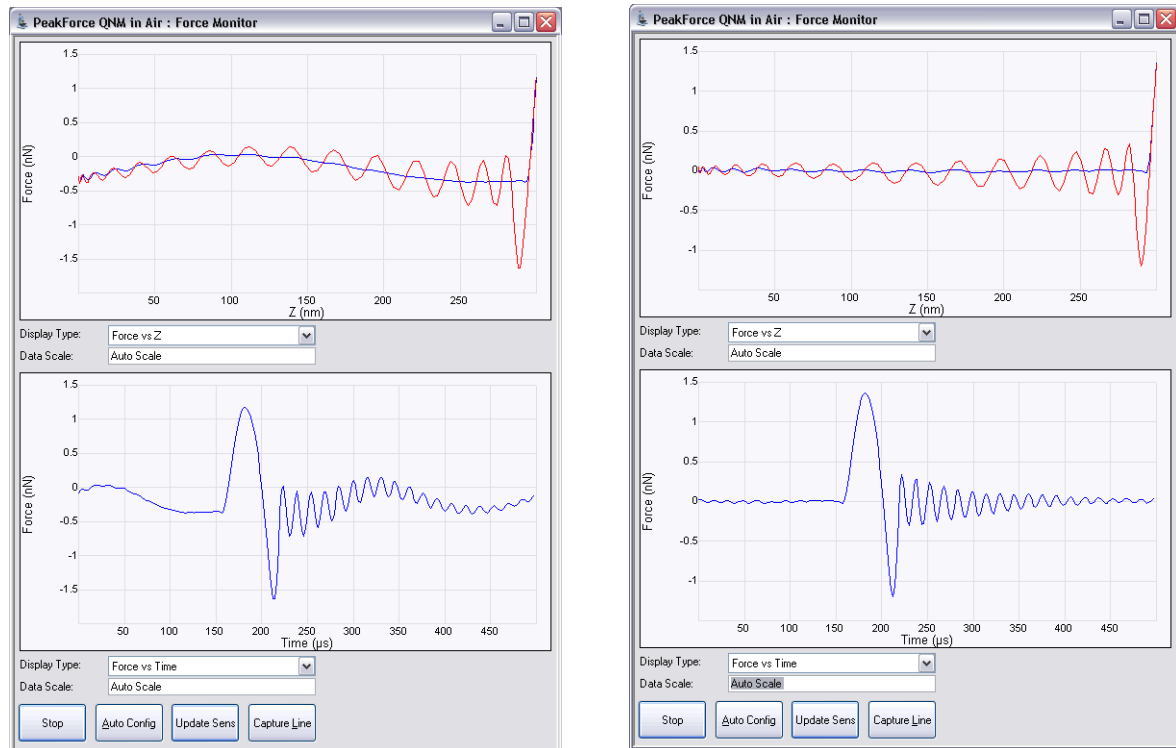
2.8 Optimizing a ScanAsyst Image

When the relative Z position between the probe and sample is modulated, parasitic cantilever motions occur. These motions include free-cantilever oscillation after snapping off the surface, deflection triggered by harmonics of the piezo motion or viscous forces. This parasitic deflection, defined as the deflection signal variation when the tip is NOT interacting with the sample, limits the low force range of ScanAsyst operation. Low force control is the most important factor to achieve high resolution imaging and property measurements.

During peak force tapping operation, the **Auto Config** operation is used to analyze the parasitic deflection signal including its data pattern by comparing the known source of parasitic excitation, namely the cantilever resonance at pulling off, modulation harmonics and other system actuation sources. The signature of the interaction, in the shape of heartbeat signal, is extracted from the parasitic deflections. The recovered heartbeat signal becomes the interaction force curve plotted in the time domain.

Figure 2.8a shows the heartbeat and force vs. Z curves of an image before and after **AUTO CONFIG** correction. The low frequency noise in the baseline has been removed.

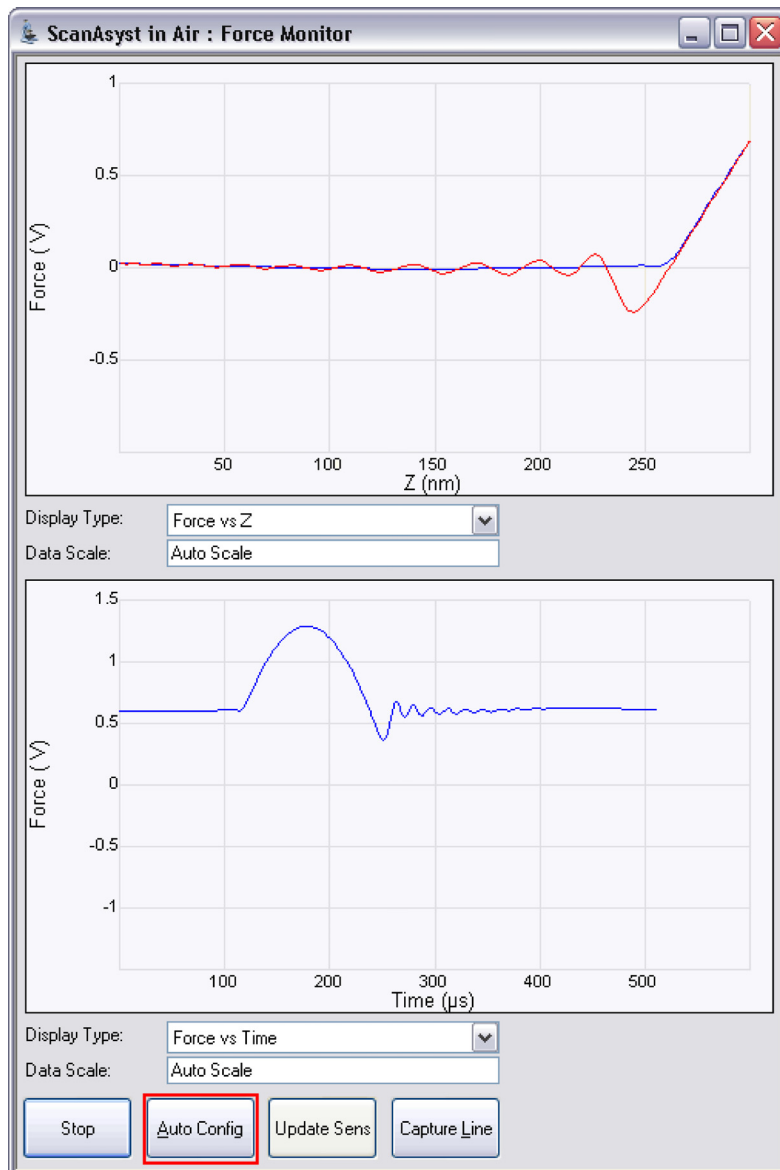
Figure 2.8a The heartbeat and force curves of an image before (left) and after (right) **AUTO CONFIG** correction.



If your force vs. time curves show parasitic background noise or the force vs. height curve load and unload curves are overlapping due to background noise, click the **AUTO CONFIG** button, shown in [Figure 2.8b](#), to invoke the real-time pattern analysis algorithm that removes parasitic deflection.

Note: Clicking **AUTO CONFIG** will automatically calculate the **Lift Height** and perform an **AUTO CONFIG** operation.

Figure 2.8b The AUTO CONFIG button



Note: When performing **AUTO CONFIG** operations with a small **Peak Force Setpoint** (less than $\sim 20\text{mV}$), the tip may drift out of contact with the surface and will be unable to return and track the surface. It is therefore recommended using a relatively large **Peak Force Setpoint** while performing **AUTO CONFIG** operations and reducing the **Peak Force Setpoint** later if necessary.

2.9 Advanced Atomic Force Operation

2.9.1 Displaying Parameters

You can adjust the number of parameters shown in the **Scan Parameter List** using several methods.

Simple Mode



1. The default **SIMPLE MODE**, intended for novice users and shown in [Figure 2.9a](#), displays the minimum number of parameters needed to make an image.

Figure 2.9a The **SIMPLE MODE** view of the **Scan Parameter List** for **PeakForce QNM in Air**

[-] Scan	
Scan Size	500 nm
Aspect Ratio	1.00
X Offset	0.000 nm
Y Offset	0.000 nm
Scan Angle	0.00 °
Scan Rate	0.977 Hz
Samples/Line	512
[-] Feedback	
Peak Force Setpoint	0.1000 V
Feedback Gain	5.000
ScanAsyst Auto Control	On
[-] Cantilever Parameters	
Spring Constant	0.3000 N/m
Tip Radius	10.0 nm
Sample Poisson's Ratio	0.300
[-] PeakForce QNM Limits	
DMT Modulus Limit	1024 Arb
[-] Limits	
Z Range	7.42 μm
[-] Other	
Units	Metric

Expanded Mode



1. The **EXPANDED MODE** view, shown in [Figure 2.9b](#), increases the number of displayed parameters enabling expert users to fine tune an image.

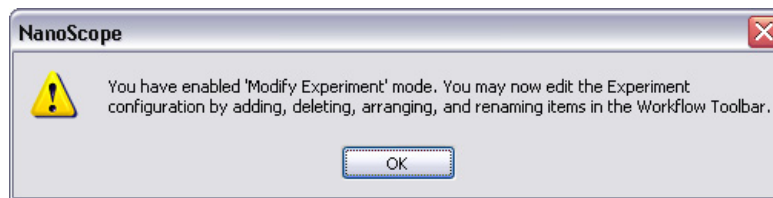
Figure 2.9b The **EXPANDED MODE** view of the **Scan Parameter List** for **ScanAsyst in Air**

[-] Scan	
[-] Scan Size	500 nm
[-] Aspect Ratio	1.00
[-] X Offset	0.000 nm
[-] Y Offset	0.000 nm
[-] Scan Angle	0.00 °
[-] Scan Rate	0.977 Hz
[-] Tip Velocity	0.977 $\mu\text{m/s}$
[-] Samples/Line	512
[-] Lines	512
[-] Slow Scan Axis	Enabled
[-] XY Closed Loop	On
[-] Feedback	
[-] Peak Force Setpoint	0.1000 V
[-] Feedback Gain	5.000
[-] LP Deflection BW	40.00 kHz
[-] ScanAsyst Noise Threshold	0.500 nm
[-] ScanAsyst Auto Control	On
[-] PeakForce QNM Control	
[-] Peak Force Amplitude	150 nm
[-] Lift Height	300 nm
[-] Cantilever Parameters	
[-] Spring Constant	0.3000 N/m
[-] Tip Radius	10.0 nm
[-] Sample Poisson's Ratio	0.300
[-] PeakForce QNM Limits	
[-] Force Limit	24.58 V
[-] Dissipation Limit	1024 Arb
[-] DMT Modulus Limit	1024 Arb
[-] Limits	
[-] Z Range	7.42 μm
[-] Deflection Limit	24.58 V
[-] Other	
[-] LP Deflection	Enabled
[-] Tip Bias Control	Ground
[-] Sample Bias Control	Ground
[-] Units	Metric
[-] Minimum Engage Gain	10.0
[-] Peak Force Engage Setpoint	0.1500 V
[-] Bidirectional Scan	Disabled
[-] Tip Serial Number	
[-] Output 1 Data Type	Off
[-] Output 2 Data Type	Off

Show All

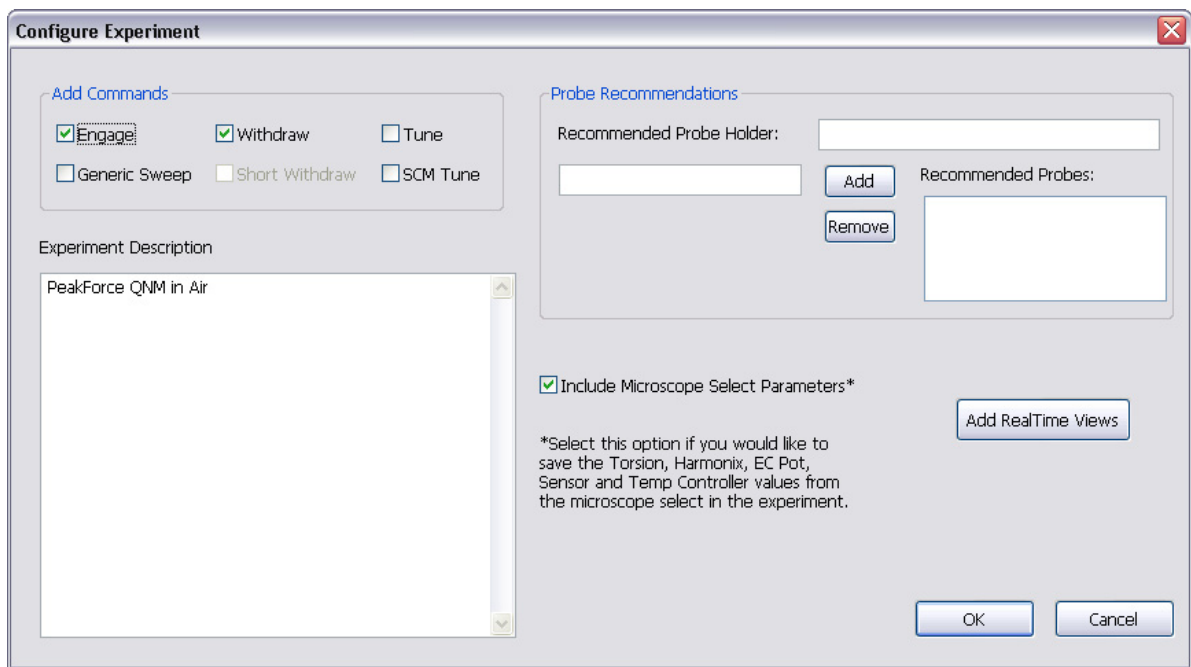
1. From the Menu bar, click **EXPERIMENT > CONFIGURE EXPERIMENT**. This opens an information window, shown in [Figure 2.9c](#).

