



Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

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Published in:
Radiation Measurements

Link to article, DOI:
[10.1016/j.radmeas.2015.01.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radmeas.2015.01.013)

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):
Timar-Gabor, A., Constantin, D., Buylaert, J.-P., Jain, M., Murray, A., & Wintle, A. G. (2015). Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range. *Radiation Measurements*, 81, 150–156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radmeas.2015.01.013>

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1 1 **Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response**
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3 3 **curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range**
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23 23 **Abstract**

24 24 SAR-OSL investigations on quartz from Romanian loess resulted in non concordant fine and coarse-grain ages
25 25 for equivalent doses higher than ~100 Gy. The laboratory dose response for both grain sizes is well represented
26 26 by a sum of two saturating exponential functions, fine and coarse grains characterised by D₀₁ and D₀₂ values of
27 27 ~140 and ~1400 Gy and ~65 and ~650 Gy respectively. Pulsed OSL experiments confirmed that this behaviour
28 28 is almost certainly inherent to quartz and not caused by contamination with another mineral. Natural dose-
29 29 response curves do not follow the same pattern and enter saturation much earlier. Analysis of time resolved
30 30 spectra indicated similar luminescence lifetimes for both fine and coarse quartz grains, and natural and
31 31 laboratory generated OSL signals seem to use the same non-dose-dependent recombination pathways. The
32 32 natural signals of a sample with an expected equivalent dose of 2000-2500 Gy were found to be below the
33 33 saturation level of the laboratory dose response curve for both grain sizes; this also applied to the luminescence
34 34 signals measured after >5000 Gy given on top of natural doses.
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45 45 **Keywords:** quartz; CW-OSL; TR-OSL; SAR protocol; dose response.
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49 49 **1. Introduction**
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51 51 Many thousands of optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) ages have been produced in the last decade using
52 52 quartz, mainly using the simple single-aliquot regeneration (SAR) protocol (Murray and Wintle, 2000) and the
53 53 modified SAR protocol (Murray and Wintle, 2003). The basic and fundamental assumption of luminescence
54 54 dating is that the growth of the luminescence signal in nature can be reproduced under laboratory conditions by
55 55 performing irradiations with a calibrated beta or gamma source. This comparison is based on the assumption
56 56 that trapped charge distribution is not dependent on the dose rate, type of radiation or irradiation history before
57 57 deposition (i.e. before sunlight exposure of the sediment).
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1 In the SAR procedure, a dose response curve is obtained by plotting the ratio of the OSL signal to the response
2
3 to a test dose. If the OSL signal is derived from a single electron trap and recombination centre, then the form of
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5 the dose response curve would be a single saturating exponential (e.g. Bøtter-Jensen et al., 2003). Some such
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7 dose response curves have been reported (e.g. Wintle and Murray, 2006); however, many SAR dose response
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9 curves for OSL signals from fine grained quartz dominated by the fast component display continuing growth at
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11 high doses (e.g. Lowick et al., 2010, 2011; Kreutzer et al., 2012). This behaviour would, in theory, enable
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13 higher equivalent doses to be obtained. In practice however, few ages have been obtained by SAR-OSL dating
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15 that have been in agreement with independent age control beyond the Eemian. Using multiple grain SAR-OSL
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17 procedures, Buylaert et al. (2007) reported natural signals below the laboratory saturation level for a sample
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19 with an expected age of ~900 ka. To our knowledge, for quartz that displays a continuing growth at high doses,
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21 there are no reports in the literature of natural signals found in saturation.

22 Our previous studies using fine (4-11 μm) and coarse (63-90 μm) quartz extracted from Romanian loess have
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24 shown that natural OSL signals from infinitely old samples are significantly below the laboratory saturation
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26 level (Timar-Gabor et al., 2012). Also, it has been reported that ages derived from these two grain size fractions
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28 are mutually inconsistent for equivalent doses higher than about 100 Gy, in the case of quartz extracted from
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30 both the Lower Danube Basin and the Carpathian Basin (Timar-Gabor et al., 2011, Constantin et al., 2014,
31
32 Constantin et al. in press, Timar-Gabor et al., in press). Moreover, our previous results derived from quartz
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34 extracted from Romanian loess indicate that the laboratory dose response curve does not accurately reflect the
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36 growth of the OSL signal in nature (Timar-Gabor and Wintle, 2013). The present work is directed at obtaining
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38 more insight into these observations, by performing additional continuous-wave OSL experiments, and by
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40 applying time resolved luminescence on quartz extracts; these experiments are designed (i) to test whether the
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42 observed luminescence growth is a characteristic of quartz rather than an artefact caused by feldspar
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44 contamination, and (ii) to determine whether luminescent recombination occurs at different centres at large
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46 doses.

2. Samples, instrumentation and measurement protocol

47 Experiments presented in the current study have been conducted on archived quartz separates (63-90 μm and 4-
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49 11 μm grains) from our previous investigations on Romanian loess. Samples coded as MV have been collected
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51 from Mircea Vodă section in Dobrudjea (Timar et al., 2010; Timar-Gabor et al., 2011). MST is the lab code
52
53 attributed to Mostistea section from the Romanian Plain (Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al., 2012). CST
54
55 samples were taken from Costineşti section near the Black Sea shore (Timar-Gabor and Wintle, 2013;
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57 Constantin et al., 2014), while samples coded as LCA come from Lunca section in South Western Romania
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59 (Constantin et al., in press). More details on these samples are given in the supplementary material (**Table S1**).
60
61 Continuous-wave optically stimulated luminescence (CW-OSL) measurements on quartz were made in the Cluj
62
63 Luminescence Dating Laboratory with a Risø TL/OSL DA-20 reader equipped with blue light emitting diodes
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65

1 (LEDs) emitting at 470 ± 30 nm and IR LEDs emitting at 875 ± 80 nm; luminescence signals were observed
2 through a 7.5 mm thick Hoya U-340 UV filter. Irradiations have been carried out using a ^{90}Sr - ^{90}Y beta source,
3
4 calibrated using fine and coarse quartz (e.g. Hansen et al., this issue). The dose rate (at the time of
5
6 measurement) for coarse grains mounted on stainless steel discs was $0.147 \text{ Gy}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ and $0.118 \text{ Gy}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ for fine
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8 grains deposited on aluminium discs. Details of the TL/ OSL reader can be found in Thomsen et al. (2006). The
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10 OSL signal was collected in time intervals of 0.154 s. All samples have been analysed using a SAR protocol
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12 (Murray and Wintle, 2000, 2003). The OSL signal used for analysis was that obtained for the first 0.308 s of the
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14 decay curve minus a background derived from the signal measured between 2.464 and 3.080 s, as had been used
15
16 in previous studies on Romanian loess (Timar et al., 2010; Timar-Gabor et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al., 2012;
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18 Timar-Gabor and Wintle, 2013) following the recommendations of Cunningham and Wallinga (2010). All OSL
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20 signals analysed were characterised by a rapid decay and the shape of the decay curve is not dose dependent
21
22 (**Figure S1**). Our previous studies showed that the shape of the linearly modulated OSL signal is not dependent
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24 on the age of the sample (Timar-Gabor et al., 2011- figure 4), nor on either the administered dose (Timar-Gabor
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26 et al., 2012- figure S1 and S4) or the thermal treatment previously applied (Timar-Gabor et al., 2011- figure 5).
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28 This provides evidence that the behaviour reported is characteristic of quartz OSL signals dominated by the fast
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30 component, as also reported by other studies (Lowick et al., 2010). Natural (L_n) and regenerated (L_x) signals
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32 were measured after a preheat of 10 s at 220°C ; the corresponding responses (T_n and T_x) to a test dose (16 Gy)
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34 were measured after a cutheat to 180°C unless otherwise stated. The value of the test dose was kept constant
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36 through all measurements for both grain sizes of quartz. A high-temperature bleach was performed after each
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38 SAR cycle by stimulating with the blue diodes for 40 s at 280°C (Murray and Wintle, 2003).
39
40 Time resolved optically stimulated luminescence (TR-OSL) experiments were carried out at DTU Nutechon a
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42 Risø TL/OSL-20 (designated as Reader V) equipped with an integrated pulsing option to control the LEDs, and
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44 a Photon Timer attachment to record the TR-OSL (Lapp et al., 2009). All TR-OSL experiments have been
45
46 carried out using the same measurement parameters as used in the CW-OSL measurements. For stimulating and
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48 recording the TR-OSL signals, the total measurement time was set to 100 s, with a pulse period of 500 μs
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50 consisting of an “on time” of 50 μs and an “off time” of 450 μs ; this is equivalent to a net stimulation period of
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52 10s in CW-OSL. A total of 500 data points was used for data collection in pulsed stimulation; the sample was
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54 not illuminated during the first and the last five channels. Measurement of dose response curves using pulsed
55
56 OSL measurements was designed to reproduce the CW-OSL measurement conditions as closely as possible,
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58 and to minimise any possible feldspar contamination of the quartz, by: (i) selection of an on time of 50 μs (ii)
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60 gating the photomultiplier for counting only during the off period; (iii) ignoring the first 4 μs during the off time
61
62 in TR-OSL OSL data analysis (Ankjærgaard et al., 2010).

