Publication III


© 2010 Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)

Reproduced by permission of The Royal Society of Chemistry.
Rare earth scandate thin films by atomic layer deposition: effect of the rare earth cation size

Pia Myllymäki, Martin Roeckerath, Joao Marcelo Lopes, Jürgen Schubert, Kenichiro Mizohata, Matti Putkonen and Lauri Niinistö

Received 9th February 2010, Accepted 24th March 2010

A series of amorphous REScO₃ films was deposited by atomic layer deposition (ALD) using rare earth (RE) β-diketonate precursors RE(thd)₃ (thd = 2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptanedionato) together with ozone in an attempt to study the effect of the RE³⁺ cation size on various film properties. A clear correlation between the deposition rate and the RE³⁺ cation radius was established. REScO₃ films with a metal ratio RE : Sc close to the stoichiometric one, viz. RE : Sc = 1, and a small excess of oxygen were realized by adjusting the metal precursor pulsing ratio. Small amount of carbon was found as impurity in all the films, concentrations varying from 1–3 at% (RE) realized by adjusting the metal precursor pulsing ratio. Small amount of carbon was found as impurity in all the films, concentrations varying from 1–3 at% (RE)

The REScO₃ films were found to crystallize either as an orthorhombic perovskite phase or as a solid solution having the cubic C-type structure. Depending on the size difference between scandium and the other RE in structure, ternary REScO₃ films can adopt either an orthorhombic perovskite structure or form a very interesting group of elements with many desirable properties. Due to the gradual reduction in the cation size within the lanthanoid series, i.e. the lanthanoid contraction, many properties also periodically change within the group. Binary RE sesquioxides RE₂O₃ can adopt different structures depending on the temperature and the RE³⁺ cation size, the hexagonal A-type and the cubic C-type being the most common at low and moderately elevated temperatures. Larger RE elements prefer the A-form, whereas the smaller RE elements prefer the cubic C-type similar to the cubic bixbyte structure. Yttrium being similar in size with erbium and holmium, and scandium being clearly the smallest of the group, they both prefer the C-type structure. Depending on the size difference between Sc and the other RE in structure, ternary REScO₃ films can adopt either an orthorhombic perovskite structure or form a solid solution having the cubic C-type structure. In the bulk form, ternary REScO₃ phases with the perovskite structure have been synthesized at ambient pressure when RE = La, Pr, Nd, Sm, Eu, Gd, Tb, Dy and Ho.

The rare earth elements (i.e. lanthanoids Ln, yttrium and scandium) form a very interesting group of elements with many similar properties. Due to the gradual reduction in the cation size within the lanthanoid series, i.e. the lanthanoid contraction, many properties also periodically change within the group. Binary RE sesquioxides RE₂O₃ can adopt different structures depending on the temperature and the RE³⁺ cation size, the hexagonal A-type and the cubic C-type being the most common at low and moderately elevated temperatures. Larger RE elements prefer the A-form, whereas the smaller RE elements prefer the cubic C-type similar to the cubic bixbyte structure. Yttrium being similar in size with erbium and holmium, and scandium being clearly the smallest of the group, they both prefer the C-type structure. Depending on the size difference between Sc and the other RE in structure, ternary REScO₃ films can adopt either an orthorhombic perovskite structure or form a solid solution having the cubic C-type structure. In the bulk form, ternary REScO₃ phases with the perovskite structure have been synthesized at ambient pressure when RE = La, Pr, Nd, Sm, Eu, Gd, Tb, Dy and Ho. Heavier lanthanoids (Er–Lu) and Y do not form perovskites under ambient conditions, but high-pressure syntheses of YScO₃, HoScO₃, ErScO₃ and TmScO₃ have been reported.

Compared to bulk form, materials may behave very differently as thin films, where the deposition method as well as the substrate has an effect on many of the thin film properties. Low-energy interfaces can facilitate the formation of otherwise unstable compounds or structures. Crystallization behavior of REScO₃ thin films deposited by pulsed laser deposition (PLD) on LaAlO₃ substrates has been recently studied and a correlation between the atomic number and the crystallization temperature has been

Introduction

Continued downscaling of metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistors (MOSFETs) has led to a search for new materials to replace SiO₂ as gate insulator. Until recently, the Si–SiO₂ system has been an ideal system from electrical, material and processing point of view. This presents many challenges for the new candidates. In addition to the electrical properties (high dielectric constant, large band gap and offset to silicon, low leakage current) new candidates must fulfill many material and processing requirements, including high interface quality, low density of interface and bulk states, chemical stability with respect to both silicon and the metal gate, as well as compatibility with the CMOS process. Either amorphous or high quality single crystal structure is required to minimize the leakage current or diffusion paths.