Figure 2.9c The Configure Experiment information window



2. Click **OK** to open the **Configure Experiment** window, shown in [Figure 2.9d](#).

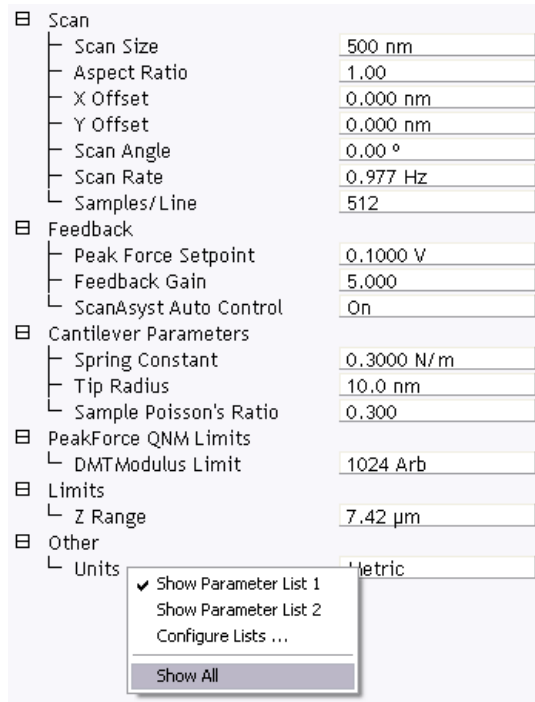
Figure 2.9d The Configure Experiment Window



3. Check a box in the **Add Commands** panel to add that command to the **Workflow Toolbar**.
4. Click **OK** to accept your choices and close the **Configure Experiment** window.

5. Right-click in the **Scan Parameter List** and select **SHOW ALL**, shown in [Figure 2.9e](#).

Figure 2.9e Select **SHOW ALL** items



This makes all **Scan Parameters** visible along with two check boxes, the left, green, check box for the **SIMPLE MODE** and the right, red, check box for the **EXPANDED MODE**. See [Figure 2.9f](#).

Figure 2.9f Enable Parameters

The screenshot displays a hierarchical list of parameters in the PeakForce QNM software. Each parameter has two checkboxes: a green one for 'SIMPLE MODE' and a red one for 'EXPANDED MODE'. The parameters are grouped into categories like Scan, Feedback, PeakForce QNM Control, Cantilever Parameters, PeakForce QNM Limits, Limits, and Other. Annotations on the left side of the image point to these checkboxes: 'With "✓" Parameter will display' points to a parameter with both checkboxes checked, and 'Without "✓" Parameter will not display' points to a parameter with only the red checkbox checked. A context menu is open over the 'Other' category, showing options: 'Show Parameter List 1', 'Show Parameter List 2', 'Configure Lists ...', and 'Show All'.

Category	Parameter	Simple Mode (Green)	Expanded Mode (Red)	Value
Scan	Scan Size	✓	✓	500 nm
	Aspect Ratio	✓	✓	1.00
	X Offset	✓	✓	0.000 nm
	Y Offset	✓	✓	0.000 nm
	Scan Angle	✓	✓	0.00 °
	Scan Rate	✓	✓	0.977 Hz
	Tip Velocity	✓	✓	0.977 μm/s
	Samples/Line	✓	✓	512
	Lines	✓	✓	512
	Slow Scan Axis	✓	✓	Enabled
	XY Closed Loop	✓	✓	On
Feedback	SPM Feedback	✓	✓	Peak Force
	Lateral 16x Gain	✓	✓	Disabled
	Peak Force Setpoint	✓	✓	0.1000 V
	Feedback Gain	✓	✓	5.000
	Proportional Gain	✓	✓	0
	Analog3	✓	✓	0 V
	Analog4	✓	✓	0 V
	LP Deflection BW	✓	✓	40.00 kHz
	ScanAsyst Setup	✓	✓	Allow
	ScanAsyst Noise Threshold	✓	✓	0.500 nm
	ScanAsyst AutoConfig Frarr	✓	✓	0
ScanAsyst Auto Control	✓	✓	On	
PeakForce QNM Control	Peak Force Amplitude	✓	✓	150 nm
	Lift Height	✓	✓	300 nm
	Top Fit Region	✓	✓	10 %
	Unload Fit Region	✓	✓	70 %
	Deformation Fit Region	✓	✓	85 %
Cantilever Parameters	Spring Constant	✓	✓	0.3000 N/m
	Tip Radius	✓	✓	10.0 nm
	Sample Poisson's Ratio	✓	✓	0.300
PeakForce QNM Limits	Force Limit	✓	✓	24.58 V
	Dissipation Limit	✓	✓	1024 Arb
	DMTModulus Limit	✓	✓	1024 Arb
	LogDMTModulus Limit	✓	✓	32.00 log(Arb)
	LogDMTModulus Offset	✓	✓	0 log(Arb)
Limits	Z Limit	✓	✓	8.957 μm
	Z Range	✓	✓	7.42 μm
	Deflection Limit	✓	✓	24.58 V
Other	Other	✓	✓	Context menu: Show Parameter List 1, Show Parameter List 2, Configure Lists ..., Show All

The checked parameters display in normal Real-time mode while those parameters without a will not display in normal Real-time mode.

Check the parameters that you want displayed and right-click in the **Scan Parameter List** and select **SHOW ALL** items to hide the unchecked parameters. The panel will once again appear in normal Real-time mode.

Chapter 3 PeakForce QNM Samples

Five samples are supplied with the PeakForce QNM kit.

Note: All samples are homogeneous and glued to Bruker sample pucks.

Note: Probe or sample contamination may compromise the accuracy of the quantitative measurements.

3.1 PDMS-Soft-1

Nominal modulus: 2.5 MPa.

This 150 μm thick PDMS gel sample is formulated for long shelf life and stability.

Suggested probe: ScanAsyst-Air.

A typical force curve of this sample is shown in [Figure 3.1a](#) and an image of the modulus is shown in [Figure 3.1b](#). The standard deviation of the modulus in this image is 0.7 MPa.

Figure 3.1a Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample

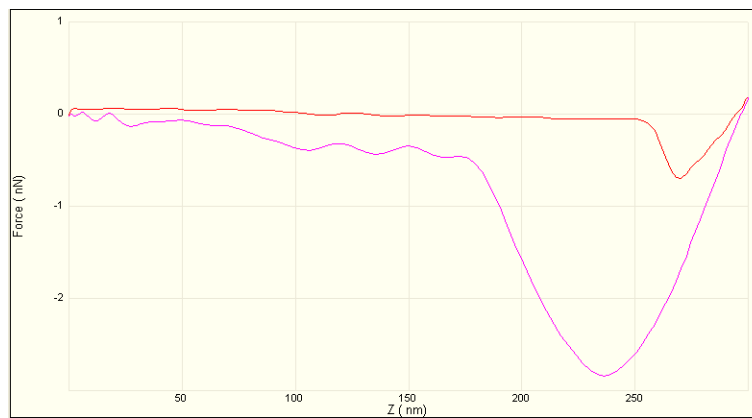
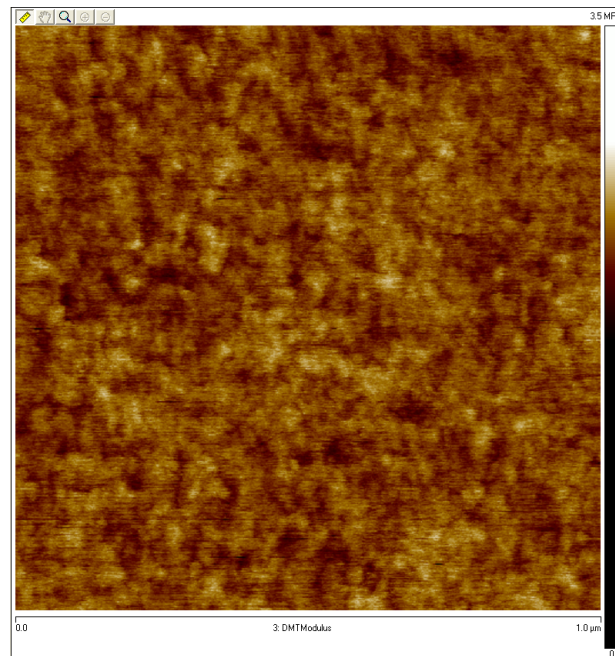


Figure 3.1b Typical modulus image of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample



3.2 PDMS-Soft-2

Nominal modulus: 3.5 MPa.

This 150 μm thick PDMS gel sample is formulated for long shelf life and stability.

Suggested probe: ScanAsyst-Air.

A typical force curve of this sample is shown in [Figure 3.2a](#) and an image of the modulus is shown in [Figure 3.2b](#). The standard deviation of the modulus in this image is 0.5 MPa.

Figure 3.2a Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-2 sample

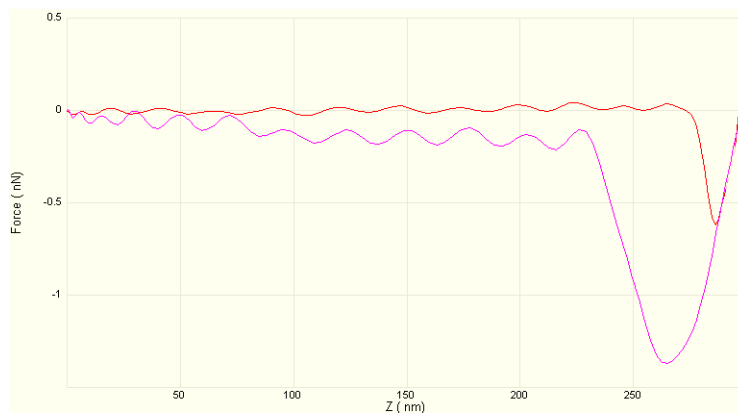
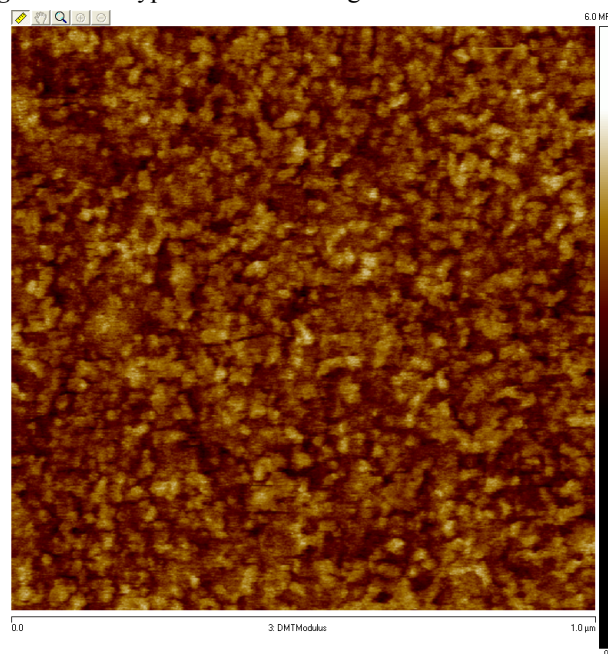


Figure 3.2b Typical modulus image of a PDMS-Soft-2 sample



3.3 Polystyrene

Nominal modulus 2.7 GPa.