63 **3. Laboratory dose response of quartz OSL**

64 **3.1. CW-OSL investigations**

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110 ¹ Previous studies on Romanian loess showed quartz saturation at large doses, especially in the case of fine grains.
111 ³ Here we compare the laboratory dose response of fine and coarse grains up to 5kGy. For fine grains, 15 aliquots
112 ⁵ (from different sections in Romania) are shown (**Figure 1a**) one aliquot of MV10 and CAC 2.1.; two aliquots of
113 ⁷ CST_{inf}, MST 2, MST 6, MST 13, MST 19 and three aliquots of LCA15; it can be seen that the saturation
114 ⁹ characteristics are similar and all datasets can be well represented by a sum of two saturating exponential
115 ¹⁰ functions:

$$116_{13}^{12} I(D) = I_0 + A(1 - \exp(-D/D_{01})) + B(1 - \exp(-D/D_{02}))$$

117 ¹⁴ Any scatter in the data may be due to different origins of the loess as samples come from both SE and SW
118 ¹⁶ Romania. For coarse grains, 11 aliquots are shown (**Figure 1b**), one aliquot from samples CAC. 2.1, CST_{inf},
119 ¹⁸ LCA 15 and two aliquots of samples MV8, MST3, MST 17, and MST 19. The scatter is greater than for the 16
120 ²⁰ samples taken down the section at Costinești (Timar-Gabor and Wintle, 2013). This may be due to the higher
121 ²² dose range investigated (5000 Gy in the present study compared to 1000 Gy in the previous work) but may also
122 ²⁴ suggest a continuity of source material at one site; in that case, **Figs. 1a** and **1b** may show a variation in source
123 ²⁵ material across southern Romania. Nevertheless, and despite the observed scatter, the saturation characteristics
124 ²⁷ of all samples from a specific grain size are rather similar, but the average behaviour of the two grain sizes is
125 ²⁹ markedly different.

126 ³¹ The reproducibility of the dose response curve was also examined (**Figure S2**). For coarse grains from sample
127 ³² MV8, the dose response curve was taken up to 15 kGy. After constructing this first dose response, the sample
128 ³⁴ was bleached, given a dose of 170 Gy and then the process repeated; the 2nd dose response agreed with the first.
129 ³⁶ As expected, the sensitivity (T_x/T_{nat}) fluctuates, although the response to the constant test dose does not change
130 ³⁸ by more than about 30% from the initial value.

131 ⁴⁰ Saturation characteristics of the dose response curves are not influenced by the thermal treatment used for either
132 ⁴² fine or coarse grains (**Figure S3**). The D_0 values for different thermal treatments are given in **Table S2**. The
133 ⁴⁴ scatter in D_0 is probably affected by the restricted number of points used to construct the dose response and the
134 ⁴⁵ maximum dose given; the latter is not high enough for the dose response to be fully saturated. Nevertheless, it is
135 ⁴⁷ clear that the saturation characteristics of the fine and coarse grains remain significantly different when
136 ⁴⁹ compared to each other no matter what thermal treatment is used. Contrary to the findings of Lai et al. (2008),
137 ⁵¹ heating the samples to 400°C produced only a trivial change in the shape of the laboratory dose response curve
138 ⁵³ (**Figure S4**).

139 ⁵⁴ If fine grains are derived from the comminution of coarser grains, it is very likely that fine grains have
140 ⁵⁶ experienced many more cycles of bleaching and irradiation than coarse grains. This process is known to sensitise
141 ⁵⁸ coarse grains (Moska and Murray, 2006) and may change the shape of the dose response curve. To test this, nine
142 ⁶⁰ aliquots of coarse grains from different samples were given multiple cycles of bleaching (100 s blue diodes at
143 ⁶² room temperature/ pause 10000s/100 s blue diodes at room temperature) and irradiation (beta dose). All aliquots

144 1 sensitized by 60% after 8 cycles of bleaching and irradiation (total dose of approximately 1000 Gy). However,
145 3 there was no noticeable change in the dose response curve shape constructed using the aliquots that were
146 5 subjected to this treatment compared to aliquots from the same sample on which the dose response curve had
147 7 been constructed following the measurement of the natural, at least up to doses of 1000 Gy (**Figure S5**).

148 8 A fundamental difference that exists in nature between coarse and the fine grains is the past irradiation history,
149 10 fine grains experience a significant alpha dose rate, in contrast to coarse grains. However, after repeated cycles
150 12 of alpha irradiation with doses up 120 kGy (4.8 kGy effective alpha dose, assuming an “a value” of 0.04) prior to
151 14 beta dose response construction, we were unable to detect any significant effect on the saturation characteristics
152 16 of previously-etched quartz grains; thus, it is unlikely that alpha irradiation is causing surface defects that might
153 18 have been responsible for the higher saturation characteristics of fine grains (Constantin et al., this issue).

155 21 **3.2. TR-OSL investigations**

156 23 In a previous study (Timar-Gabor et al., in press QI), time-resolved OSL (TR-OSL) measurements were made
157 25 on fine and coarse grains from one sample of Serbian loess from Orlovat. The shape of the TR-OSL was typical
158 27 of quartz (Chithambo, 2003; Denby et al., 2006; Thomsen et al., 2008). In addition, the similarity of the shapes
159 29 with and without prior exposure to IR further confirmed that the OSL was derived from quartz and that no part
160 31 of the signal was from feldspar. Dose response curves for both grain sizes were obtained using the TR-OSL
161 33 signal and were found to be very similar to those using the initial part of the CW-OSL signal. The equivalent
162 35 doses were also in agreement (TR-OSL 171 ± 9 and 170 ± 16 Gy for fine and coarse grains, respectively; the
163 37 equivalent values for CW-OSL were 175 ± 4 and 181 ± 10 Gy). This study was repeated on fine and coarse grains
164 39 from four samples of loess of different ages from Costinești and Lunca sections. The samples were preheated to
165 41 220°C and stimulated at 125°C . The IR treatments consisted of stimulation for 200 s at 125°C . TR-OSL curves
166 43 for fine and coarse grains given different doses, recorded both during “on and off times” are presented in
167 45 **Figures 2a and 2b**, respectively. During the “off time”, the signals display a slow decay that can be fitted with
168 47 a single exponential function.

169 49 The aliquots have been measured using a typical SAR protocol measurement sequence, with a test dose of 19
170 51 Gy, and the counts from the photomultiplier were gated to record only during the off period. Data were
171 53 registered in 500 channels of 0.2 seconds, each channel consisting of 400 pulses of stimulation. Data collected
172 55 from 1-4 seconds of signal registration were selected for integration, corresponding to a stimulation time
173 57 interval of 0.32 seconds, a value very similar to that used in CW-OSL (0.308s). The dose response curves for
174 59 TR-OSL (**Figure 2c**) follow the same pattern as those for CW-OSL, showing beyond reasonable doubt that the
175 61 difference observed between coarse and fine grains is inherent in quartz OSL, and not due to some contaminant.
176 63 The lifetimes were calculated for both natural and regenerated TR-OSL signals, as well as for signals obtained
177 65 after IR exposure and for the recycling point in the dose response curve, and these are shown as a function of
178 67 dose in **Figure 2d**. As in the previous study on ORL4 (Timar-Gabor et al., in press QI), the lifetimes for a

179 1 stimulation temperature of 125 °C are the same for both grain sizes and agree with the values of 36.5-38.5µs
180 3 obtained by others (e.g. Chithambo, 2003; Ankjærgaard et al., 2010-figure 1) but there is no marked
181 5 dependence of lifetime as function of given dose (c.f. Chithambo et al., 2008). These results indicate that the
182 7 same recombination pathways are used to produce OSL in both fine and coarse grained quartz and these
183 9 pathways are independent of dose. They also suggest that the second saturation exponential term observed in
184 10 the dose response curve is not an effect of the existence of multiple recombination centres emitting within our
185 12 detection window.

187 16 **4. Natural dose response**

188 18 Following the approach of Chapot et al. (2012), we have calculated the average sensitivity-corrected natural
189 19 signals down the section at Costineşti and plotted them as a function of the expected equivalent dose. The latter
190 21 were calculated using the measured dose rate and the expected ages derived from a model based on changes in
191 23 magnetic susceptibility down section (Constantin et al., 2014). A relative error of 10% was assigned to the
192 25 paleomagnetic ages. Fine and coarse grains from 25 samples of loess from Costineşti with expected doses up to
193 27 500 Gy were used (Timar-Gabor and Wintle, 2013). These results are shown in **Figures 3a and 3b**, together
194 29 with the value for “an infinitely old sample” (Timar-Gabor et al., 2012), with expected doses of between 2000
195 31 and 2500 Gy, depending on grain size. The natural dose response of the infinitely old sample is about 60% of
196 32 the laboratory saturation level for fine grains and 80% of the laboratory saturation level in the case of coarse
197 34 grains. These results provide further evidence that natural signals from infinitely old samples from this region
198 36 do not fall on the laboratory dose response curves. By comparing **Figures 3a and 3b**, it is seen that the
199 38 differences between the natural and laboratory dose response curves are more pronounced in the case of fine
200 40 grains. Based on the dose response curves presented, the natural response seems to overestimate the laboratory
201 42 response in the 100-400 Gy region, while for higher doses, as in the case of fine grains, the natural signals show
202 44 earlier saturation.