Due to their many desirable properties (e.g. high dielectric constant, high crystallization temperature, large band gap and offset to silicon), rare earth scandate (REScO₃) thin films have gained considerable interest as possible high-k gate insulators. Until recently, the Si–SiO₂ system has been an ideal system from electrical, material and processing point of view. This presents many challenges for the new candidates. In addition to the electrical properties (high dielectric constant, large band gap and offset to silicon, low leakage current) new candidates must fulfill many material and processing requirements, including high interface quality, low density of interface and bulk states, chemical stability with respect to both silicon and the metal gate, as well as compatibility with the CMOS process. Either amorphous or high quality single crystal structure is required to minimize the leakage current or diffusion paths.

The royal society of Chemistry 2010

Laboratory of Inorganic Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, Aalto University School of Science and Technology, FI-00076 Aalto, Finland. E-mail: pia.myllymaki@alke.fi

Institute of Bio and Nanosystems, JARA-Fundamentals of Future Information Technologies, Research Centre Jülich, D-52425 Jülich, Germany

Division of Materials Physics, Department of Physics, University of Helsinki, FI-00014, Finland

Beneq Oy, P.O. Box 262, FI-01511 Vantaa, Finland

This journal is © The Royal Society of Chemistry 2010

J. Mater. Chem., 2010, 20, 4207–4212 | 4207
found.\textsuperscript{14} REScO\textsubscript{3} perovskite phase was detected when RE = La–Ho, but TmScO\textsubscript{3}, YbScO\textsubscript{3} and LuScO\textsubscript{3} did not form the perovskite phase in the temperature range studied (800 °C and below). With a suitable substrate material, even the smallest of the lanthanoid series, viz. Lu has been reported to form a perovskite phase when deposited onto NdGaO\textsubscript{3}(110) and DyScO\textsubscript{3}(110) substrates.\textsuperscript{45}

In this paper, we have attempted to explore how the reduction in the cation size affects some properties of the ALD-deposited rare earth scandate thin films. To investigate this, we have chosen to study the LaScO\textsubscript{3}, DyScO\textsubscript{3}, ErScO\textsubscript{3} and LuScO\textsubscript{3} thin films. This series includes the largest (La) and the smallest (Lu) element in the group. Especially the region, where the change in crystal structure from perovskite to solid solution is to be expected, was investigated in more detail. Moreover, results from previously published processes of YScO\textsubscript{3}\textsuperscript{16} and GdScO\textsubscript{3}\textsuperscript{8} thin films were included for comparison. β-Diketonate type RE(thd)\textsubscript{3} (thd = 2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-3,5-heptanedionato) metal precursors were used for two main reasons. Firstly, they can easily be synthesized for all the RE elements covered in this study and besides ALD processes of these rare earth oxides have been well documented using thd-precursors.\textsuperscript{45} Secondly, by using these precursors the depositions could be carried out at the same temperature (300 °C). Furthermore, we have earlier demonstrated in our study of YScO\textsubscript{3} films that some properties, e.g. crystallization behavior and electrical properties, are affected by the choice of precursors,\textsuperscript{46} which is another reason to use the same type of metal precursors for all the depositions.

**Experimental**

**Film deposition**

REScO\textsubscript{3} thin films were deposited in a hot-wall flow-type ALD F-120 reactor manufactured by ASM Microchemistry. RE(thd)\textsubscript{3} precursors were synthesized by the method described by Eisen-traut and Sievers\textsuperscript{18} and subsequently purified by sublimation. In the ALD reactor, metal precursors were sublimed from open glass crucibles at the sublimation temperatures listed in Table 1. Sublimation temperature for Sc(thd)\textsubscript{3} was 115–118 °C. Metal precursor pulse and purge lengths were 1.0 s and 1.5 s, respectively. Oxygen produced from 99.999% O\textsubscript{2} in Fischer Model 502 ozone generator was used as the oxygen source. Ozone pulse and purge lengths were 1.5 s and 2.0 s, respectively. Nitrogen (99.999%+) was used as both the carrier and purge gas and was obtained from air using a Nitrox UHPN 3000-1 nitrogen generator. The deposition temperature was 300 °C and the pressure in the reactor during the depositions was 2–3 mbar. Films were deposited onto two 5 × 5 cm p-type Si(100) substrates (Okmetic Ltd, Vantaa, Finland). Glass substrates of similar size were used on the backside to prevent film growth on the back of silicon. Silicon substrates were mostly used as received, but substrates for the samples intended for electrical characterization were dipped prior to the depositions into 2% HF solution to remove the native oxide layer.