This polystyrene sample is spin-cast on a silicon wafer.

Suggested probes: Tap 150, TESPA.

A typical force curve of this sample is shown in [Figure 3.3a](#) and an image of the modulus is shown in [Figure 3.3b](#). The standard deviation of the modulus in this image is 0.2 MPa.

Figure 3.3a Typical force curve of a Polystyrene sample

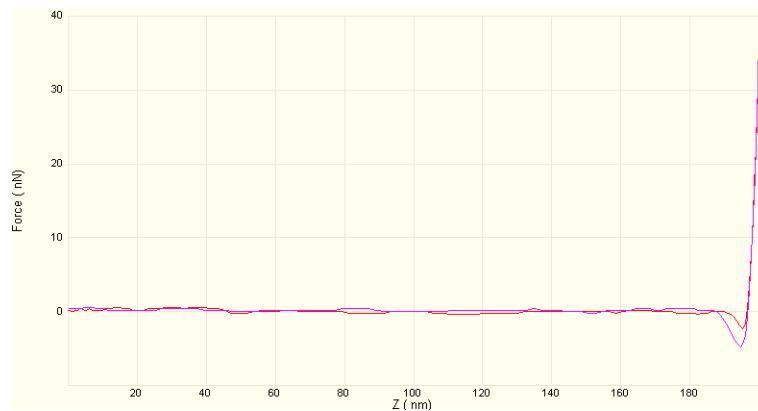
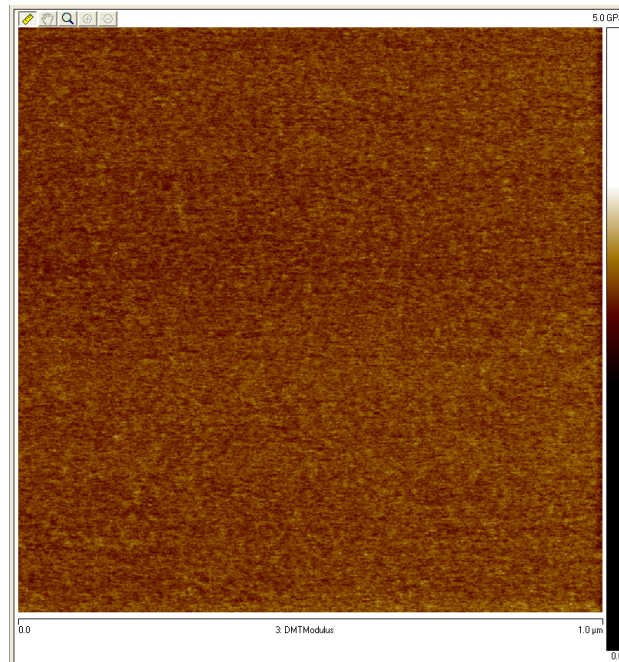


Figure 3.3b Typical modulus image of a Polystyrene sample



3.4 HOPG

Highly Oriented Pyrolytic Graphite.

Nominal modulus 18 GPa.

Suggested probes: TESPA, diamond

A typical force curve of this sample is shown in [Figure 3.4a](#) and an image of the modulus is shown in [Figure 3.4b](#). The standard deviation of the modulus in this image is 2 MPa.

Figure 3.4a Typical force curve of a HOPG sample

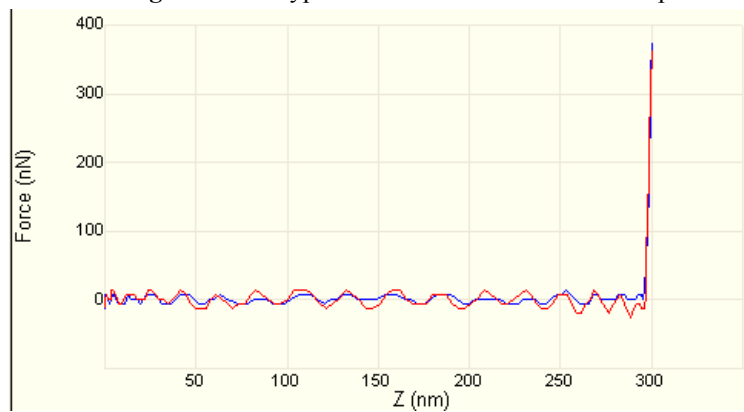
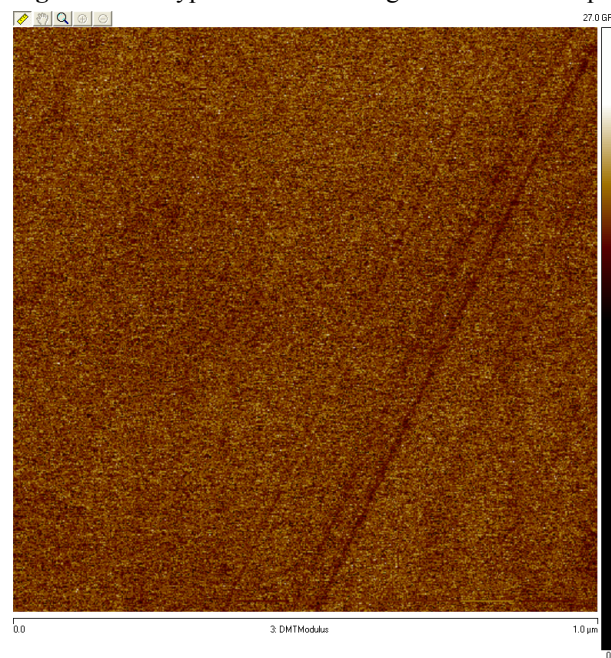


Figure 3.4b Typical modulus image of a HOPG sample



3.5 Fused Silica

Corning 7980 fused silica.

Nominal modulus 72.9 GPa.

Suggested probe; Diamond.

Chapter 4 Calibration

4.1 Introduction to Calibrating PeakForce QNM

To quantify the forces as well as other mechanical properties of your sample, it is important to understand the PeakForce QNM calibration procedure.

Note: For best results, the calibration process will need to be performed for each probe.

4.2 Absolute vs. Relative Calibration Methods

There are two methods of obtaining calibrated, quantitative results from PeakForce QNM. The first method (the relative method) avoids accumulated errors that can cause errors in modulus measurements, but has the downside in that it requires a reference sample that can be measured by the same probe as the unknown sample. The second method (the absolute method) does not require a reference sample, but requires accurate measurement of the tip end radius (typically by scanning an artifact sample like TipCheck) and spring constant (typically with thermal tune for soft cantilevers). Both methods require measurement of the deflection sensitivity on a hard sample.

For both methods, it is important to choose a probe that can cause enough deformation in the sample and still retain high force sensitivity. [Figure 4.2a](#) shows the recommended probes and the modulus range over which they work best.

Figure 4.2a Modulus ranges covered by various probes. The modulus of the reference sample for each range is indicated as well.

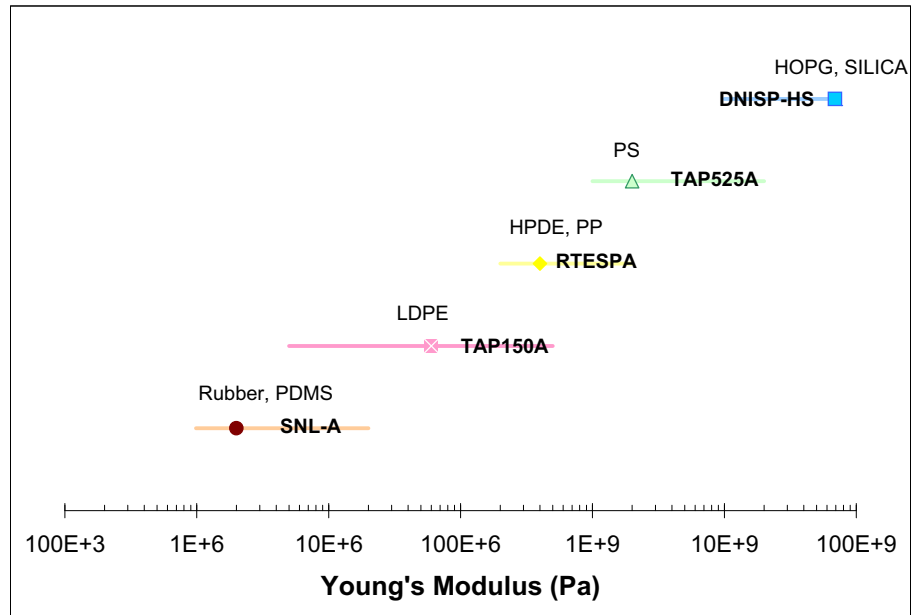


Table 4.2a Legend

Symbol	Chemical Name
PDMS	Polydimethylsiloxane
LPDE	Low-density polyethylene
HPDE	High-density polyethylene
PP	Polypropylene
PS	Polystyrene
HOPG	Highly Oriented Pyrolytic Graphite

4.2.1 The Relative Method

The relative method of calibration uses a sample of known modulus to obtain the ratio of spring constant to the square root of tip end radius. It is still important to accurately calibrate the deflection sensitivity in order to obtain modulus results. An outline of the procedure follows:

1. Calibrate the **Deflection Sensitivity** on a clean, hard sample (Sapphire or Silicon, which can be used for samples with modulus less than 10 GPa). See **Calibrate the Deflection Sensitivity**: [Section 4.3](#) for a procedure to measure this.
2. If quantitative **Adhesion** or **Dissipation** data is required, use the NanoScope **Thermal Tune** function to obtain the spring constant, otherwise enter the nominal value from the manufacturer. See **Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning**: [Section 4.4](#) for a procedure to measure this.
3. Image the reference sample using **PeakForce QNM** and adjust the **Tip Radius** parameter to make the measured **Modulus** equal the known value of the reference sample.
4. Image the unknown sample adjusting the **Peak Force Setpoint** to match the deformation depth used during imaging of the reference sample.

4.2.2 The Absolute Method

The absolute procedure is very similar to the relative procedure except for two important differences:

1. The spring constant calibration ([Step 2](#)) is not optional.
2. Instead of using the reference sample, the tip end radius is measured by scanning a tip calibration artifact (such as TipCheck Bruker part #RS) and analyzing the resulting image. See **Measure the Tip Radius**: [Section 4.5](#) for a procedure to measure this.

Note: The absolute procedure has the benefit that there is no concern over the accuracy of the modulus of the reference sample or whether it ages over time or becomes contaminated.