204 47 **5. Other dose response curves**

205 49 **5.1. Multiple-aliquot additive-dose with 110 °C TL correction**

206 51 A new multiple-aliquot additive-dose (MAAD) procedure was applied, in which the OSL responses of all
207 53 aliquots were normalised using the 110 °C TL peak measured in response to a test dose given before any other
208 55 laboratory treatment, such as irradiation or preheating. Murray and Wintle (2000) pointed out that a subsequent
209 57 test dose (as used in the standard for of SAR) did not monitor sensitivity change occurring during measurement
210 59 of the natural OSL signal; they further showed that a prior 110°C TL measurement could be used for this
211 61 purpose, if the changes in the sensitivity of the two signals were directly proportional, and Singhvi et al. (2011)
212 63 later tested this suggestion. In our MAAD procedure, we used 96 aliquots of fine grains from CST 3, which had
213 65 an equivalent dose of 105 ± 3 Gy as derived using the standard SAR protocol. Immediately following delivery

214 1 of a 4 Gy test dose, the 110 °C TL peak was measured by heating to 180 °C. Subsequently the aliquots were
215 3 divided into 12 groups of 8 aliquots and irradiated with doses ranging from 10 to 2580 Gy. Following a preheat
216 5 for 10 s at 220 °C, the OSL was measured at 125 °C for 40 s, and this signal was normalised using the
217 7 previously measured 110 °C TL response.

218 8 The MAAD dose response curve is given in **Figure 4** and the equivalent dose (103 ± 20 Gy) obtained by
219 10 extrapolation of a single saturating exponential function (which was found to be the best fit for the presented
220 12 dataset) is indistinguishable from the SAR result (105 ± 3 Gy). The scatter observed for each dose point is
221 14 intriguing, possibly suggesting that individual aliquots have either a range of TL responses to the initial 4 Gy
222 16 dose or different OSL responses to added dose. Either explanation is surprising, because fine grains are
223 18 expected to have a homogenous response because of the large number of grains on each disc. Due to this high
224 20 degree of scatter, a quantitative assessment based on fitting parameters of saturation characteristics cannot be
225 22 performed with confidence. However, it is important to note that the MAAD dose response is not fully saturated
226 24 for doses over 2000 Gy and thus grows to higher doses than the natural dose response, which is fully saturated
227 26 at doses about 500-1000 Gy (**Figure 3**).

229 28 **5.2. The effect of adding a large dose on top of natural signals**

230 30 In an earlier study, Timar-Gabor and Wintle (2013) added 1816 Gy on top of the natural dose for fine grains
231 32 from sample CST 6 ($D_e = 197 \pm 7$ Gy) and 1676 Gy for coarse grains from another sample, CST 1 ($D_e = 116 \pm$
232 34 8 Gy). The light levels obtained were compared with those reached by the laboratory dose response curve
233 36 constructed using the SAR procedure using doses up to 2300 Gy. For the coarse grains, the signal seemed to be
234 38 in saturation, while for fine grains the signal appeared to be below the maximum value obtained in the
235 40 laboratory. However, the dose response curves did not show complete saturation. In our study, we have given
236 42 additional doses of 8000 Gy to the fine grains and 5000 Gy to the coarse grains for the same sample, MST 7.
237 44 Laboratory dose response curves were then constructed using doses up to 10000 Gy. For both grain sizes,
238 46 signals from aliquots given added doses are below the saturation levels of the laboratory dose responses; this
239 48 difference is greatest for fine grains (**Figure 5**). It seems likely that quartz cannot be used to accurately measure
240 50 a known given dose at high doses (see **Figure S6** and **Table S3** -fine grains and **Figure S7** and **Table S4**-
241 52 coarse grains for further information), and that signal instability is not likely to be the cause of underestimation
242 54 of the natural signal relative to the saturation level in the infinitely old sample. In contrast, these results strongly
243 56 suggest that, at large doses, sensitivity changes in the first measurement cycle are not adequately corrected for
244 58 using the response to a test dose given either before or after measurement of the signal of interest. They also
245 60 demonstrate the need to construct laboratory dose response curves up to full saturation before pertinent
246 62 conclusions regarding the saturation parameters can be drawn.

248 63 **6. Summary and Conclusions**

249 1 SAR measurement sequences carried out on fine (4-11 μm) and coarse (63-90 μm) grained quartz extracts from
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250 3 loess deposits at four sites in the south of Romania have confirmed previously published work that shows the
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251 5 SAR laboratory dose response curves obtained for the two grain sizes to be quite different. For both grain sizes,
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252 7 the sum of two exponential functions is required to fit the data, characterised by D_{01} and D_{02} values of ~ 140 and
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253 9 ~ 1400 Gy for fine grains and ~ 65 and ~ 650 Gy in the case of coarse grains, respectively, when doses up to 5000
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254 11 Gy are given (**Figure 1**). Only when the laboratory dose was extended up to 9 kGy is the fine-grain signal seen
12
255 12 to be in full saturation. Laboratory saturation characteristics are not affected by previous irradiation, bleaching,
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256 14 or the thermal treatments employed.

15
257 16 TR-OSL measurements on fine and coarse grains showed signals typical of quartz (**Figures 2a** and **b**), with
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258 18 lifetime values independent of dose (**Figure 2d**). These results imply that the second exponential component in
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259 20 the dose response curve is not a result of a varying contribution from different luminescent centres.

260 21 For doses higher than about 200 Gy natural and laboratory dose response curves for fine grains diverge (**Figure**
22
261 23 **3a**), with natural signals showing earlier saturation. Based on the divergence shown for these samples from
24
262 25 Costinești, it is tempting to suggest that an upper limit of $2 D_{01}$ could be applied to values of D_e determined
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263 27 using SAR, as suggested by Wintle and Murray (2006) for single exponential growth. For these samples, Timar-
28
264 29 Gabor and Wintle (2013, Figure 2c) obtained a value of $D_{01} = 76$ Gy when they fitted a double exponential to
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265 31 the average dose response curve for all samples from this section constructed using doses up to 1200 Gy.
32
266 32 However, as shown in **Figure 1a**, D_{01} ranges between 131 ± 20 and 200 ± 24 Gy when doses up to 5000 Gy
33
267 34 were used to construct the dose response curve; for CST_{inf} , the value was 144 ± 19 Gy. It is thus not possible to
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268 36 provide firm numerical guidance on the maximum value of D_e that can be determined reliably. In addition, the
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269 38 comparison is constrained by the uncertainty in the D_e predicted down section based on the dose rate and age
39
270 40 from the palaeomagnetic model, though likely error bars are given in **Figure 1a**. For 63-90 μm quartz, it is
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271 41 difficult to assess the degree of overlap of the natural and laboratory dose response due to the scatter of the
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272 43 datapoints (**Figure 3b**).

44
273 45 The multiple-aliquot additive dose response curve (**Figure 4**) seems to grow to higher doses than the natural
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274 47 dose response; while there is agreement between the values obtained by SAR and MAAD for equivalent doses
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275 49 ~ 100 Gy, the signals measured after adding a dose of the magnitude of the SAR saturation level (5000 Gy for
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276 51 coarse grains; 8000 Gy for fine grains) on top of the natural dose were found to be significantly below the
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277 52 saturation level (**Figure 5**). This suggests an initial dose-dependent sensitivity change that is not corrected for
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278 54 by the use of the response to a test dose, whether given before or after the signal of interest.

55
279 56 In conclusion, several lines of investigation, such as signal contamination and the effects of prior dose and
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280 58 thermal treatments, were unable to identify the cause of either the differences between quartz fine-grained and
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281 60 coarse-grained dose response curves, or the age under-estimation at high doses. Although our previous studies
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282 61 have shown that acceptable recovered-to-given dose ratios could be obtained up to ~ 500 Gy (Timar-Gabor et
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283 63 al., 2011, Timar-Gabor et al., 2012, supplementary material) or even ~ 1500 Gy (Constantin et al., 2014) when
64
283 64

284 1 doses are given after a laboratory bleach, our present study suggests that age underestimation may, in part, be
285 3 caused by poor dose recovery at very high doses.
286 5 Further investigations in this high dose range are clearly needed and it is recommended that adding a large dose
287 6 on top of the natural and comparing the measured signal to the laboratory saturation limit should be
288 8 incorporated as a standard test for evaluating the performance of the SAR protocol, especially when
289 10 applications are carried out in the high dose range.

291 14 **Acknowledgements**

292 16 A.T-G. and D.C. acknowledge the financial support from a grant of the Romanian National Authority for
293 17 Scientific Research CNCS-UEFISCDI, PN-II-RU-TE-2011-3-0062, nr. 73/05.10.2011.D.C. also acknowledges
294 19 the financial support of the Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013,
295 21 co-financed by the European Social Fund under the project POSDRU/159/1.5/S/133391-“Doctoral and
296 23 postdoctoral excellence programs for training highly qualified human resources for research in the fields of Life
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371³⁴
372³⁶ **Figure captions**

373³⁸ **Figure 1:** Laboratory dose response of (a) 15 aliquots of fine grained (4-11 μm) quartz and (b) 11 aliquots of
374⁴⁰ coarse grained (63-90 μm) quartz. For fine grains, the individual values for D_{01} range between 131 ± 20 Gy
375⁴¹ and 200 ± 24 Gy, while the D_{02} values are between 1252 ± 119 Gy and 1917 ± 280 Gy. In the case of coarse
376⁴³ grain, values for D_{01} range between 30 ± 3 Gy and 68 ± 6 Gy while the minimum and maximum values for D_{02}
377⁴⁵ are 317 ± 26 Gy and 705 ± 120 Gy. The average dose response curve for each grain size is represented as a solid
378⁴⁷ line.