The metal precursor pulsing ratio RE : Sc and the number of deposition cycles were varied to afford films with the desired composition and thickness, respectively. During the optimization of the deposition parameters, the metal ratio RE : Sc was measured by X-ray fluorescence (XRF, Philips PW 1480 WDS spectrometer) using Rh excitation. The data were analyzed with the UniQuant 4.34 program (Omega Data Systems, Netherlands), which is based on fundamental parameters and experimentally determined instrumental sensitivity factors.\textsuperscript{19,20} When a metal ratio close to the stoichiometric one, viz. RE : Sc = 1, was observed, samples of different thicknesses from 5 nm to ca. 100 nm were deposited. The growth rates for films with thickness >50 nm were calculated from thickness data determined by an optical fitting method described by Yilammi and Ranta-aho.\textsuperscript{21} In this method, theoretical spectra were fitted to reflectance spectra (190–1100 nm) measured in a Hitachi U-2000 double beam spectrophotometer. The film thickness for thinner films (from 5 nm to 20 nm) was determined by XRR at an angle of incidence of 1° to 5°. Optimized precursor pulsing ratios and deposition rates for the nearly stoichiometric films are presented in Table 1.

**Characterization**

The RE : Sc metal ratio was determined by Rutherford backscattering spectrometry (RBS) with He\textsuperscript{+} ions at an energy of 1.4 MeV. The amount of light elements and the metal to oxygen ratio M : O were determined by time-of-flight elastic recoil detection analysis (TOF-ERDA)\textsuperscript{22} at the Acceleration Laboratory of the University of Helsinki. A beam of 8Br\textsuperscript{+} ions at 48 MeV was obtained from a 5 MV tandem accelerator EGP-10-II. The speciation of carbon impurities was investigated by Fourier transform infrared (FT-IR) spectroscopy in a Nicolet Magna-750 infrared spectrometer. Selected samples were analyzed before and after thermal annealing. The crystal structure of the films was determined before and after thermal annealing by X-ray diffraction (XRD) using Cu K\textsubscript{α} radiation (Philips MPD 1880). Selected samples were also analyzed by GIXRD (Panalytical X'Pert Pro MDP diffractometer). Thermal annealings for 10 min were carried out in a PEA 601 (ATV Technologie GmbH) rapid thermal annealing oven under flowing nitrogen. Annealing temperatures varied between 500 °C and 1000 °C.

For the electrical characterization, capacitor stacks were prepared. The top contacts were realized by depositing platinum using electron beam evaporation through a shadow mask. The pads were 65 by 65 μm\textsuperscript{2} large and approximately 70 nm thick. The deposition was performed at a pressure of 3–6 × 10\textsuperscript{4} mbar with a deposition rate of 1.3 Å s\textsuperscript{-1}. Prior to the deposition, the samples were heated to 200 °C and kept there for 10 min in order to remove the adsorbed water. For the backside contact, 200 nm of Al were deposited under the same pressure and with a rate of 8 Å s\textsuperscript{-1}. A forming gas annealing (90% N\textsubscript{2}/10% H\textsubscript{2}) was performed.
performed at 400 °C for 10 min to reduce interface states between the high-k film and the silicon substrate and to improve the backside contact. The electrical characterization of the capacitor stacks was performed on a measuring stage with precisely movable measuring tips. C–I–V curves were recorded with an impedance analyzer (HP 4192A) at a frequency of 100 kHz and a hold time of 3 s per point. I–V curves were recorded with a semiconductor parameter analyzer (HP 4155B) using a hold time of 30 s at each measuring point.

Results and discussion

Film deposition

Table 1 summarizes the REScO₃ thin film growth rates and metal precursor pulsing ratios used to achieve the stoichiometric metal ratio RE : Sc ≈ 1. As expected, the growth rates of the REScO₃ thin films increase as the RE³⁺ cation radius increases. The same trend has been reported for the binary RE₂O₃ thin films. The film thickness was linearly dependent on the number of the deposition cycles and the growth rates for the thicker and the thinner films were same within experimental error which is typical for an ALD process.