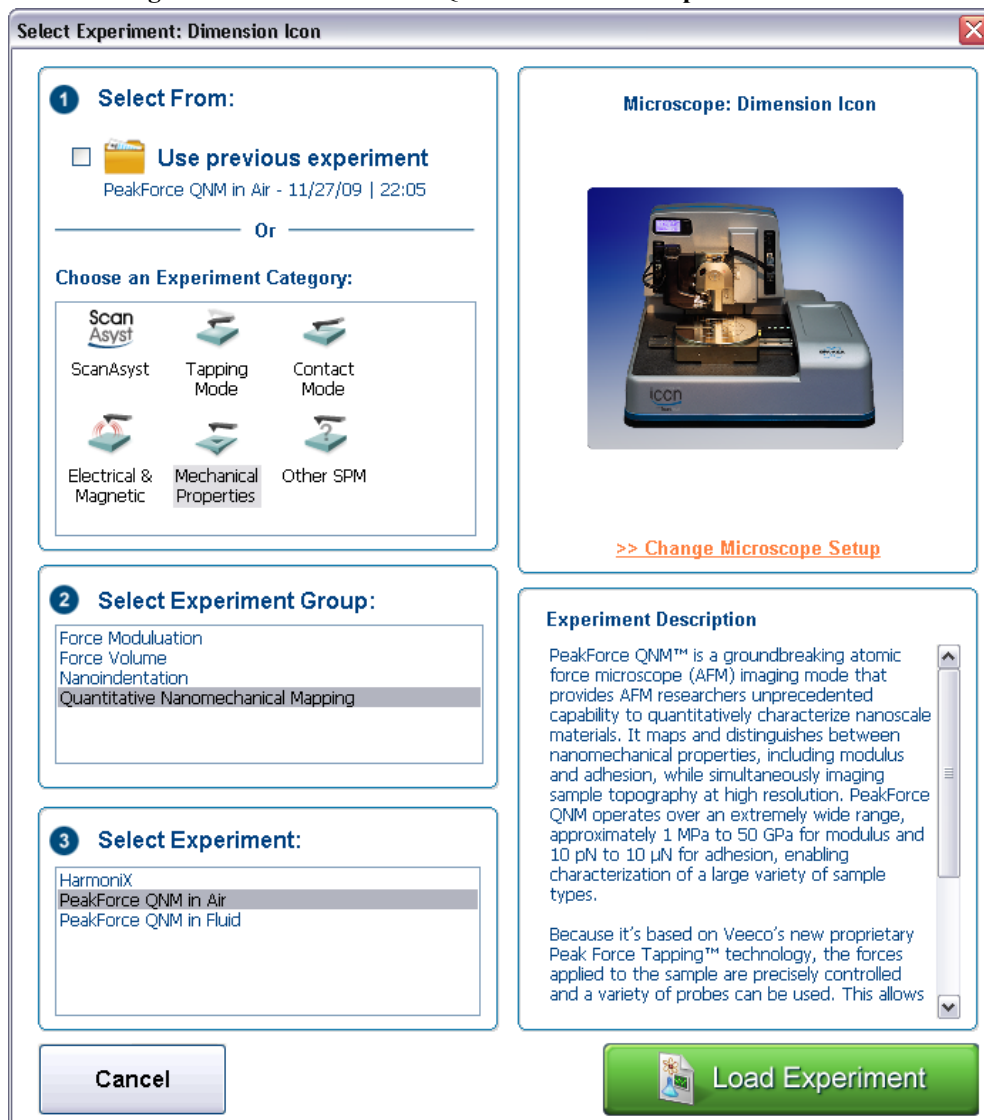
4.3 Calibrate the Deflection Sensitivity

Because Peak Force QNM mode ramps the Z piezo and acquires force curves, measuring deflection sensitivity requires fewer steps than the normal ramp procedure.



1. Click the **SELECT EXPERIMENT** icon. This opens the **Select Experiment** window, shown in **Figure 4.3a**.

Figure 4.3a The PeakForce QNM in Air **Select Experiment** window



2. Select **MECHANICAL PROPERTIES** in the **Experiment Category** panel.
3. Select **QUANTITATIVE NANOMECHANICAL MAPPING** in the **Select Experiment Group** panel.

4. Select **PEAKFORCE QNM IN AIR** in the **Select Experiment** panel and click **LOAD EXPERIMENT**.

5. Set the **Scan Size** to **0** nm.



6. **ENGAGE** the probe onto a clean sapphire (required for cantilevers with $k > 200$ N/m) or silicon surface using the **PeakForce QNM in Air** mode.



7. Activate **RAMP**, mode by clicking the **RAMP** icon in the **Workflow Toolbar**. This causes the system to stop scanning, and the probe to position above the center of the previous image.

8. Enter the following parameter settings in the designated panels of the **Ramp Parameter List**:

a. In the **Ramp** panel select:

Parameter	Setting
Ramp output	Z
Ramp size	100nm - 1.00 μ m
Scan Rate	1.00Hz
Number of samples	512

b. In the **Mode** panel select:

Parameter	Setting
Trigger mode	Relative
Trig threshold	0.2V

c. In the **Channel 1** panel select:

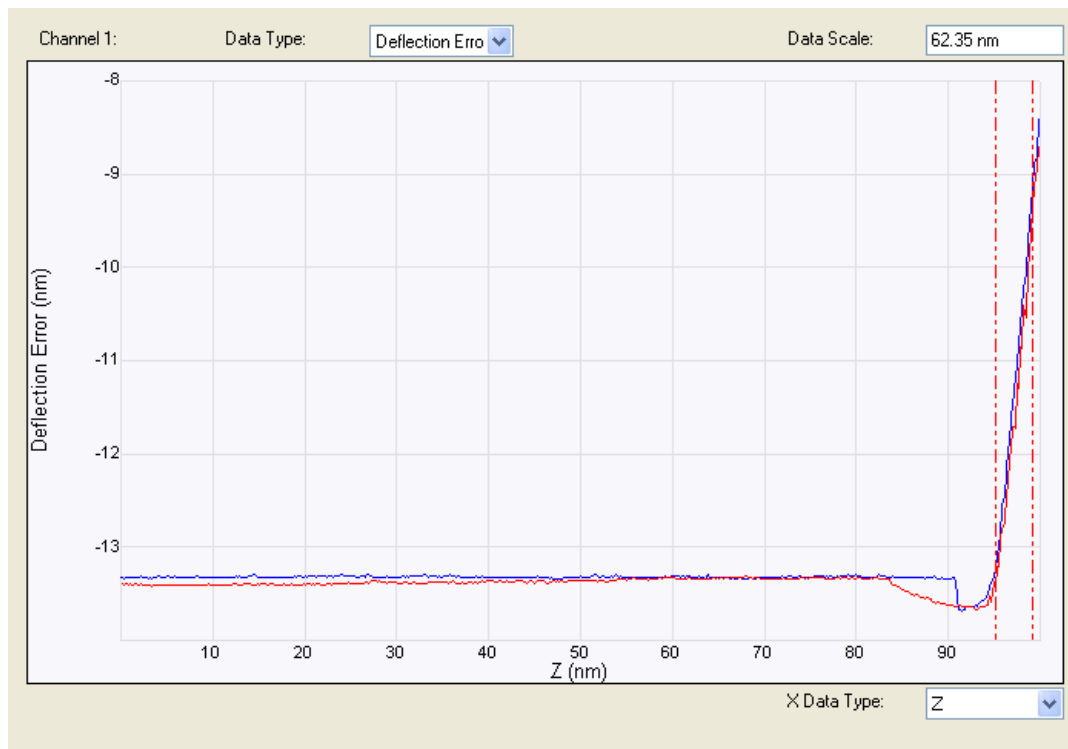
Parameter	Setting
Data Type	Deflection Error
X Data Type	Z
Display Mode	Deflection Error vs. Z



9. Click the **RAMP SINGLE** icon on the NanoScope toolbar or select **Ramp > Ramp Single**, from the menu bar.

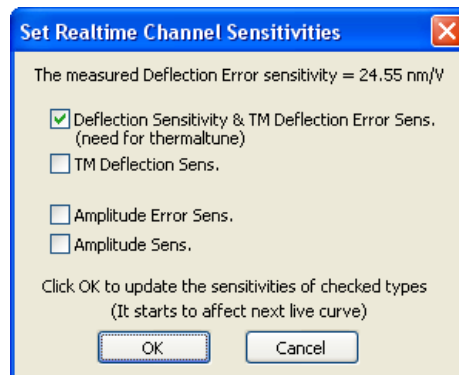
10. Move two cursors onto the Deflection vs. Z plot (see [Figure 4.3b](#)).
11. Arrange the cursors so that they surround the contact (steepest) portion of the graph (see [Figure 4.3b](#)).

Figure 4.3b Force Curve Cursors



12. Click the **UPDATE SENSITIVITY** icon in the NanoScope toolbar or select **Ramp > Update Sensitivity**. The software will automatically calculate the deflection sensitivity and open the Set Realtime Channel Sensitivities window (see [Figure 4.3c](#)).

Figure 4.3c Deflection Sensitivity Dialogue Box



13. Click **OK** to accept this deflection sensitivity in the dialogue box that displays, and it will automatically be entered into the **Deflection Sensitivity** parameter.

4.4 Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning

Note: Bruker recommends **Thermal Tune** included in NanoScope software for probes with spring constants less than or equal to 1 N/m. Other methods (Sader¹, added mass, vibrometer, pre-calibrated probes) are recommended for probes with higher spring constants. These techniques are reviewed in detail in Bruker Application Note 94: *Practical Advice on the Determination of Cantilever Spring Constants*.



1. Ensure that the probe is withdrawn adequately from the sample before activating **THERMAL TUNE**. The probe should not interact with the sample during its self excitation under ambient conditions.
2. Click **CALIBRATE > THERMAL TUNE** or the **THERMAL TUNE** icon in the NanoScope tool bar (shown).
3. Select a frequency range that includes the resonant frequency of the cantilever. See [Figure 4.4a](#). Stiff cantilevers may require the 5 - 2000 kHz range.

Figure 4.4a Select **Thermal Tune** Frequency Range

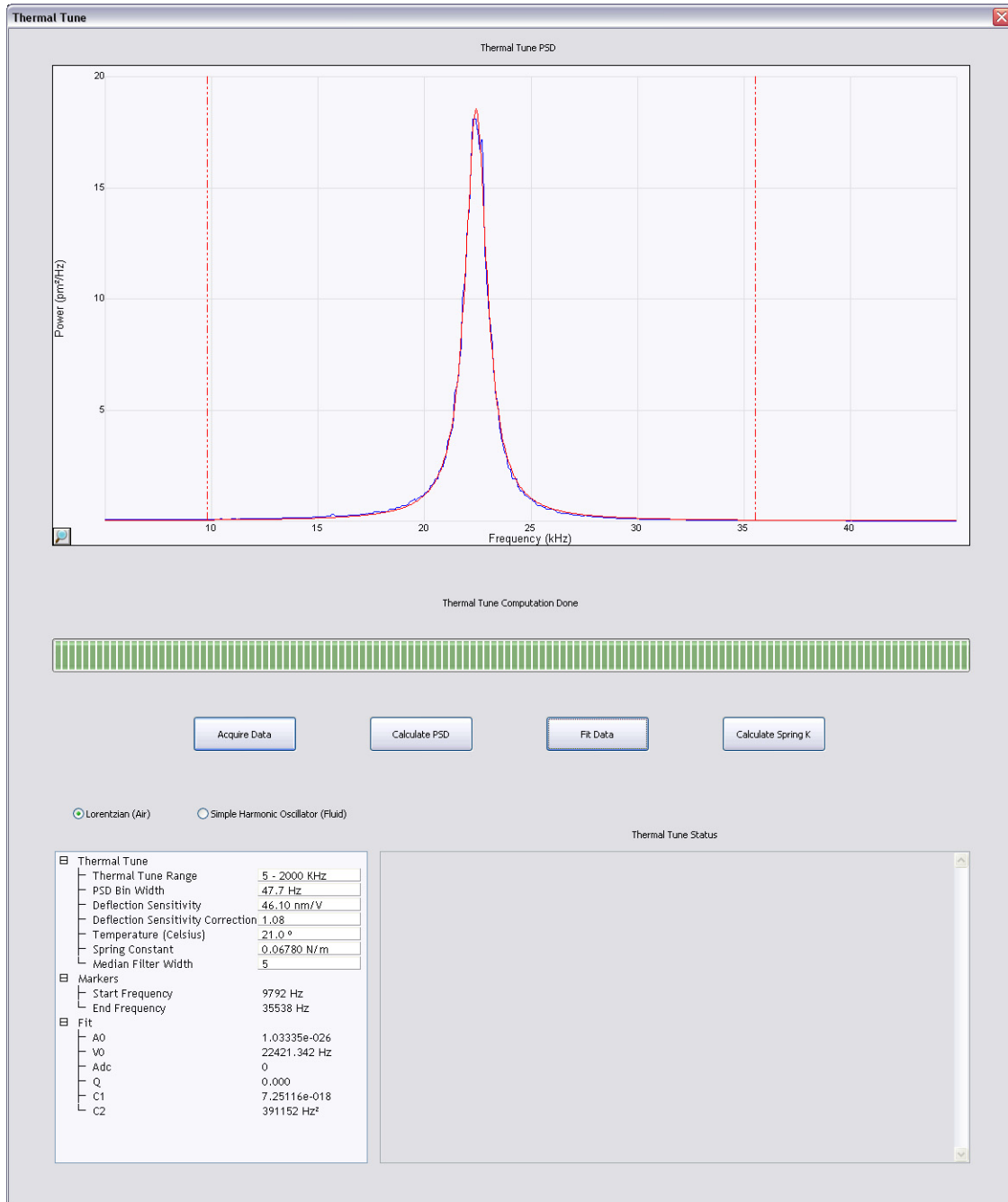
Thermal Tune	
Thermal Tune Range	1 - 100 KHz
PSD Bin Width	1 - 100 KHz
Deflection Sensitivity	5 - 2000 KHz
Deflection Sensitivity Corre	1.08
Temperature (Celsius)	21.0 °
Spring Constant	0.06780 N/m
Median Filter Width	3

1. See <http://www.ampc.ms.unimelb.edu.au/afm/calibration.html>

Calibration
Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning

- Click **ACQUIRE DATA** in the **Thermal Tune** panel, shown in [Figure 4.4b](#).