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380⁵⁰ **Figure 2:** TR-OSL signals (photon arrival time distributions-PAT) for one representative aliquot of (a) fine and
381⁵² (b) coarse grains of sample CST 3 recorded after different doses. (c) Dose response curves for fine (4-11 μm)
382⁵⁴ grains and coarse (63-90 μm) grains of sample CST 3 constructed using TR-OSL. (d) Average lifetimes
383⁵⁶ obtained as function of dose. The lifetimes of natural signals are depicted as stars. The IR stimulation was
384⁵⁸ performed in a pseudo-CW stimulation manner (on time 500 μs; off time 4.5 μs) for 100 s at 125 °C. Each
385⁶⁰ datapoint represents the average value obtained on 10 aliquots.

387 1 **Figure 3:** The average sensitivity-corrected natural signal for 26 samples from Costinești (a) fine and (b) coarse
388 2 grains plotted as function of their expected equivalent dose. The average laboratory dose response curve (based
389 3 on data taken up to 5000 Gy) is displayed for each grain size.
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391 8 **Figure 4:** Multiple aliquot additive dose response curve obtained using 110 °C TL peak for normalisation.
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393 12 **Figure 5:** Normalised luminescence signals for sample MST 7 ($De = 149 \pm 3$ Gy- fine grains; $De = 191 \pm 17$
394 13 Gy- coarse grains); following irradiation to a dose of (a) 8000 Gy for fine grains and (b) 5120 Gy for coarse
395 14 grains given on top of the natural dose.
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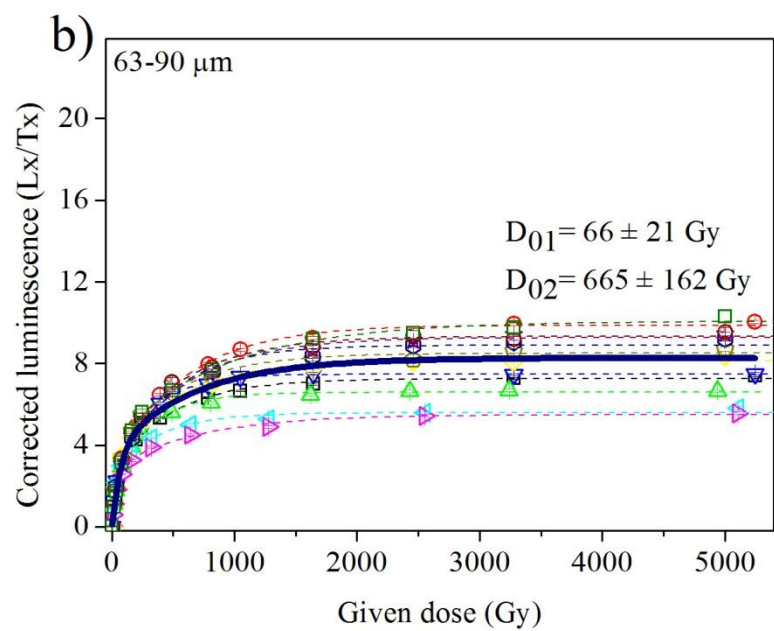
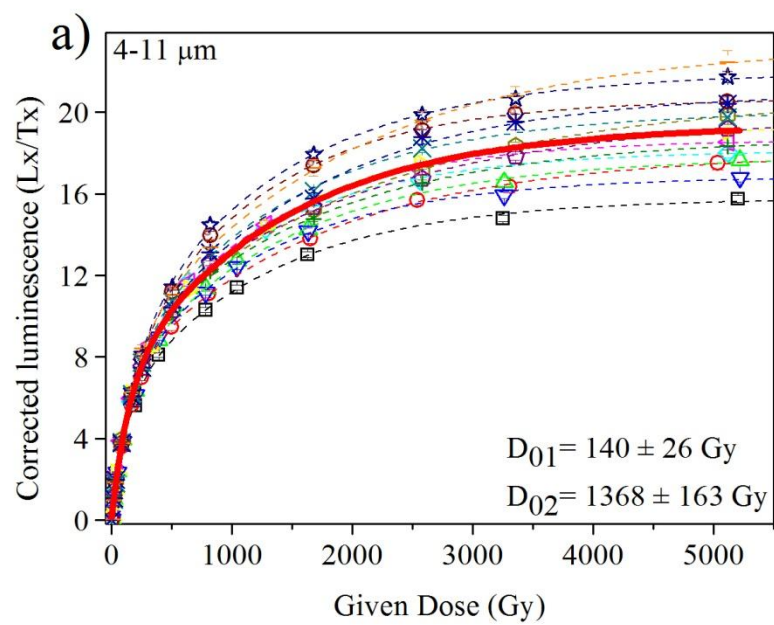
Figure 1

Figure 2

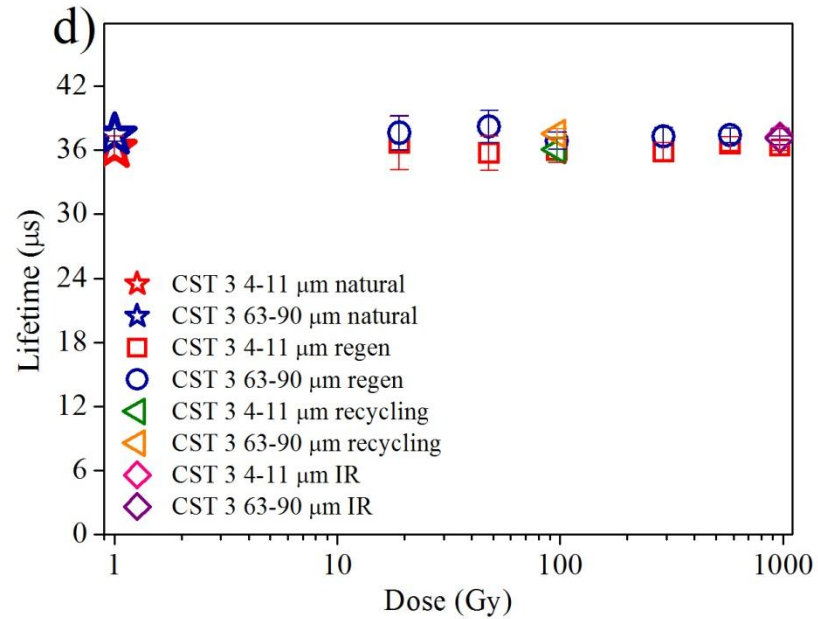
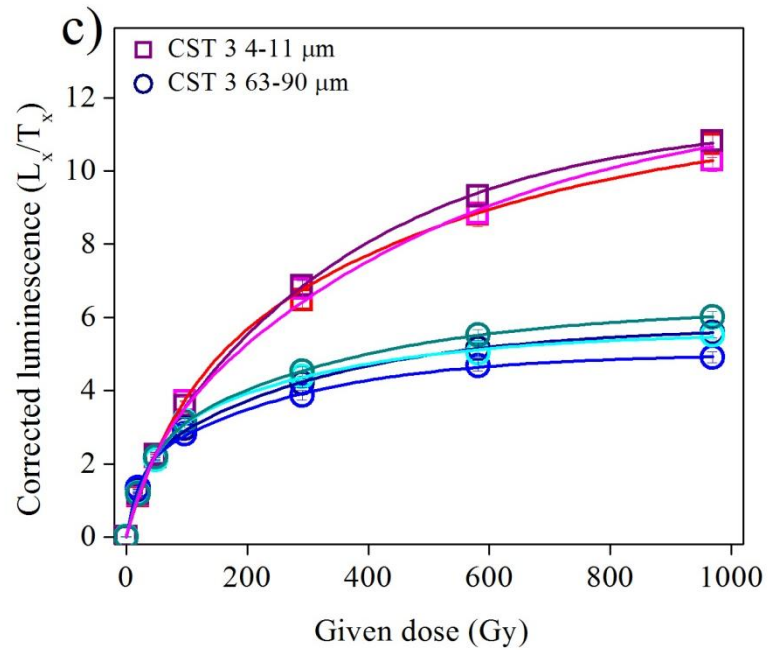
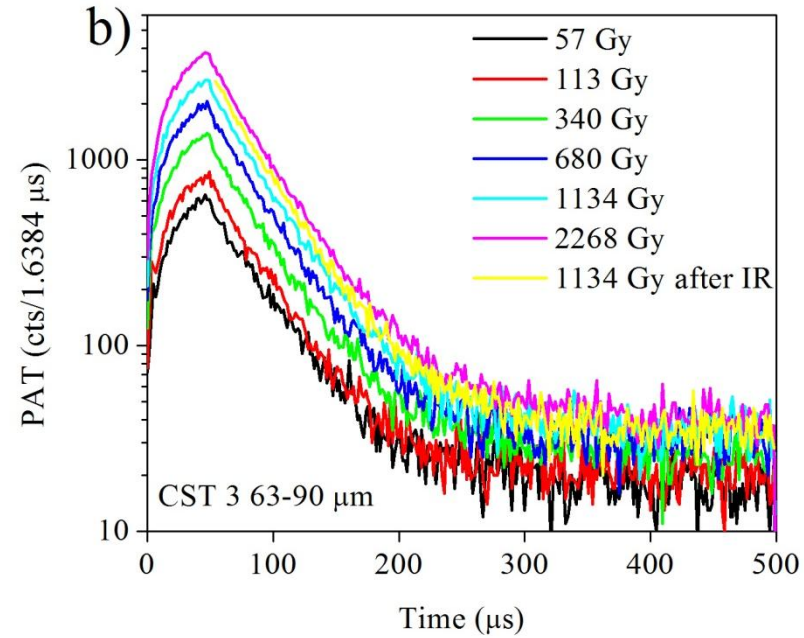
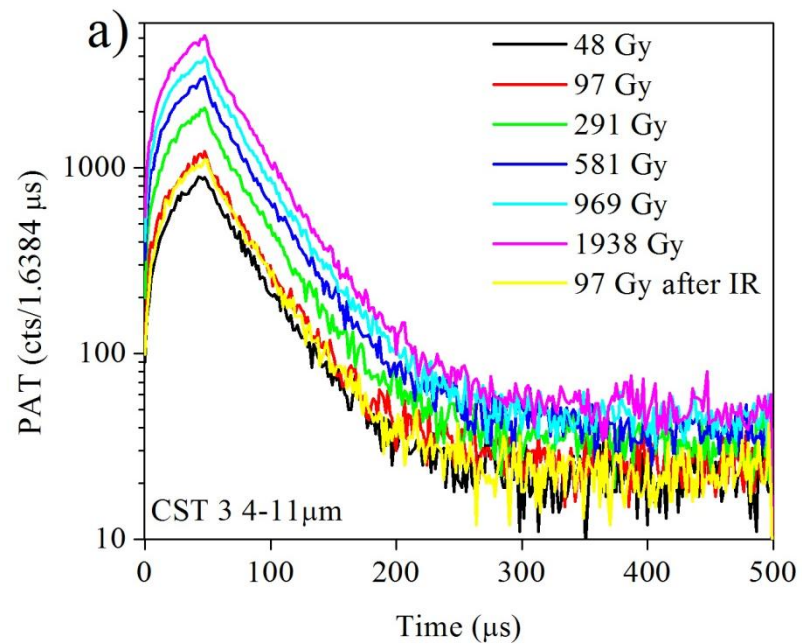