Film composition

According to RBS, all films had a metal ratio close to the stoichiometric one, viz. RE : Sc = 1, in particular for lighter REs, as can be seen in Table 2. Based on preliminary XRF results, a small excess of Sc was needed to deposit stoichiometric films except for ErScO₃ and LuScO₃. In these cases, it was sufficient that an equal amount of RE and Sc or even a slight excess of RE was pulsed into the film which resulted in slightly RE rich films. Table 2 also presents the metal to oxygen ratio and concentration of light elements in the films as determined by TOF-ERDA.

Carbon is a common impurity in ALD-deposited thin films when carbon-containing precursors are used. As can be seen in Table 2, films with larger REs have more carbon (~3 to 1 at%) than films with smaller REs (≤0.5 at%). It has been reported earlier that La₂O₃ films deposited by ALD using the same thd-precursor as here together with ozone contain relatively high amounts of carbon (8–10 at% at the deposition temperature range 300–325 °C). Incorporation of another metal into the La₂O₃ film considerably reduces the presence of carbon. A similar ALD process as here to deposit LaAlO₃ thin films using β-diketonate precursors resulted in films with 2.4 at% of carbon at the deposition temperature of 325 °C and only 0.8 at% at the deposition temperature of 400 °C. Binary oxide films of smaller REs, viz. Y₂O₃ and Sc₂O₃, contained only a very small or negligible amount of carbon (1.0–1.4 at% or <0.1 at% at the deposition temperature 350 °C, respectively). The amount of carbon found here is in good accordance with these earlier findings. There is also some hydrogen and fluorine in the films. The level of hydrogen (1–2 at%) found in the films is approximately the same as was found previously in binary RE₂O₃ films deposited by the thd-process. A small fluorine impurity is common when ozone is used in our reactor and assumed to originate from the vacuum grease or the Teflon gaskets used in the reactor. Therefore it could probably be eliminated by different reactor design and choice of materials.

The type of carbon impurities was studied in more detail by FT-IR spectroscopy. A typical doublet at 1500 to 1400 cm⁻¹ (shown in Fig. 1a) and a singlet at ~850 cm⁻¹, resulting from the unidentate carbonate group, could be identified especially in the case of larger REs. This is to be expected when a strong

![Fig. 1](image-url) (a) FT-IR spectra of as-deposited LaScO₃, GdScO₃, ErScO₃ and LuScO₃ films showing typical doublet band of carbonate group. (b) The effect of annealing on amount of carbonate in LaScO₃ films as shown by the decrease of the doublet intensity.

Table 2 Film compositions according to RBS and TOF-ERDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Composition</th>
<th>Pulsing ratio</th>
<th>Measured RE : Sc</th>
<th>M : O ratio</th>
<th>C (at%)</th>
<th>H/at%</th>
<th>F/at%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LaScO₃</td>
<td>5 : 6</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>2.7 ± 0.2</td>
<td>1.8 ± 0.1</td>
<td>2.0 ± 0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GdScO₃</td>
<td>10 : 11</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.1</td>
<td>1.9 ± 0.1</td>
<td>2.9 ± 0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DyScO₃</td>
<td>5 : 6</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.3</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.2</td>
<td>0.7 ± 0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ErScO₃</td>
<td>1 : 1</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.5 ± 0.1</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.2</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LuScO₃</td>
<td>6 : 5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.4 ± 0.1</td>
<td>1.5 ± 0.1</td>
<td>2.8 ± 0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from a different batch, which may have been of lower quality analyzed by TOF-ERDA was deposited onto a silicon substrate depicted as a function of the RE\textsuperscript{3+} cation radius, showing a clear barely noticeable (Fig. 1b). In Fig. 2 the normalized peak area is radius indicating a clear trend in the amount of carbonate found in the doublet, and after annealing at 1000°C. However, this does not explain why the amount of TOF-ERDA. However, this does not explain why the amount of oxygen in the REScO\textsubscript{3} film, where the carbon content is very small, there still is a considerable amount of excess oxygen. One explanation for the observed high oxygen content in all the films could be the fact that the interfacial SiO\textsubscript{2} layer is very difficult to distinguish by TOF-ERDA and, therefore, the actual amount of oxygen in the REScO\textsubscript{3} film could well be slightly lower than that detected by TOF-ERDA. However, this does not explain why the amount of oxygen in the ErScO\textsubscript{3} film is so much higher than expected. Another possible explanation could be the fact that the ErScO\textsubscript{3} sample analyzed by TOF-ERDA was deposited onto a silicon substrate from a different batch, which may have been of lower quality having a thicker native SiO\textsubscript{2} layer at the surface. A more detailed analysis is obviously needed to fully explain this phenomenon.