Figure 4.4b The **Thermal Tune** panel



- The microscope will acquire data for about 30 seconds.
- Zoom in on the region around the peak.

7. Click either the **LORENTZIAN (AIR)** or **SIMPLE HARMONIC OSCILLATOR (FLUID)** button to select a Lorentzian or a simple harmonic oscillator model, respectively, of the PSD to be least squares fit to the data.

Note: The equations used to fit the filtered data are:

Lorentzian, for use in air

$$A(\nu) = A_0 + \frac{C_1}{(\nu - \nu_0)^2 + C_2}$$

Note: where: $A(\nu)$ is the amplitude as a function of frequency, ν
 A_0 is the baseline amplitude
 ν_0 is the center frequency of the resonant peak
 C_1 is a Lorentzian fit parameter
 C_2 is a Lorentzian fit parameter

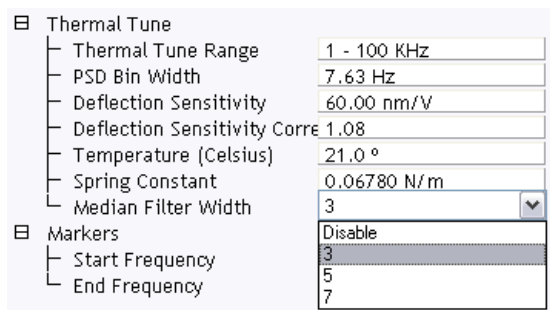
Simple Harmonic Oscillator, for use in fluid

$$A(\nu) = A_0 + A_{DC} \cdot \frac{\nu_0^2}{\sqrt{(\nu_0^2 - \nu^2)^2 + \frac{\nu_0^2 \nu^2}{Q^2}}}$$

where: $A(\nu)$ is the amplitude as a function of frequency, ν
 A_0 is the baseline amplitude
 A_{DC} is the amplitude at DC (zero frequency)
 ν_0 is the center frequency of the resonant peak
 Q is the quality factor

8. Adjust the **Median Filter Width**, shown in [Figure 4.4c](#), to remove individual (narrow) spikes. This replaces a data point with the median of the surrounding n ($n=3, 5, 7$) data points.

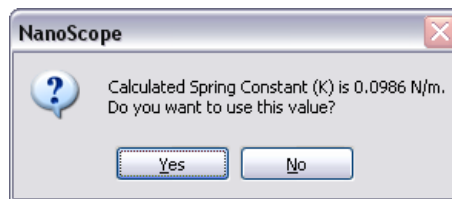
Figure 4.4c Median Filter Width



9. Adjust the **PSD Bin Width** to reduce the noise by averaging.

10. Drag markers in from the left and/or right plot edges to bracket the bandwidth over which the fit is to be performed. See [Figure 4.4b](#).
11. Click **FIT DATA**. The curve fit, in red, is displayed along with the acquired data. If necessary, adjust the marker positions and fit the data again to obtain the best fit at the thermal peak.
12. Enter the cantilever **Temperature**.
13. Click **CALCULATE SPRING K**.
14. You will be asked whether you want to accept the calculated value of the spring constant, k (see [Figure 4.4d](#)). Clicking **OK** copies the calculated spring constant to the **Spring Constant** window in the **Cantilever Parameters** window.

Figure 4.4d Spring Constant Calculation Result

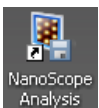


4.5 Measure the Tip Radius

Tip radius may be measured using a tip characterizer sample and the **Tip Qualification** function in NanoScope Analysis software (NanoScope software does not include the Estimated End Radius function).



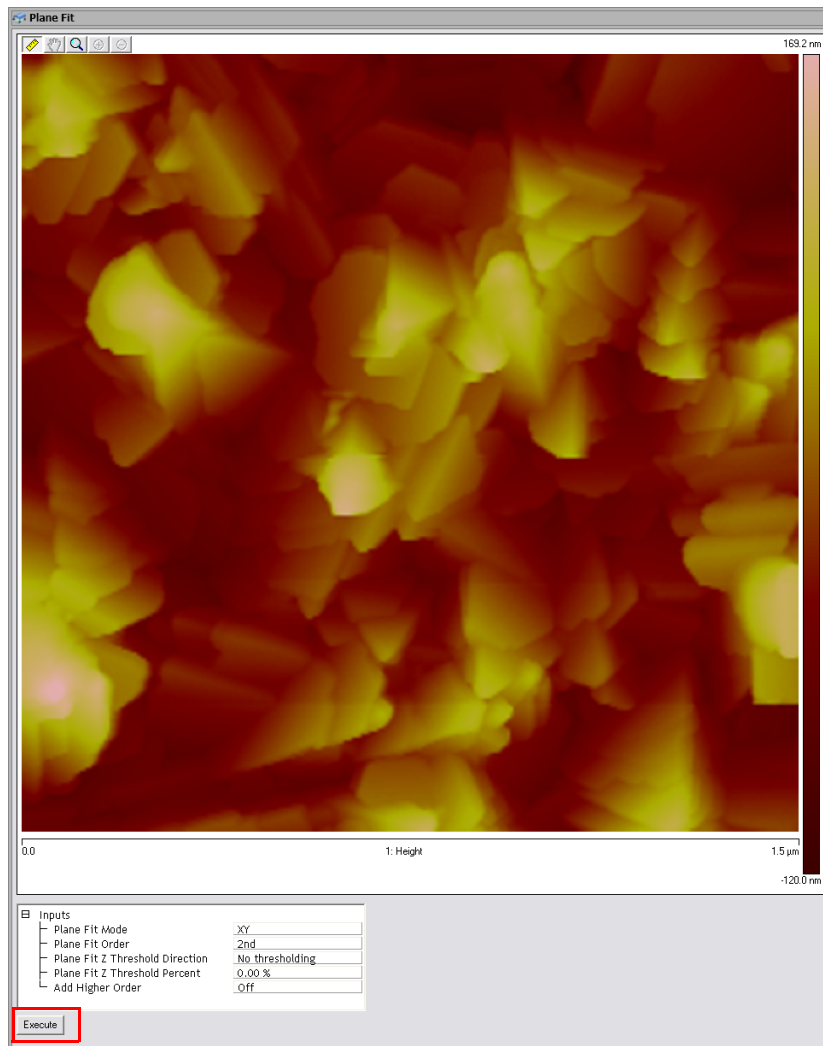
1. **Scan (PEAK FORCE QNM IN AIR mode)** the characterizer sample. Set the **Scan Size** to approximately 1.5 μm . Characterizer image size is important because, along with **Tip Image Size** and feature density, it determines how many peaks are used for the tip estimation.
2. Set the **Samples/Line** and **Lines** to **512**.
3. Set the **Aspect Ratio** to **2.0**
4. Set the **Scan Rate** to **0.5 Hz** or less.
5. Because this is an intentionally rough sample that can damage the probe tip, set **ScanAsyst Noise Threshold** to **1.0 nm**.
6. **CAPTURE** the characterizer image.
7. Open the **Height** channel of the saved image in the **NANOSCOPE ANALYSIS** package.





8. Flatten the image by clicking the **PLANE FIT** icon.
9. Select **XY** as the **Plane Fit Mode**.
10. Select **1ST AS** the **Plane Fit Order**.
11. Click **EXECUTE** to plane fit the image. See [Figure 4.5a](#).

Figure 4.5a Plane Fit of the Characterizer Sample

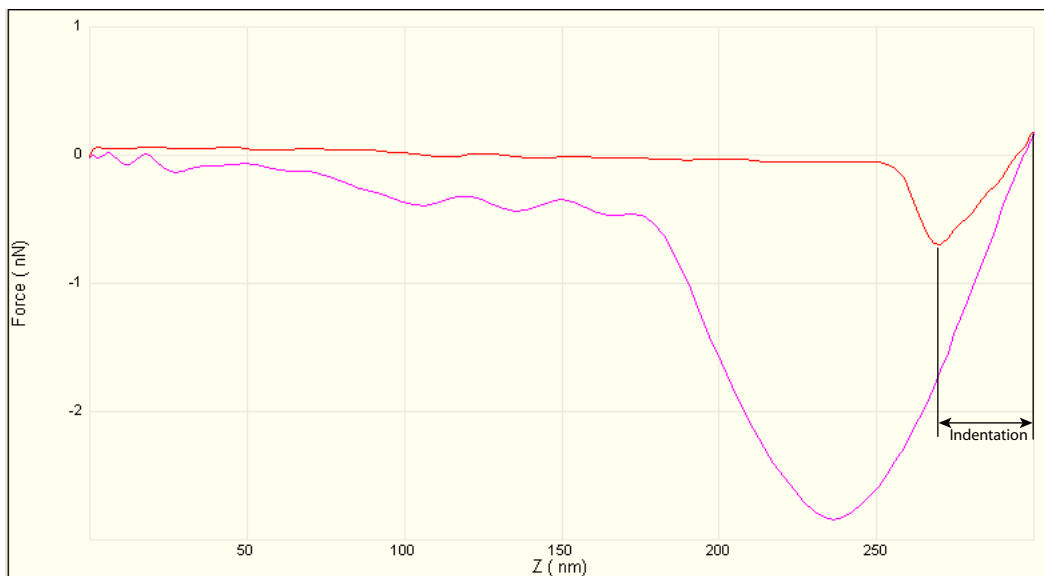




- Click the **TIP QUALIFICATION** icon in the **NanoScope Analysis** toolbar to open the **Tip Qualification** window.
- Enter the measured average **Deformation** (see **Deformation: Section 2.5.6**) into the **Height 1 from Apex** field.

