

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Background	7
2.1	Magnons in localized moment systems	7
2.1.1	The quasi-classical counterpart of a magnon	7
2.1.2	A magnon in quantum mechanics	10
2.1.3	Magnons in thin ferromagnetic films	12
2.2	Stoner excitations in itinerant-electron ferromagnets	16
2.3	Electron scattering	18
2.3.1	Low-energy inelastic electron scattering	18
2.3.2	Spin-dependent effects in elastic electron scattering	19
3	Experimental techniques	23
3.1	Spin-polarized electron energy loss spectroscopy	23
3.1.1	Spin polarized inelastic electron scattering	23
3.1.2	Principles of SPEELS	25
3.2	The experimental setup	27
3.2.1	The ultra high vacuum system	27
3.2.2	SPEEL-spectrometer	28
3.2.3	The GaAs-photocathode	30
4	Results	33
4.1	The Co/Ir(001) system	33
4.1.1	Sample preparation and characterization	33
4.1.2	MOKE measurements	36
4.1.3	SPEELS measurements	40
4.2	The Co/Cu(001) system	49
4.2.1	SPEELS measurements	49
4.3	The Co/Pt(111) system	53
4.3.1	Sample preparation and characterization	53
4.3.2	MOKE measurements	54

4.3.3	SPEELS measurements	55
5	Discussion	63
5.1	Film structure and substrate dependence	63
5.1.1	“Acoustic” magnons in Co and Fe films	63
5.1.2	Confined magnon modes in the 3 ML Co films	67
5.2	Confined magnon modes in the Heisenberg model	71
5.3	Layer-dependent exchange parameters	76
5.4	Impact of the electronic structure on the magnons	85
5.5	The magnon lifetime	89
5.5.1	“Acoustic” magnons in Co and Fe films	89
5.5.2	Confined magnon modes	92
6	Conclusions and outlook	95
A	Description of spin-polarized electrons	99