According to TOF-ERDA, all the films contained some excess oxygen. This can be partly explained by the presence of carbonate (especially in the case of LaScO\textsubscript{3}), but for the ErScO\textsubscript{3} film, where the carbon content is very small, there still is a considerable amount of excess oxygen. One explanation for the observed high oxygen content in all the films could be the fact that the interface SiO\textsubscript{2} layer is very difficult to distinguish by TOF-ERDA and, therefore, the actual amount of oxygen in the REScO\textsubscript{3} film could well be slightly lower than that detected by TOF-ERDA. However, this does not explain why the amount of oxygen in the ErScO\textsubscript{3} film is so much higher than expected. Another possible explanation could be the fact that the ErScO\textsubscript{3} sample analyzed by TOF-ERDA was deposited onto a silicon substrate from a different batch, which may have been of lower quality having a thicker native SiO\textsubscript{2} layer at the surface. A more detailed analysis is obviously needed to fully explain this phenomenon.

Crystallization behavior

An amorphous structure is ideal for a gate dielectric film, since there are no dislocations nor grain boundaries that can act as possible pathways for leakage current or diffusion. During the CMOS manufacturing process high temperatures are used and therefore high crystallization temperature is important for the gate insulator material to stay amorphous.

According to the XRD data, all the REScO\textsubscript{3} thin films were amorphous after the deposition except for LuScO\textsubscript{3}, which showed weak diffraction peaks of the cubic C-type structure even before the thermal annealing. After thermal annealing, all films eventually started to crystallize and form polycrystalline structures. First signs of crystallinity were detected at 600°C (ErScO\textsubscript{3}), 800°C (LaScO\textsubscript{3}) and 900°C (DyScO\textsubscript{3}). According to our earlier studies, YScO\textsubscript{3} and GdScO\textsubscript{3} start to crystallize at 1000°C and 900°C, respectively. Diffraction patterns of annealed LaScO\textsubscript{3}, DyScO\textsubscript{3} and LuScO\textsubscript{3} measured at a grazing incidence mode are shown in Fig. 3. Larger RES (La–Gd) formed the orthorhombic perovskite phase as expected while smaller ones preferred the cubic C-type solid solution. DyScO\textsubscript{3} showed an interesting behavior: after annealing at 900°C only peaks of the C-type solid solution were clearly visible but after annealing at 1000°C also peaks of the perovskite phase became visible from the background. In earlier studies, DyScO\textsubscript{3} films are reported to crystallize as hexagonal Dy\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3}, as or perovskite phase DyScO\textsubscript{3}, depending mainly on the substrate material. A bulk study on high pressure synthesis of DyScO\textsubscript{3} revealed that both C-type solid solution and perovskite phase had formed, but after prolonged annealing at high pressure only the perovskite phase was detected. However, some recent publications have given new information concerning the behavior of the silicon/REScO\textsubscript{3} interface. It has been shown that MOCVD-deposited DyScO\textsubscript{3} films react with the underlying SiO\textsubscript{2} layer at temperatures ~800°C and thereupon an amorphous silicate layer is formed. The same phenomenon was also detected with LaScO\textsubscript{3} films deposited by molecular beam deposition (MBD). The extent of Si diffusion seems to depend on many factors, e.g. annealing temperature, atmosphere and the quality of the SiO\textsubscript{2} layer between the silicon substrate and the REScO\textsubscript{3} film. Also the thickness of the original REScO\textsubscript{3} layer plays a significant role. At

![Graphical representation of normalized carbonate doublet peak areas versus RE\textsuperscript{3+} cation radius indicating a clear trend in the amount of carbonate found in REScO\textsubscript{3} films.]