Figure 3

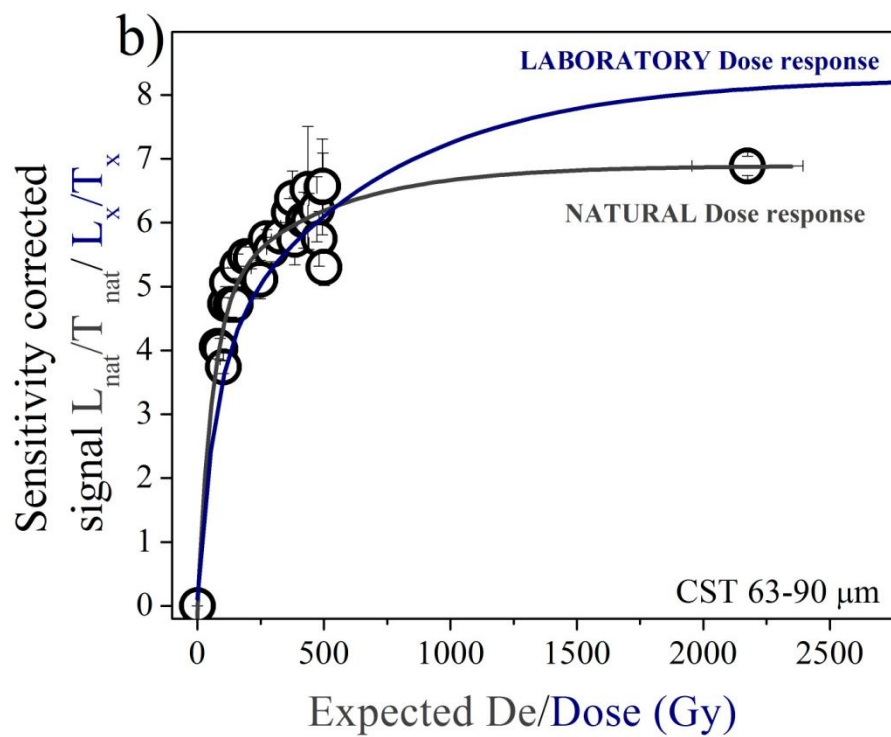
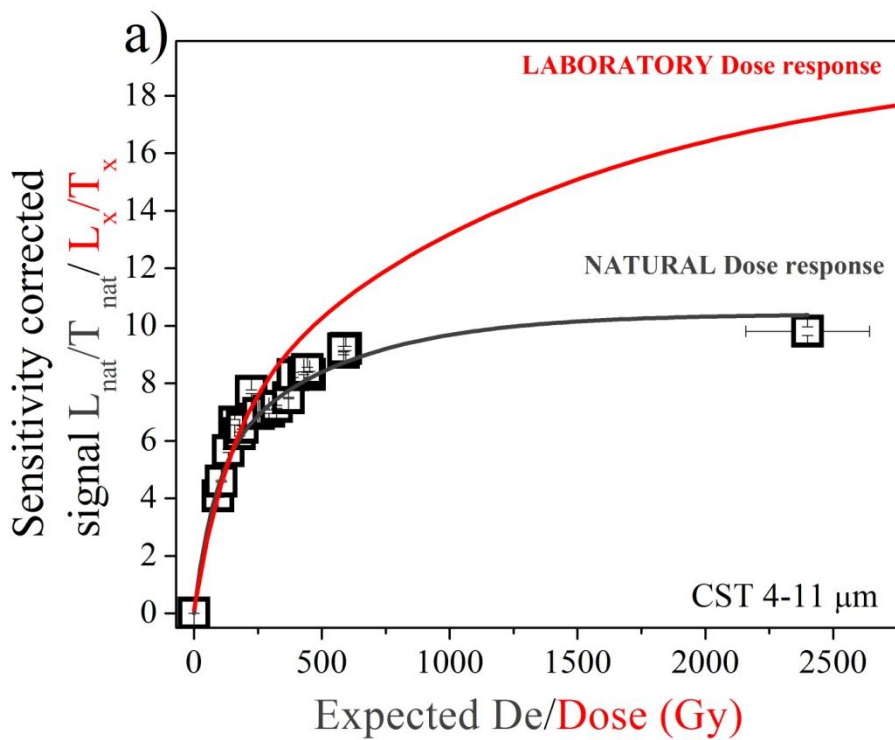


