# Unit B – Practical 8

# Experimental determination of internal resistance of a cell

# Safety

There are no safety issues concerning this experiment.

# Apparatus and materials

- 1.5 V cell
- 5 Ω resistor
- variable resistor
- switch
- ammeter and voltmeter (or two digital multimeters)
- connecting wires

### Introduction

When a power source, like a cell, is not ideal it has an internal resistance. Some of the energy provided in the circuit is dissipated in the internal resistance. In this experiment you will determine the internal resistance and electromotive force (emf) of a cell.

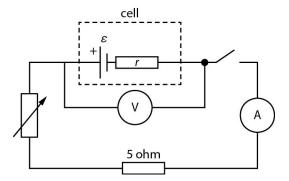
When a cell of emf  $\varepsilon$  and internal resistance *r* is connected to a circuit of total resistance *R* then:

$$\varepsilon = IR + Ir$$
 or  $IR = \varepsilon - Ir$ 

where / is the current in the circuit.

But the terminal potential difference (pd) across the cell  $V_t$  is equal to IR and therefore:

$$V_{\rm t} = E - Ir$$



### Procedure

- 1 Construct the circuit as shown in the diagram.
- 2 If you are using multimeters, set one in the V DC range (voltmeter) and one in the A DC range (ammeter).
- 3 Set the variable resistor at a middle setting, close the switch and record the measurements of  $V_t$  and I in a suitable table. Keep the switch closed for the minimum amount of time required to take the measurements.

- 4 Repeat the measurement four more times and calculate the average values of V<sub>t</sub> and *I*. Wait 10-20 seconds between measurements.
- 5 Repeat steps **3–4** for four more settings of the variable resistor.
- **6** Plot a suitable graph to determine the values of emf  $\varepsilon$  and internal resistance *r* of the cell (see question **1**).
- 7 Determine the uncertainties of these values.

#### Questions

- 1 What measurements should go on the *y* and *x*-axis? What is the value of the gradient equal to? What is the value of the *y*-intercept equal to?
- 2 If you connected a second cell of the same emf and internal resistance in series with the first one, how would this alter your measurements?