![GIXRD patterns of LaScO\textsubscript{3} (after annealing at 800°C), DyScO\textsubscript{3} (1000°C) and LuScO\textsubscript{3} (600°C). LaScO\textsubscript{3} crystal structure can be identified as orthorhombic perovskite type (ICDD reference code 01-074-4348) and LuScO\textsubscript{3} as cubic C-type (reference code 04-002-0541). Most intense peaks of both phases (labeled “c” for cubic C-type and “p” for perovskite) can be identified in diffraction patterns of DyScO\textsubscript{3} (reference code 00-027-0204 for perovskite).]
1000 °C, a thin (~4 nm) DyScO3 film was completely transformed into amorphous Dy2ScSi2O7 layer,26 but in the case of an originally thicker (~12 nm) DyScO3 film, a polycrystalline DyScO3 layer was formed on top of an amorphous silicon rich layer.26 The size of the crystals was very small, which explains why they were not detected by X-ray diffraction methods. Due to the similarities within the lanthanoid group, it is likely that other REScO3 films behave similarly as well. When the reaction between binary RE2O3 films and silicon substrates was investigated after thermal annealing, it was concluded that the larger the ionic radius of the RE3+ is, the more easily Si diffuses into the RE2O3 film.22 In the scope of this paper, however, we did not investigate the possible reactions between the REScO3 films and the substrate in more detail, but it is quite possible that similar reactions occur also with ALD-deposited REScO3 films.

Fig. 4 summarizes the crystallization behavior of the REScO3 films studied. Crystallization temperatures are relatively high for the perovskite films obtained close to the phase transition zone (800–1000 °C), but they decrease rapidly when the RE3+ cation size becomes smaller and the cubic solid solution becomes more favorable.

**Electrical properties**

REScO3 films with thicknesses varying from 5 to 20 nm (and also 55 nm for DyScO3) were subjected to electrical characterization. C–V curves were smooth without any humps or irregularities and almost free of hysteresis (typically <35 mV) indicating a low density of oxide charges in the films. Only in the case of the thinnest (5 nm and 10 nm) LaScO3 films the hysteresis was slightly larger, viz. in the range of 55–90 mV. Flat band voltages were typically between 0.05 V and 0.2 V, except for ErScO3 where a larger variation from −0.03 mV to 0.4 mV was observed. C–V curves for DyScO3 are shown in Fig. 5.

CETs (capacitance equivalent thicknesses) calculated from capacitances taken at a gate voltage of −2 V were plotted versus the physical film thicknesses resulting in straight lines where the dielectric constants could be extracted from the slopes. The highest dielectric constant was found for DyScO3 (~24), which is slightly higher than values found in films deposited with PLD2 or MOCVD3 (~22). For LaScO3, κ values from 16 to 22 have been reported earlier,2,3,31 and in this case κ = 16 was extracted from the CET plot. The dielectric constant for LuScO3 deviates most from the rest of the series being only ~11, which is close to what has been reported for binary RE2O3 oxides.17

Leakage current densities for all films (Table 3) were small. Again results for LuScO3 were somewhat surprising. Although, as revealed by XRD, LuScO3 films (~80 to 100 nm) had partly crystallized during the deposition, which in many cases leads to higher leakage current densities, the measured leakage current density of 5 nm LuScO3 film was still the lowest in the series. However, it is possible that the very thin sample analyzed for leakage current may have been amorphous, if the crystallization during the deposition only takes place when the film thickness reaches a certain critical value.

**Conclusions**

Ternary REScO3 thin films were deposited by ALD using β-diketone type precursors and ozone. At 300 °C the film growth rate increased as the RE3+ cation radius increased. Also the amount of carbon impurities found in the films by TOF-ERDA and FT-IR spectroscopy increased with the increasing RE3+ cation radius and the basicity of the cation.
The crystallization behavior of the REScO₃ films was studied after thermal annealings by XRD and, depending on the RE, either perovskite phase or a cubic solid solution of binary oxides was formed. DyScO₃ first crystallized as cubic solid solution, but after annealing at 1000 °C also the perovskite phase was detected. The crystallization temperature of perovskite phases near the phase transition zone was high (800–1000 °C) but decreased rapidly when the RE⁺⁺ cation radius decreased and the solid solution became more favorable. LuScO₃ films showed a weakly crystallline structure even as deposited, before additional thermal annealing. Based on this study and several other recent publications it is obvious that several factors influence the crystallization behavior of REScO₃ thin films. All REScO₃ films gave smooth and clean $C-V$ curves and had low leakage current densities, indicating their potential as alternative high-$\kappa$ dielectric materials for MOSFETs. Highest dielectric constant was found for DyScO₃ (~24).

References