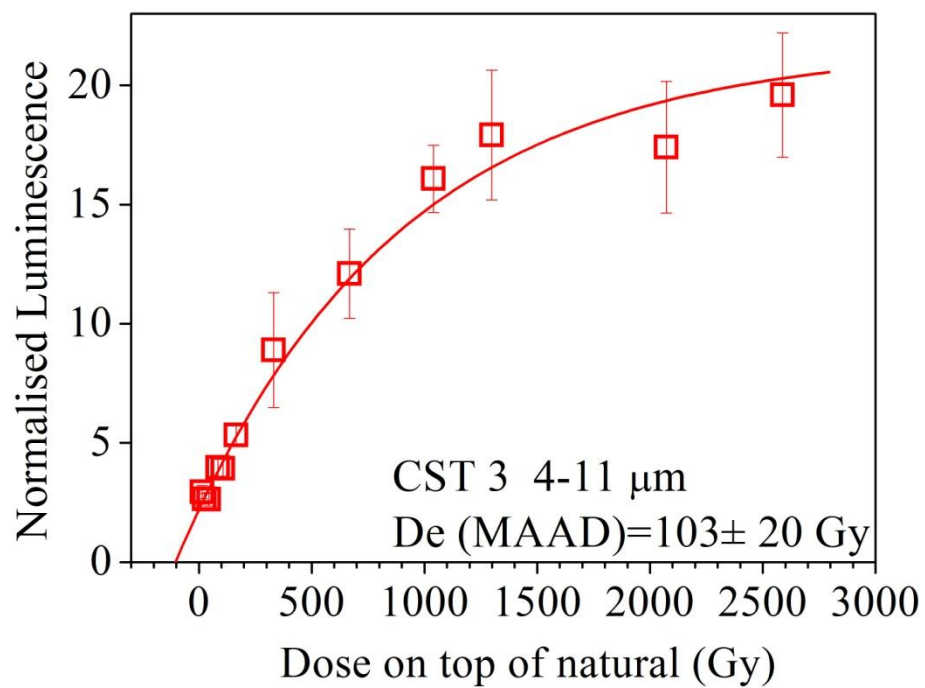
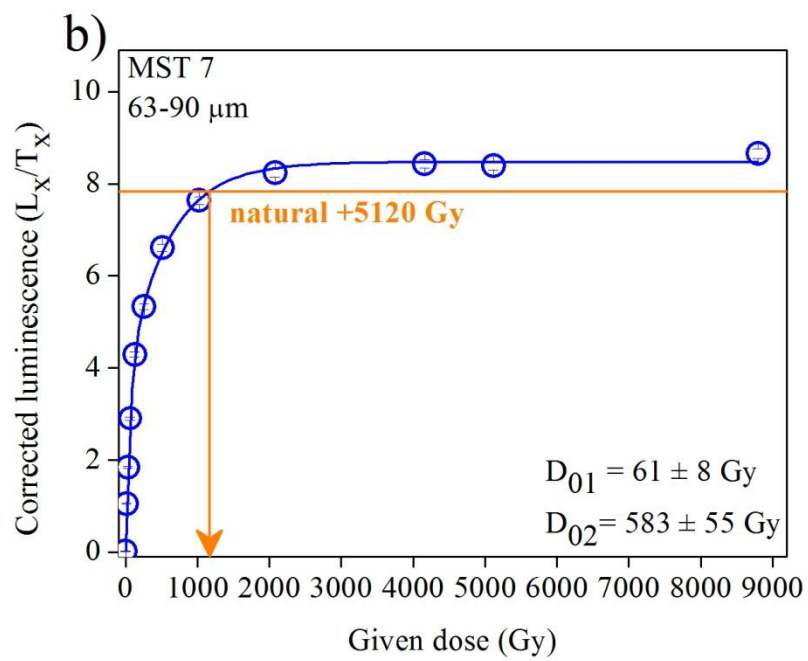
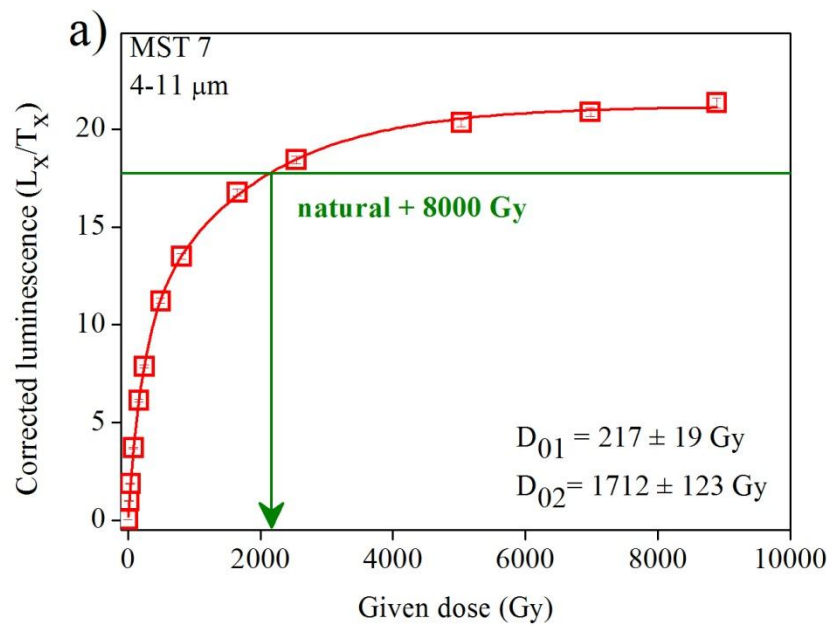
Figure 4

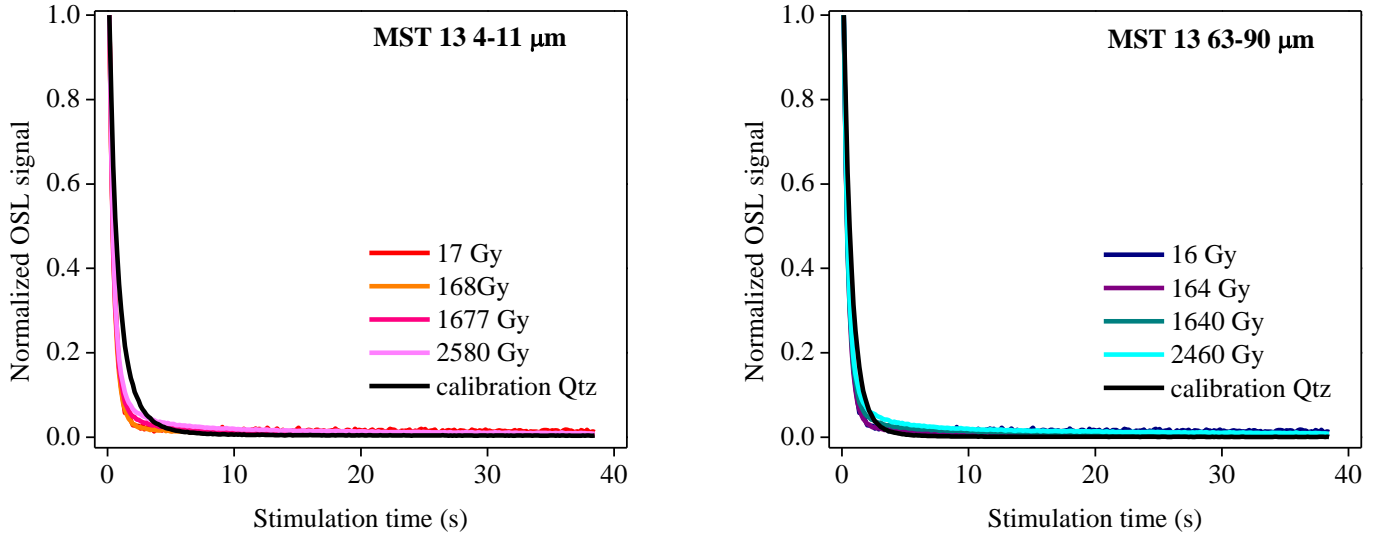
Figure 5

SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

Table S1: Additional information on investigated samples:

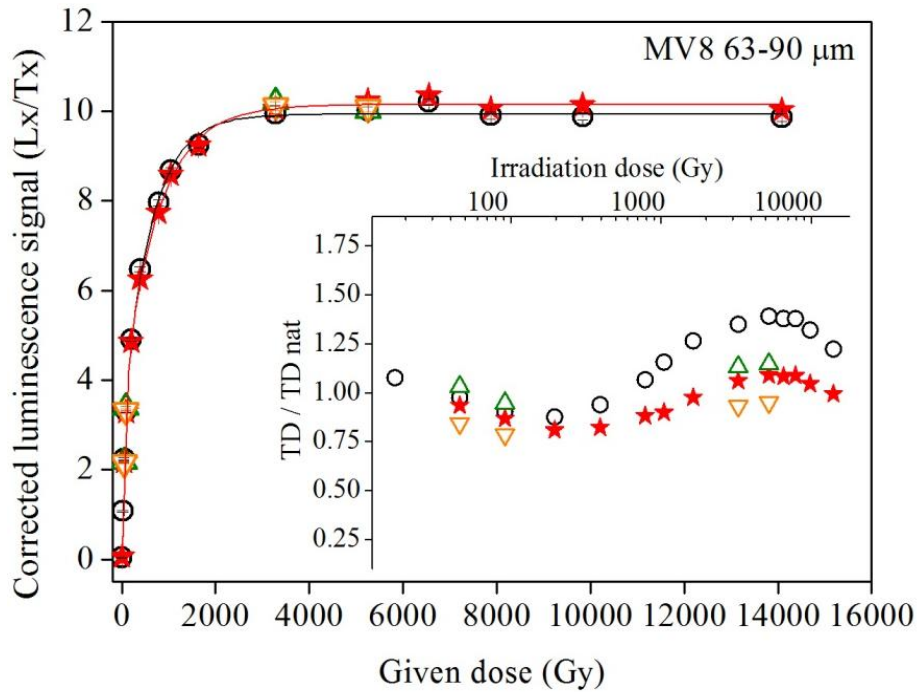
Sample code	De 4-11 μm quartz (Gy)	De 63-90 μm quartz (Gy)	Reference
MV 2	32 ± 1	46 ± 4	Timar-Gabor et al. 2011
MV 8	209 ± 3	247 ± 8	Timar-Gabor et al. 2011
MV 10	310 ± 9	319 ± 15	Timar-Gabor et al. 2011
CAC 2.1.	126 ± 4	119 ± 9	Constantin et al. 2012
MST 2	113 ± 2	130 ± 10	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 3	151 ± 4	153 ± 4	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 6	147 ± 2	185 ± 9	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 7	149 ± 3	191 ± 17	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 13	195 ± 2	277 ± 15	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 17	264 ± 9	279 ± 28	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
MST 19	289 ± 9	288 ± 57	Vasiliniuc et al., 2011; Timar-Gabor et al. 2012
LCA 15	113 ± 2	117 ± 5	Constantin et al. in press
CST 1 \rightarrow CST 25	$90 \pm 1 \rightarrow 409 \pm 12$	$116 \pm 8 \rightarrow 470 \pm 38$	Constantin et al. 2014, Timar-Gabor and Wintle 2013
Cst inf.	650 ± 20	628 ± 47	Timar-Gabor et al. 2012

Figure S1: CW-OSL decay curves as a function of dose compared to the calibration quartz (4.81 Gy) OSL decay curve. The data are normalized to the number of counts in the first channel (first 0.15 s of the stimulation time).