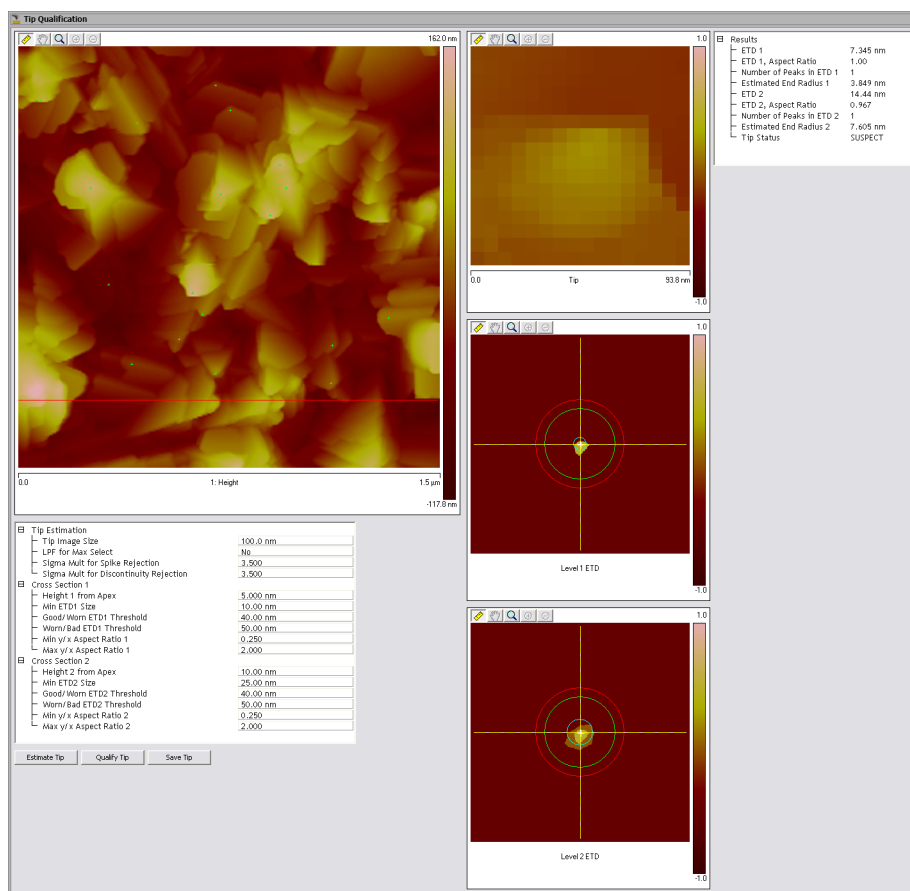
Note: The **Height from Apex** parameter should equal the average penetration depth or the indentation in the force curve. The indentation can be measured as the separation from the minimum force to the peak force in the loading curve. For most samples, the indentation is very close to the sample deformation. Therefore, the average deformation can be used as **Height from Apex** parameter to estimate tip radius. But for very soft samples (<20MPa), the adhesion is very large and the difference between indentation and deformation is large so that the indentation must be measured from the force curves in the **Force Monitor** window shown in [Figure 4.5b](#).

Figure 4.5b Typical force curve of a PDMS-Soft-1 sample. Nominal modulus: 2.5 MPa.



- Click **ESTIMATE TIP**.
- Click **QUALIFY TIP**. [Figure 4.5c](#) displays the **Estimated Tip End Radius**.

Figure 4.5c Tip Qualification Results



4.6 Calibrate Peak Force QNM

Three parameters are needed to fully calibrate PeakForce QNM:

1. **Deflection Sensitivity.** See **Calibrate the Deflection Sensitivity:** [Section 4.3](#) for a procedure to measure this.
2. **Spring Constant.** See **Calibrate the Spring Constant Using Thermal Tuning:** [Section 4.4](#) for a procedure to measure this.
3. **Tip Radius.** See **Measure the Tip Radius:** [Section 4.5](#) for a procedure to measure this.

A fourth parameter, the **Sample's Poisson's Ratio**, is needed to convert the measured reduced modulus, E^* , to the sample modulus, E_s . The reduced modulus is related to the sample modulus by the following equation:

$$E^* = \left[\frac{1 - \nu_t^2}{E_t} + \frac{1 - \nu_s^2}{E_s} \right]^{-1}$$

where ν_t and E_t are the Poisson's ratio and Young's modulus of the tip and ν_s and E_s are the Poisson's ratio and Young's modulus of the sample. We assume that the tip modulus, E_t , is much larger than the sample modulus, E_s , and can be approximated as infinite and calculate the sample modulus using the sample Poisson's Ratio

Poisson's ratio generally ranges between about 0.2 and 0.5 (perfectly incompressible) giving a difference between the reduced modulus and the sample modulus between 4% and 25%. Because the sample's Poisson's ratio is not generally known, many publications report only the reduced modulus. Entering zero for this parameter will cause the system to return the reduced modulus. Recommended values for the sample's Poisson ratio, ν_s , are shown in [Table 4.6a](#).

Table 4.6a Recommended values of the sample Poisson's ratio, ν_s , as a function of the sample stiffness, E_s .

E_s	ν_s
$E_s < 100$ MPa	0.5
$0.1 < E_s < 1$ GPa	0.4
$1 \text{ GPa} < E_s < 10$ GPa	0.3

4.6.1 Cantilever Parameters

After you have measured the cantilever **Spring Constant** and the **Tip Radius**, enter them into the **Cantilever Parameters** panel in the Scan Parameters window of the NanoScope software window, shown in [Figure 4.6a](#). If available, enter the **Sample Poisson's Ratio**.

Figure 4.6a The **Cantilever Parameters** panel



4.6.2 Feedback Parameters

Peak Force Setpoint

A **Peak Force Setpoint** that is too high can either damage the sample or wear the tip. It is generally desirable to reduce the **Peak Force Setpoint** to as small a value as is possible. However, in order to achieve accurate Elastic modulus measurement, sufficient sample deformation is needed. If the deformation is less than 2nm, increase the **Peak Force Setpoint** to achieve sufficient sample deformation.

For the relative method, you should adjust the **Peak Force Setpoint** to keep the **Deformation** the same for both the reference and measurement samples.

Feedback Gain

Reduce the **Feedback Gain** to lower the noise in the property channels.

If **ScanAsyst Auto Gain** is On, set the **ScanAsyst Noise Threshold** to 0.5nm or less.

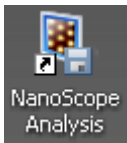
Chapter 5 Offline Analysis

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in [Chapter 2](#), real-time PeakForce QNM saves images of processed data like modulus and adhesion. There are times when one would like to compare these processed data images with the associated force curves. For this reason, a PeakForce QNM mode off-line analysis function is included in the NanoScope Analysis package. The main intention of this function is to allow you to view and analyze force curves from areas where material properties are most likely to change. You are given options to export raw force curves that can then be analyzed in the NanoScope Analysis or third party analysis programs.

As discussed in [Section 2.7](#), you should collect an image and then, at a region of interest during the capture, click the **CAPTURE LINE** button. This ensures capture of the raw high speed data capture (HSDC) in the DSP buffers. Remember that to transfer the data to the computer and into a file, you must click the **UPLOAD DATA** button in the **High Speed Data Capture** interface.

5.2 Procedure

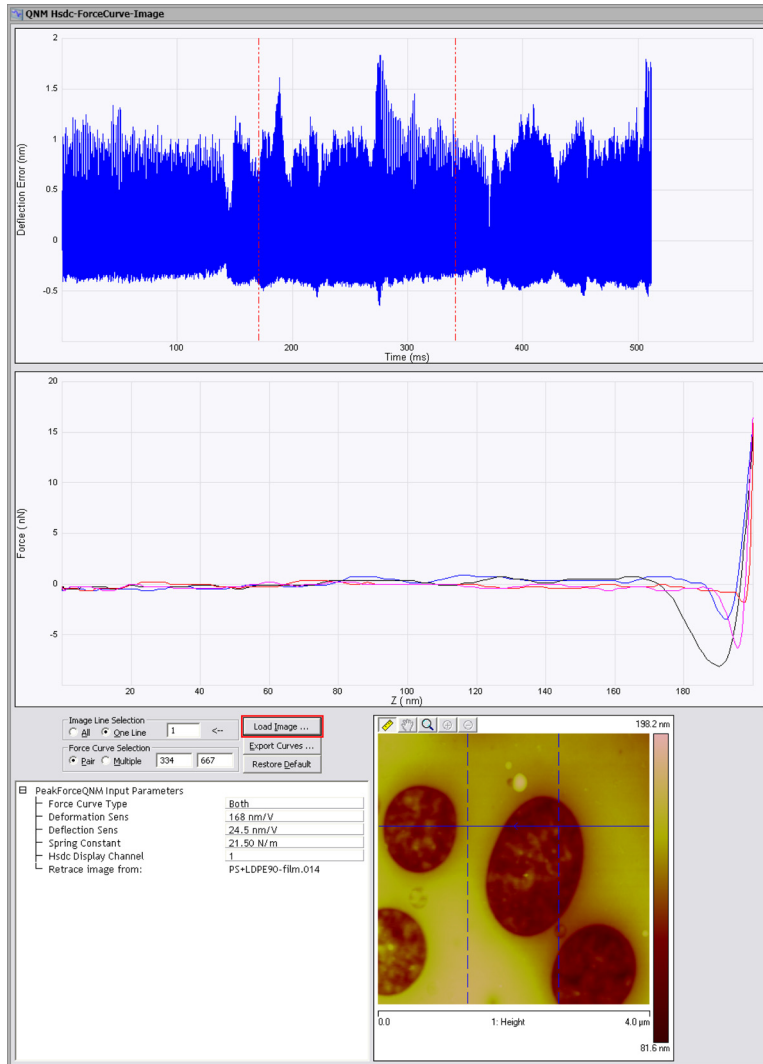


1. Start the NanoScope Analysis package by double clicking the offline icon on the Windows desktop.
2. Open the PeakForce QNM HSDC file.



3. Click the QNM-Hsdc Force Curve-Image icon to open the **QNM Hsdc Force Curve-Image** window, shown in [Figure 5.2a](#).

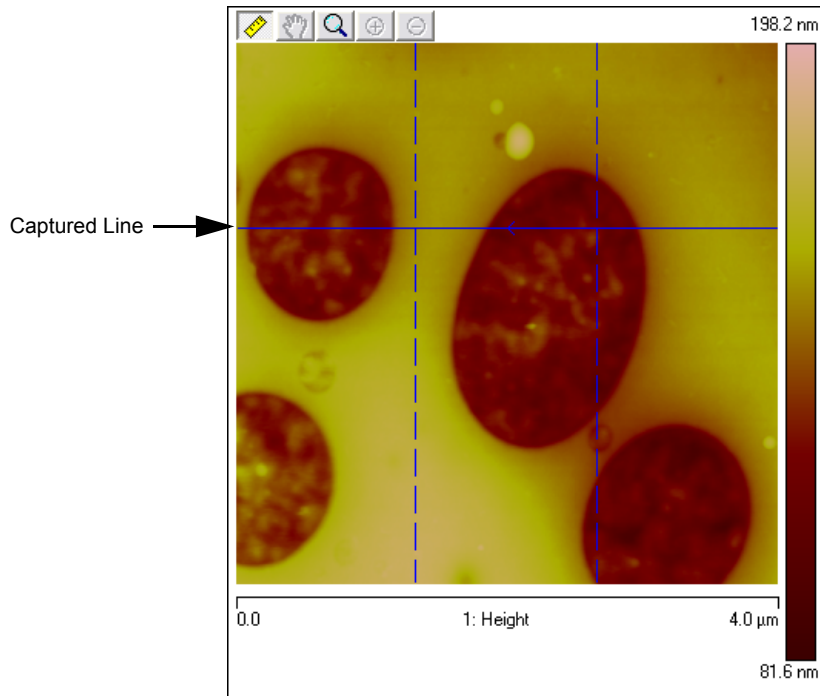
Figure 5.2a The QNM Hsdc Force Curve-Image window



4. Click the **LOAD IMAGE** button, circled in [Figure 5.2a](#), and select the image file associated with your high speed data capture file.

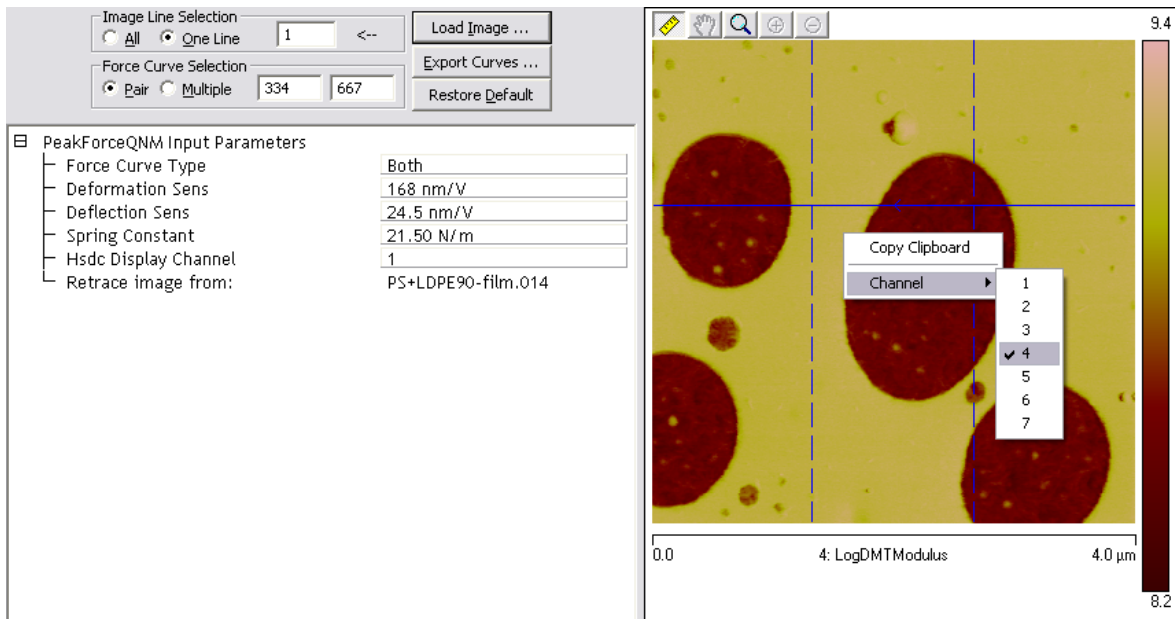
- The solid blue horizontal line, shown in [Figure 5.2b](#), displays the captured line.

Figure 5.2b The HEIGHT channel of the image file



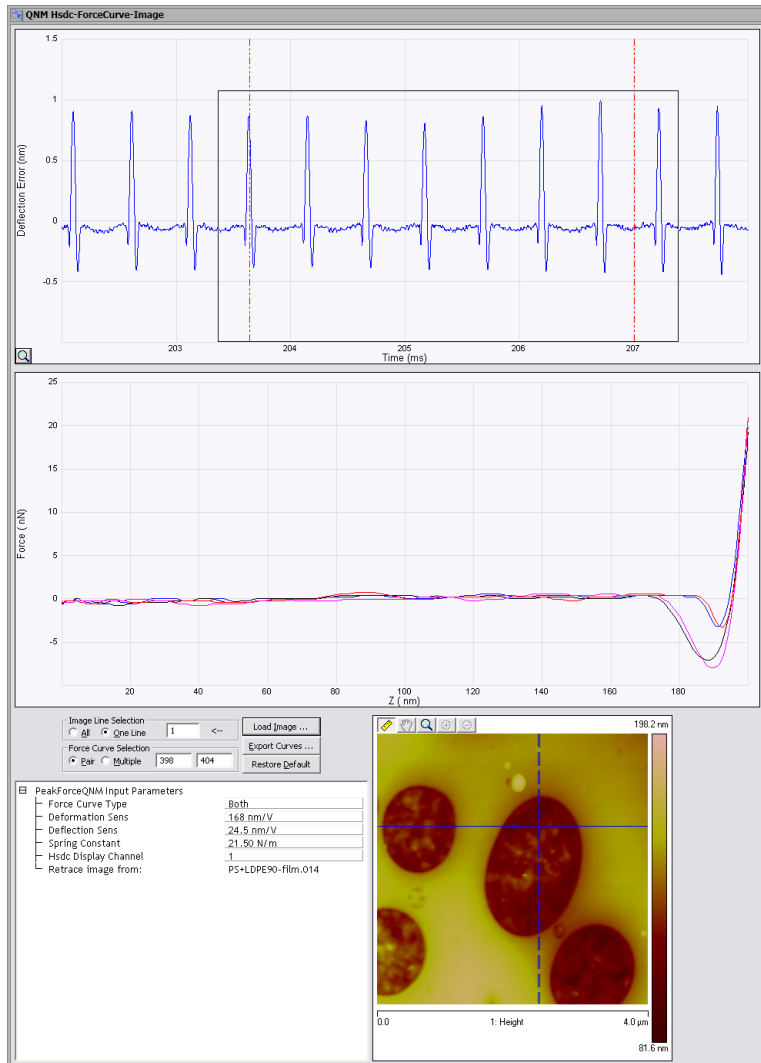
- Two vertical dashed blue cursors, shown in [Figure 5.2c](#), display the X position of the displayed force curves when **PAIR** is checked in the **Force Curve Selection** box. The associated number boxes display the Z piezo tap number. You may move the force position by either dragging the dashed blue cursors in the image, the dashed red cursors (see [Step 7](#)) in the time display or entering the numbers in the **Force Curve Selection** panel. You may select the channel of the captured image by right-clicking in the image as shown in [Figure 5.2c](#).

Figure 5.2c Vertical cursors display X position



- The position of the force curves is also represented by the red dashed cursors in the **Deflection Error vs. Time** display, shown in [Figure 5.2d](#). To Zoom in on an area of interest in the graphs, hold down the Control key and draw a box in the preferred area. To Zoom back out, double-click the image or click the magnifying glass icon in the lower left corner of the plot.

Figure 5.2d The QNM Hsdc Force Curve-Image window



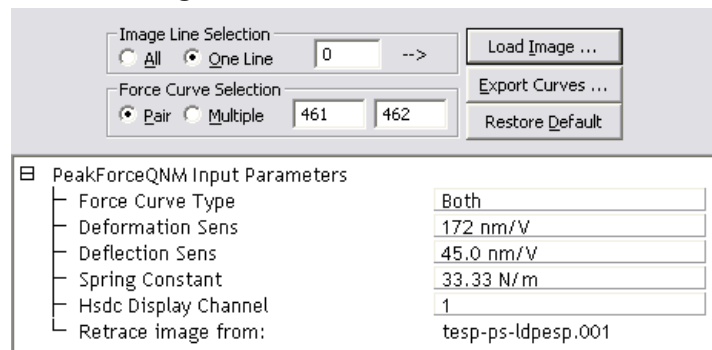
5.3 Controls and Settings

5.3.1 Image Line Selection

Range and Settings: ALL: Displays all captured lines.

ONE LINE: Displays one captured scan line of taps. The arrow in the **Image Line Selection** panel and the solid blue line, shown in [Figure 5.2b](#), display the scan direction. The counters are displayed in the **Force Curve Selection** panel.

Figure 5.3a PeakForce QNM Controls

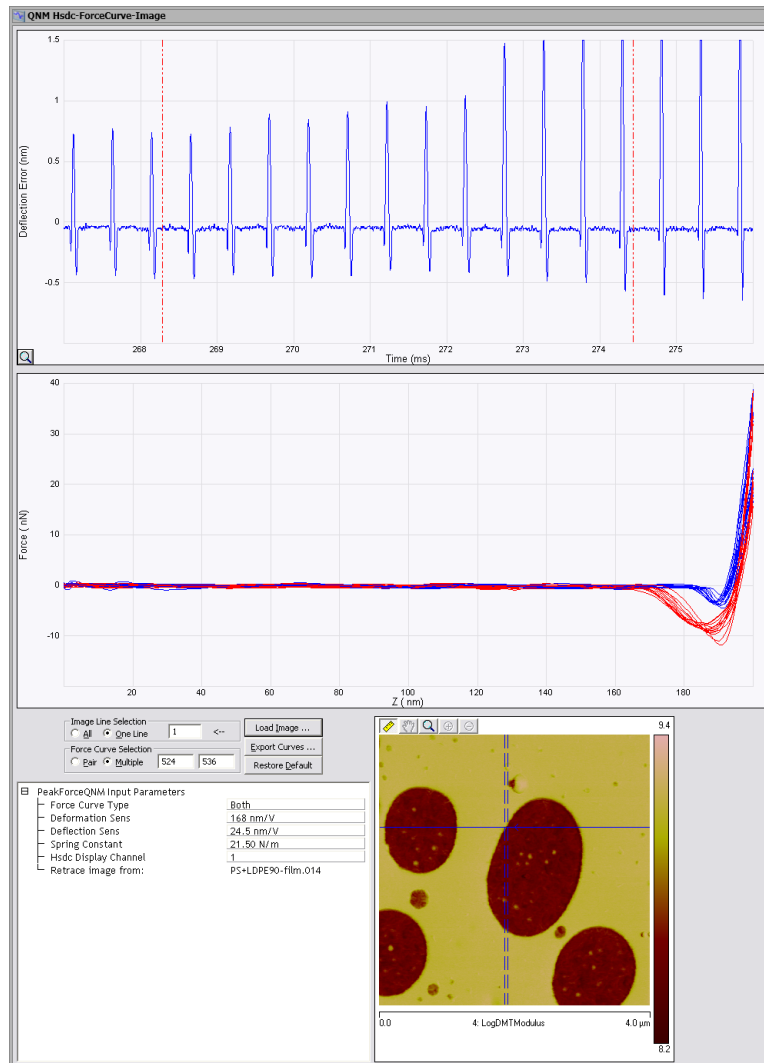


5.3.2 Force Curve Selection

Range and Settings: **PAIR:** Displays a pair of force curves. See [Figure 5.2d](#) for an example. The location of the pair of force curves can be controlled by moving either the dashed blue cursors in the image, the dashed red cursors (see [Step 7](#) on [Page 73](#)) in the time display or entering the numbers in the **Force Curve Selection** panel.

MULTIPLE: Displays all the force curves between the vertical cursors. The location of the force curves can be controlled by dragging either the dashed blue cursors in the image, the dashed red cursors (see [Step 7](#) on [Page 73](#)) in the time display or entering the numbers in the **Force Curve Selection** panel. See [Figure 5.3b](#).

Figure 5.3b Multiple Force Curve Selection



5.3.3 Force Curve Type

Range and Settings: **BOTH:** Display both the extend and retract portions of the Z piezo ramp.

TRACE: Displays the extend portion of the Z piezo ramp.

RETRACE: Displays the retract portion of the Z piezo ramp.

5.3.4 Exporting Force Curves

Click the **EXPORT CURVES** button to export either a **PAIR** of force curves or **MULTIPLE** curves in a directory FrcExport. One file will be created for each force curve. This binary file (header is ASCII) can be opened by the NanoScope Analysis package.

Because off-line plots (either NanoScope or NanoScope Analysis) feature more display options for exported curves (FrcExport) than HSDC files, you may wish to export your curves and then open the FrcExport files. Details can be found in the *Line Plot and Multiple Line Plot* page of the *Force Curve and Ramping Analysis* in the help pages of the NanoScope Analysis package.

5.4 PeakForce QNM Input Parameters

The parameters appearing in the **PeakForce QNM Input Parameters** window have been collected in real-time but may be modified for off-line analysis here.

- Deformation Sensitivity
- Deflection Sensitivity
- Spring Constant
- Hsdc Display Channel

5.5 Exported Force Curves

Exported force curves (file names begin with FrcExport) can be viewed in NanoScope software or NanoScope Analysis software. Off-line plots feature more display options for exported curves than are available for HSDC files. These additional options are listed below.

5.5.1 Time Domain Plots

Change the **X Data Type** from **Z HEIGHT** to **TIME** to transform the original force curve, shown in [Figure 5.5a](#), to a **Force vs. Time** plot (a.k.a. heartbeat), shown in [Figure 5.5b](#).