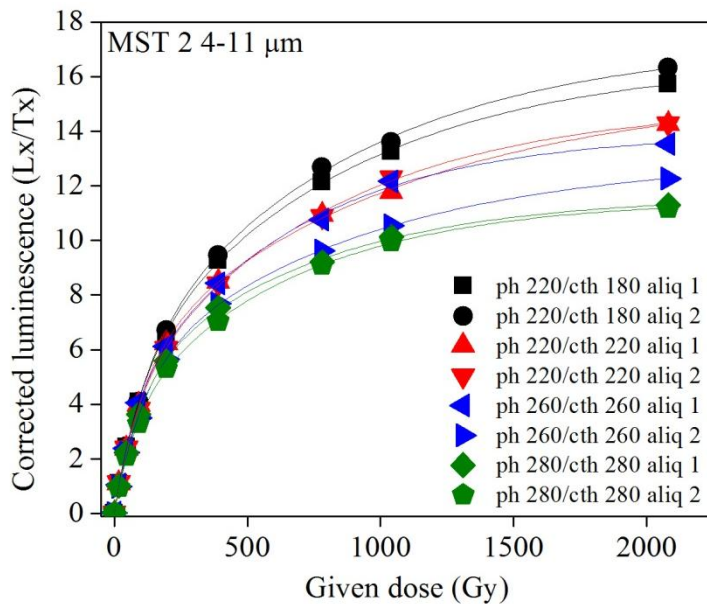


1 **SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose**
 2 **response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range**
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 7 **Figure S2:** Dose response curve reproducibility test for a coarse quartz aliquot of sample MV8 (see text for
 8 experimental details). The first growth is represented by circles while the second growth is represented by stars.
 9 Repeat points for the first and second dose responses are represented by up and down triangles respectively. The
 10 inset shows the change in sensitivity monitored by the response to the test dose.
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 38 **Figure S3:** Dose response curves constructed up to 2000 Gy using different combinations of preheat/cutheat
 39 treatments, for a sample of fine quartz. Fitting parameters in the case of this particular sample, as well as the
 40 coarse quartz counterpart material, are given in the table below.
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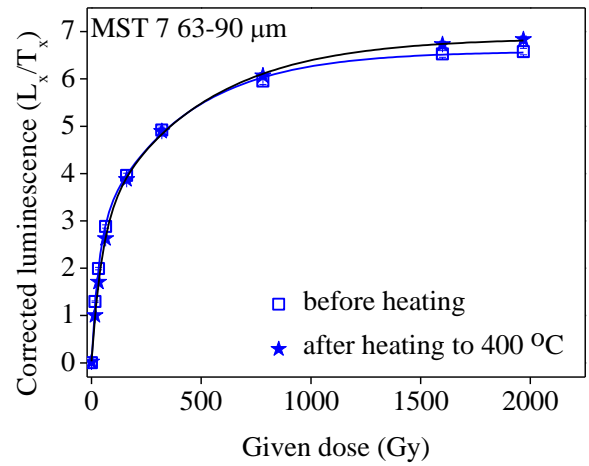
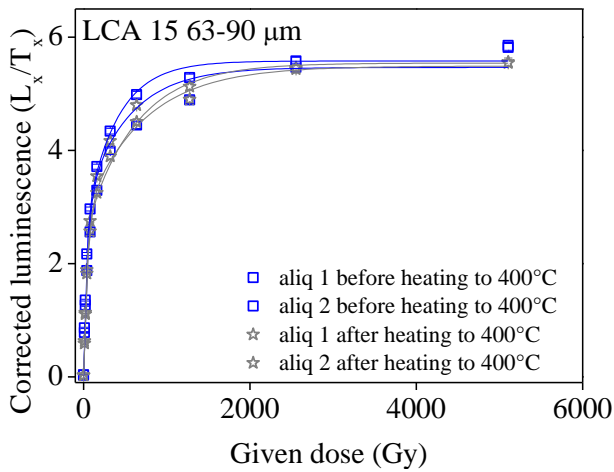
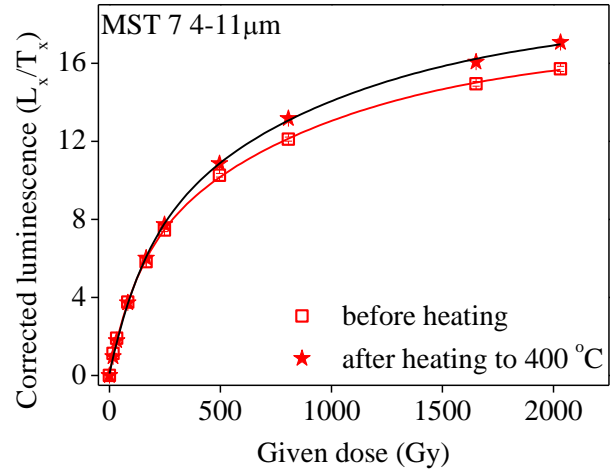
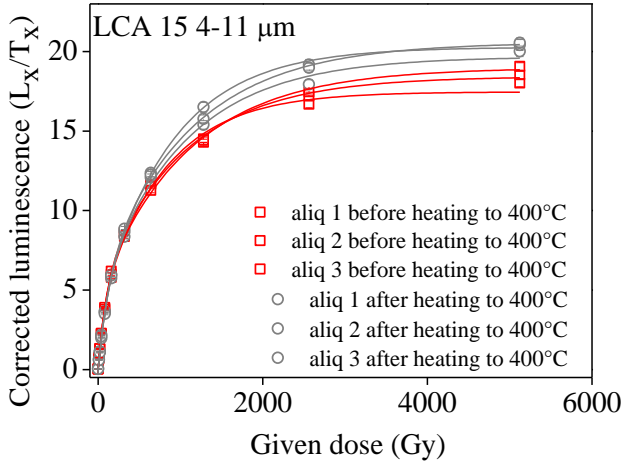
SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

Table S2: Fitting parameters for OSL dose response curves constructed up to 2000 Gy for different thermal treatments. Please note that fitting parameters should be regarded as an indication of a specific trend rather than a quantitative measure, due to the restricted number of points used and dose range investigated.

Sample	y₀	y₀ error	A₁	A₁ error	D₀₁	D₀₁ error	A₂	A₂ error	D₀₂	D₀₂ error	Reduced χ²	R²
4 – 11 μmMST 2												
Ph 220 cth 180	0.09	0.07	4.8	0.4	105	11	11.7	0.3	826	56	0.007	1.000
Ph 220 cth 180	0.08	0.12	5.0	0.8	112	20	12.2	0.6	836	101	0.020	0.999
Ph 220 cth 220	0.09	0.09	5.3	0.5	108	13	10.2	0.3	1035	131	0.012	1.000
Ph 220 cth 220	0.08	0.11	3.8	0.5	82	14	11.1	0.4	761	68	0.016	0.999
Ph 260 cth 260	0.02	0.13	3.6	0.5	72	15	10.3	0.4	629	59	0.021	0.999
Ph 260 cth 260	0.08	0.07	4.7	0.4	107	12	8.2	0.3	871	94	0.007	1.000
Ph 280 cth 280	0.07	0.08	4.2	0.4	91	11	7.4	0.3	675	64	0.008	1.000
Ph 280 cth 280	0.07	0.07	3.4	0.3	82	10	8.1	0.3	645	45	0.006	1.000
Sample	y₀	y₀ error	A₁	A₁ error	D₀₁	D₀₁ error	A₂	A₂ error	D₀₂	D₀₂ error	Reduced χ²	R²
63-90 –μmMST 3												
Ph 220 cth 180	0.09	0.07	3.2	0.3	47	8	3.9	0.3	762	163	0.02	1.00
Ph 220 cth 180	0.08	0.12	2.4	0.6	41	17	4.2	0.5	464	122	0.05	0.99
Ph 220 cth 220	0.09	0.09	1.7	0.3	28	8	5.3	0.3	252	22	0.01	1.00
Ph 220 cth 220	0.08	0.11	3.0	0.4	50	11	3.7	0.3	657	157	0.02	1.00
Ph 260 cth 260	0.02	0.13	2.2	0.2	28	4	2.2	0.2	256	36	0.00	1.00
Ph 260 cth 260	0.08	0.07	2.1	0.3	38	10	5.8	0.3	431	45	0.01	1.00
Ph 280 cth 280	0.07	0.08	1.7	1.0	29	17	2.0	1.0	145	68	0.02	0.99
Ph 280 cth 280	0.07	0.07	2.8	0.4	45	9	1.5	0.3	394	162	0.01	0.99

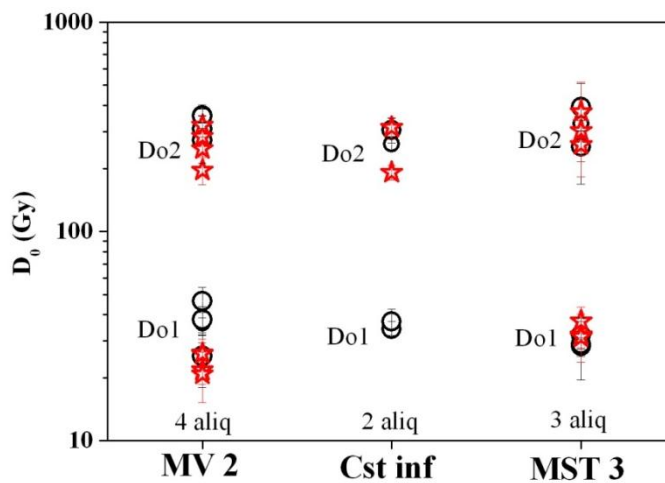
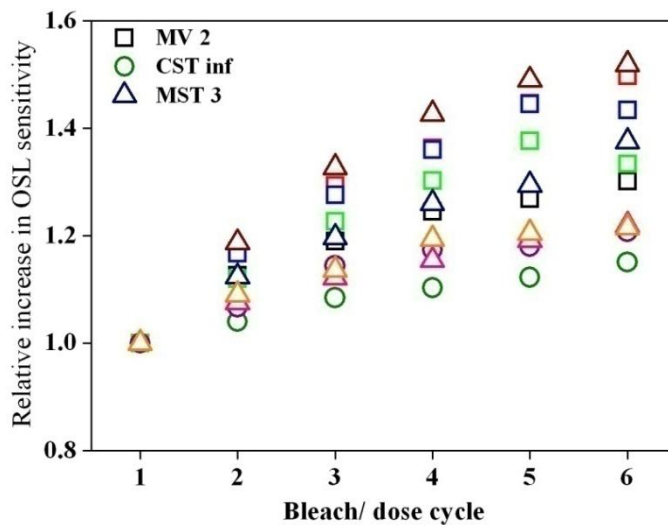
1 **SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose**
2 **response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range**
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5 **Figure S4:** Dose response curves for fine and coarse quartz grains constructed before and after heating the
6 sample to 400 °C.
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SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

Figure S5: (a) Variations in OSL sensitivity as a function of bleach/dose cycle obtained using nine coarse quartz aliquots of samples collected from Mircea Voda, Costinesti and Mostistea. The samples were first optically zeroed using a double blue stimulation at room temperature for 100 s with 10 ks pause in between. The aliquots were then given a 170 Gy dose and the OSL signal was measured using a blue stimulation at 125 °C for 40s. This was repeated for five times in order to accumulate a dose of ~ 1000 Gy after bleaching. A dose-response curve was then built using seven regenerative doses up to ~ 1050 Gy. The data represent the net OSL signals obtained in each cycle normalized to the OSL signal from the first cycle. (b) Comparison between the saturation characteristics (D_{01} , D_{02}) obtained for dose-response curves constructed after multiple bleach/dose cycles (open stars) and the values obtained for dose-response curves constructed for D_e measurement, on different aliquots. It can be noted that there is a difference between the individual values (which is to be expected, due to the fact that different aliquots of coarse grains are investigated ; i.e. see scatter in fig 1.b), but remain consistent within error limits.



SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

Figure S6: Normalised luminescence signal for sample MST 7 4-11 μm quartz, with an equivalent dose of 149 Gy following irradiation with a dose of 2000 Gy.

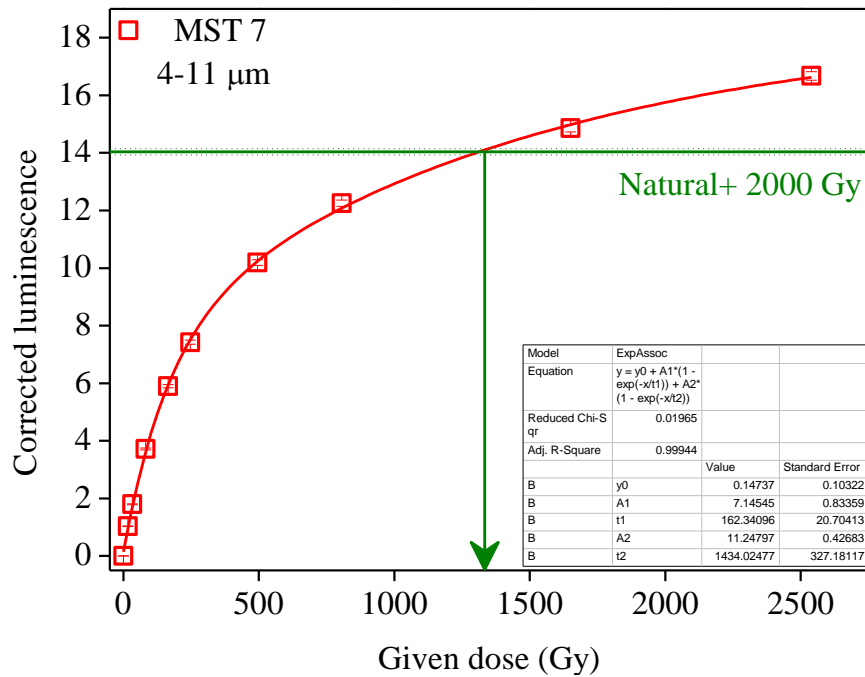


Table S3: Further results of adding a laboratory dose on top of natural doses for fine quartz grains of samples MST7, MST11 and MST 17.

Sample MST 7 4-11 μm De=149 \pm 3 Gy

Given dose (Gy)	MEASURED DOSE	Nr of aliq	Measured/Given dose
“NATURAL”	149 \pm 3 Gy	6	-
NAT + 99 Gy=248Gy	236 \pm 3 Gy	2	0.95 \pm 0.02
	237 \pm 3 Gy		
NAT + 198 Gy=347Gy	348 \pm 5 Gy	2	0.99 \pm 0.02
	337 \pm 5 Gy		
NAT + 397 Gy=546Gy	491 \pm 8 Gy	2	0.89 \pm 0.02
	485 \pm 10 Gy		
NAT + 595 Gy=744Gy	699 \pm 16 Gy	2	0.95 \pm 0.02
	718 \pm 15 Gy		
NAT + 977 Gy=1126 Gy	1088 \pm 25 Gy	3	0.96 \pm 0.03
	1028 \pm 17 Gy		
	149 \pm 3 Gy		
NAT + 2000 Gy=2149 Gy	1373 \pm 24 Gy	1	0.64 \pm 0.01
NAT + 4508 Gy=4657 Gy	1989 \pm 50 Gy	1	0.43 \pm 0.01
NAT + 7938 Gy=8087 Gy	2930 \pm 83 Gy	1	0.36 \pm 0.01

Sample MST 11 μm De=173 \pm 4 Gy

Given dose (Gy)	MEASURED DOSE	Nr of aliq	Measured/Given dose
“NATURAL”	173 Gy	10	-
NAT + 175 Gy=348 Gy	341 \pm 11 Gy	3	0.98 \pm 0.04

Sample MST 17 μm De=264 \pm 9 Gy

Given dose (Gy)	MEASURED DOSE	Nr of aliq	Measured/Given dose
“NATURAL”	264 \pm 9 Gy	7	-
NAT + 705 Gy=969 Gy	924 \pm 51 Gy	1	0.95 \pm 0.06

SUPPLEMENTARY- Fundamental investigations of natural and laboratory generated SAR dose response curves for quartz OSL in the high dose range

Figure S7: Normalised luminescence signal for sample MST 7 63-90 µm quartz, with an equivalent dose of 170 Gy following irradiation with a dose of 2000 Gy.

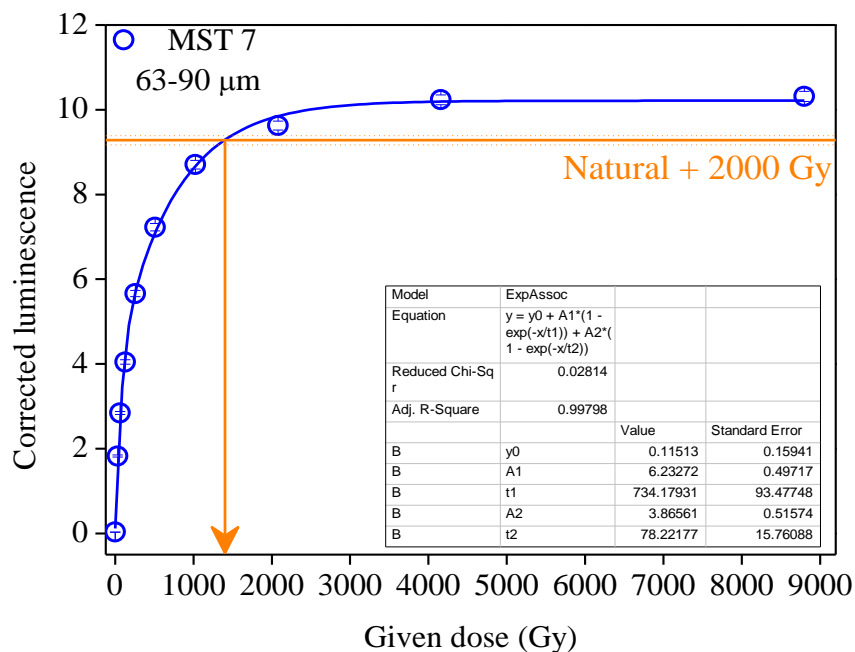


Table S4: Further results of adding a laboratory dose on top of natural doses for coarse quartz grains of sample MST7.

Sample MST 7 63-90 µm De=170± 8Gy n=9

Given dose (Gy)	MEASURED DOSE	Nr of aliq	Measured/ Given dose
“NATURAL”	170 ± 8 Gy	8	-
NAT + 5000 Gy	1121 Gy	1	0.22
NAT + 2000 Gy	1197 Gy	1	0.55
NAT + 800 Gy	830 Gy	1	0.86
NAT +200 Gy	330 Gy	1	0.89
NAT +104 Gy	258 ± 12 Gy	5	0.94±0.06