Figure 5.5a Exported force curve

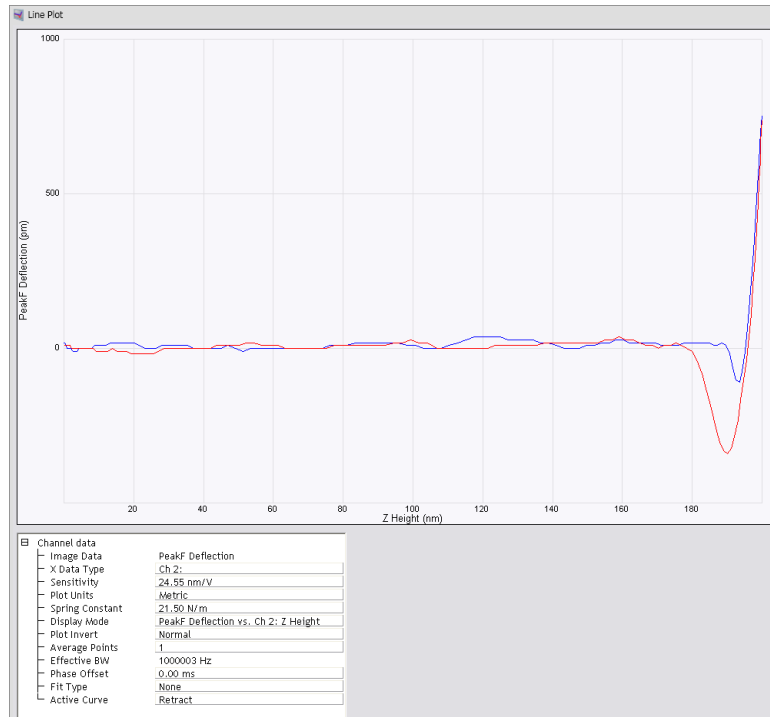
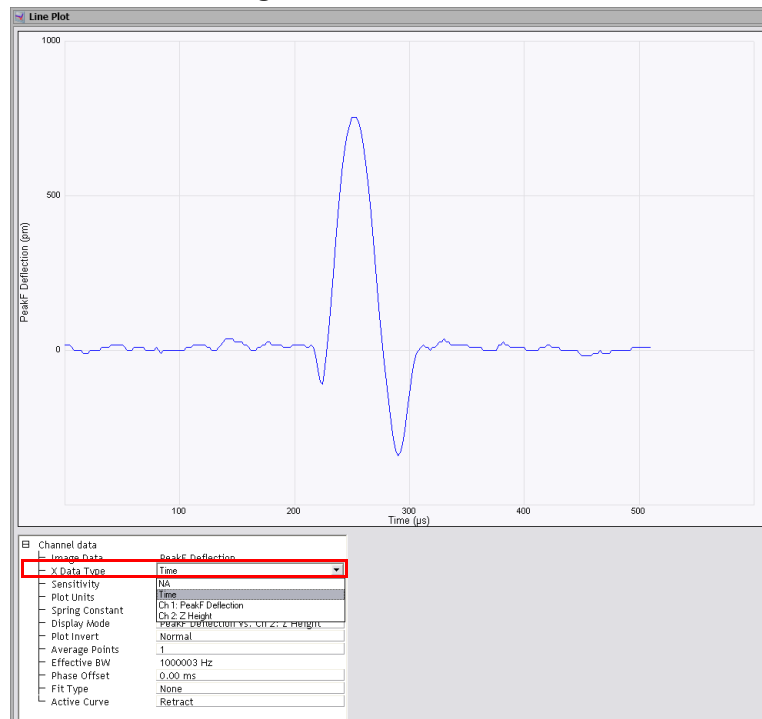


Figure 5.5b Force vs. time



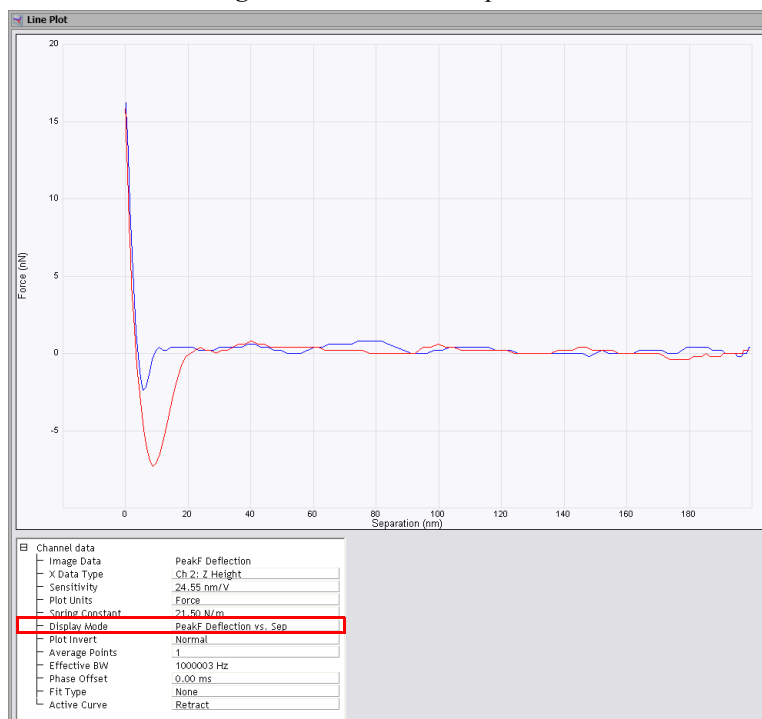
5.5.2 Plot Units

The Y axis can be displayed as **VOLTS** (Deflection), **METRIC** (distance in nano meters) or **FORCE** (nano Newtons).

5.5.3 Display Mode

Change the **Display Mode** to **PEAKF DEFLECTION VS. SEP**, shown in [Figure 5.5c](#), to plot your data vs. separation.

Figure 5.5c Force vs. separation



5.6 Image Math

You can use the **IMAGE MATH** functions in NanoScope Analysis software to re-evaluate your results if you wish to change a parameter.

For instance, you can re-compute Young's modulus if you wish to compensate for a changed tip radius or a different spring constant.

Because

$$E \propto \frac{k}{\sqrt{R}}$$

you can scale Young's modulus by to arrive at corrected results. [Figure 5.6a](#) shows an image of Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film before correction. [Figure 5.6b](#) shows an image of Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film after multiplying it by $(1/\sqrt{2})$ to compensate for a tip radius that has increased by a factor of 2 (e.g. from 10 nm to 20 nm).

Figure 5.6a Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film before correction

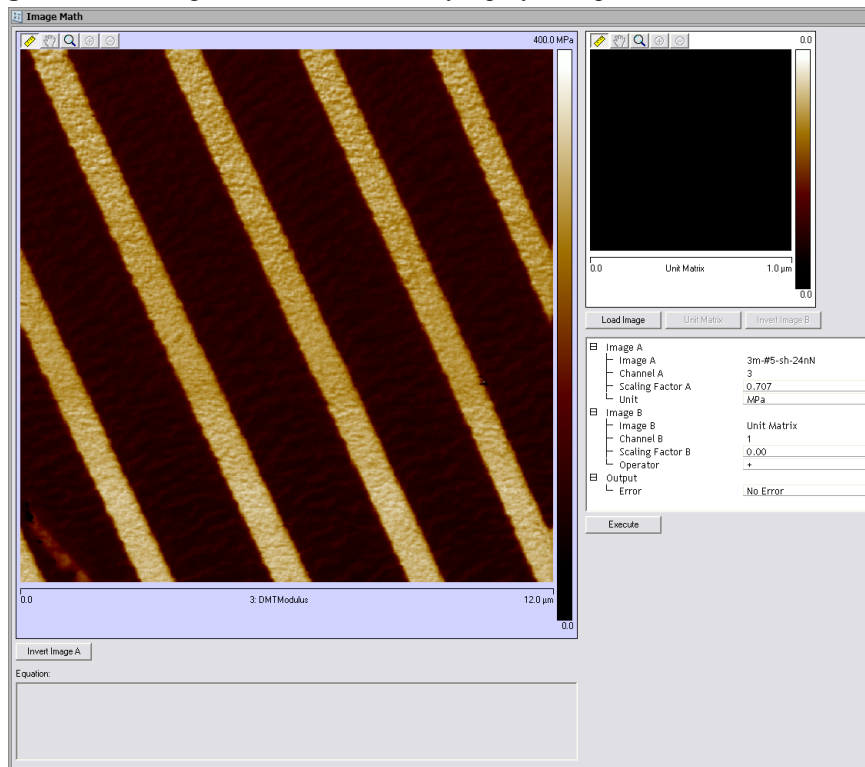
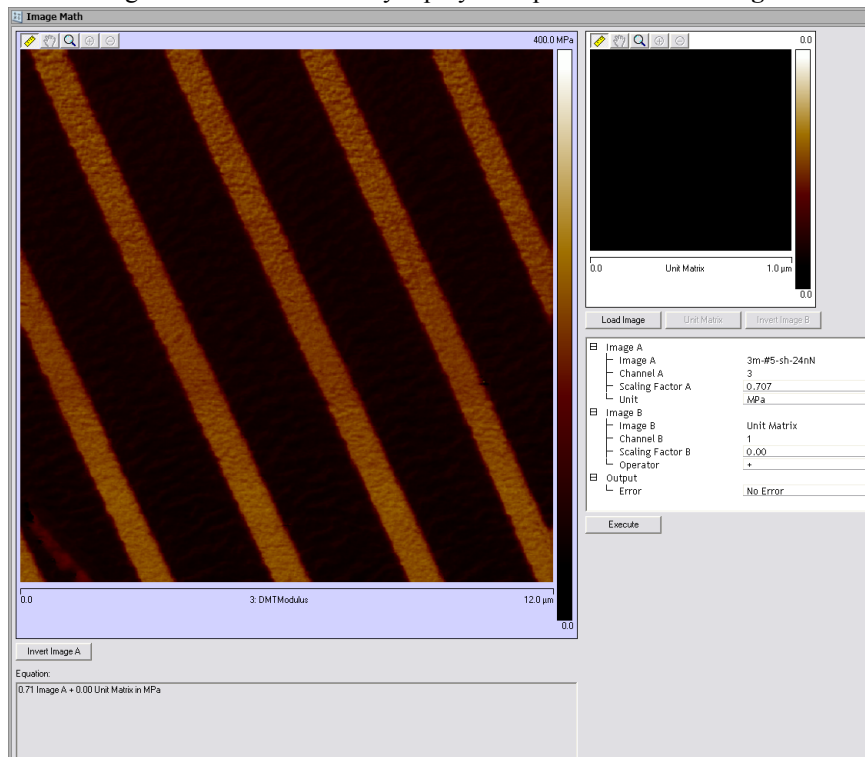


Figure 5.6b Young's modulus in a multilayer polymer optical film after **Image Math** correction



The **Image Math** interface is shown in [Figure 5.6c](#) and the corresponding equation appears in [Figure 5.6d](#).

Figure 5.6c The **Image Math** interface

[-] Image A	
Image A	3m-#5-sh-24nN
Channel A	3
Scaling Factor A	0.707
Unit	MPa
[-] Image B	
Image B	Unit Matrix
Channel B	1
Scaling Factor B	0.00
Operator	+
[-] Output	
Error	No Error

Figure 5.6d The **Image Math** equation

Equation:
0.71 Image A + 0.00 Unit Matrix in MPa

Index

A

Adhesion 17
Auto Config 23, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40

C

Cantilever 2
Cantilever Parameters 29, 66
Capture 36
Capture Line 37
Channels 15
Configure Experiment 42

D

Deflection Limit 31, 35
Deflection Sensitivity 56, 76
Deformation 22
Deformation Fit Region 28, 35
Deformation Sensitivity 76
Display Mode 79
Dissipation 20
Dissipation Limit 30, 35
DMT model 15
DMT Modulus 15
DMT Modulus Limit 30, 35

E

Engage 12
Expanded Mode 41
Exported Force Curves 76
Exporting Force Curves 76

F

Feedback Gain 24, 34
Feedback Parameters 23
Force Curve Selection box 72
Force Limit 30, 35

H

Hsdc 69
Hsdc Display Channel 76

I

Image Math 79

L

Lift Height 26, 35
Limits 30
Limits Parameters 31
Load Image 70
LogDMT Modulus Limit 30, 35
LogDMT Modulus Offset 30, 35
Low Pass Deflection Bandwidth 24, 34

M

Medium 33
Modulus 65

N

NanoScope Analysis 76

O

Offline analysis 69
Optimization 38

P

Parameter Visibility 34
Peak Force Amplitude 26, 35
Peak Force Engage Setpoint 32
Peak Force Setpoint 23, 34
PeakForce QNM Channels 15
PeakForce QNM Control Parameters 26
Plot Units 78
Poisson's Ratio 29, 35

Probe 2

Probe Holder 2

Probetip 2

S

ScanAsyst 1
ScanAsyst Auto Config Frames 25, 34
ScanAsyst Auto Control 25, 34
ScanAsyst Auto Gain 25, 34
ScanAsyst Auto Setpoint 25, 34

Index

ScanAsyst Auto Z Limit 34
ScanAsyst Noise Threshold 24, 34
ScanAsyst Scan Auto Scan Rate 25, 34
ScanAsyst Setup 23, 24, 34
Select Experiment 7, 56
Show All 42
Simple Mode 40
Spring Constant 29, 35, 76
Substrate 2
T
Thermal Tune 59
Time Domain Plots 77
Tip 2
Tip Radius 35, 62
Top Fit Region 27, 35
Torsional Q 29
U
Unload Fit Region 27, 35
Upload Data 37
Y
Young's modulus 15, 54, 66, 79
Z
Z Limit 31, 35
Z Range 31, 35