On solving norm equations in global function fields

István Gaál and Michael E. Pohst

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Abstract. The potential of solving norm equations is crucial for a variety of applications of algebraic number theory, especially in cryptography. In this article we develop general effective methods for that task in global function fields for the first time.

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1 Introduction

Let \( E/F \) be a (finite) extension of fields of degree \( d \). Let \( \omega_1, \ldots, \omega_d \) be a fixed \( F \)-basis of \( E \). Then each element \( x \in E \) has a presentation

\[
x(\omega_1, \ldots, \omega_d) = (\omega_1, \ldots, \omega_d) M_x
\]

with a matrix \( M_x \in F^{d \times d} \). The determinant \( \det(M_x) \) is called the norm \( N(x) \) of the element \( x \in E \) with respect to \( F \). Since \( N(x) \) is – up to sign – the constant term in the characteristic polynomial of \( x \) it is independent of the choice of the basis.

The calculation of elements of prescribed norm is an important task in algebraic number theory.

From now on, we consider the situation in which the base field \( F \) is either the field of rationals \( \mathbb{Q} \) or a rational function field \( k(t) \) over a finite field \( k = \mathbb{F}_q \) of characteristic \( p \), say with \( q = p^i \). Let \( o_F \) be the ring of integers of \( F \), i.e. \( \mathbb{Z} \) or \( k[t] \), respectively.

The extension \( E \) of \( F \) is assumed to be separably generated by an element \( y \) with minimal polynomial \( m_y(T) \in o_F[T] \). Then there are \( d \) different embeddings of \( E \) into the algebraic closure \( \overline{F} \), say \( \sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_d \). It can be easily shown that

\[
N(x) = \prod_{j=1}^{d} \sigma_j(x) \quad \forall x \in E.
\]

In the context of global fields, norm equations are in general discussed as follows. We choose \( 2 \leq m \leq d \) \( F \)-linearly independent elements \( \gamma_1, \ldots, \gamma_m \) of \( E \), usually in \( o_E \), the integral closure of \( o_F \) in \( E \).

Then \( M = \oplus_{i=1}^{m} o_F \gamma_i \) is a free \( o_F \)-module in \( E \). We are going to look for solutions of

\[
N(x) = c \quad (x \in M)
\]

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for given $c$ of $\mathcal{O}_F$. Writing $x = x_1\gamma_1 + \cdots + x_m\gamma_m$ with $x_i \in \mathcal{O}_F$, the norm $N(x)$ becomes a form in the $x_i$ with coefficients in $F$.

For two special values of $m$ the computation of solutions is quite well understood. The first one is $m = d$ and the module $M$ is an order of $E$. This means that the unit group $U_M$ of $M$ operates on $M$. If there is a solution of $N(x) = c$ then also $xc$ is one for any $c \in U_M$ of norm 1.

Multiplying $x$ with a suitable $c$, we can impose conditions on the conjugates $\sigma_j(x)$. All elements of $M$ satisfying those conditions can then be calculated by reduction theory. These ideas are well known for algebraic number fields, see [3], [11], for example. For global function fields the reduction procedure is more subtle because there does not exist an analogue of the LLL-algorithm. We discuss that reduction procedure in Section 3.

We note that both methods require the computation of a set of generators of $U_E$, the unit group of $\mathcal{O}_E$. The latter is possible with KANT or Magma, for example. (In the number field case also by Pari, of course.)

The second well understood case is $m = 2$ and $d > 2$. In this situation $N(x)$ becomes a binary form and $N(x) = c$ a so-called Thue-equation. It can be reduced to a unit equation in two unknowns as follows. For simplicity’s sake we assume $\gamma_1 = 1, \gamma_2 = \alpha$, hence $x = x_1 + x_2\alpha$. Then we have Siegel’s identity:

$$(\sigma_i(\alpha) - \sigma_j(\alpha))\sigma_k(x) + (\sigma_j(\alpha) - \sigma_k(\alpha))\sigma_i(x) + (\sigma_k(\alpha) - \sigma_i(\alpha))\sigma_j(x) = 0$$

for any three pairwise different indices $1 \leq i, j, k \leq d$. Dividing by the last summand, we obtain

$$\frac{(\sigma_i(\alpha) - \sigma_j(\alpha))\sigma_k(x)}{(\sigma_i(\alpha) - \sigma_k(\alpha))\sigma_j(x)} + \frac{(\sigma_j(\alpha) - \sigma_k(\alpha))\sigma_i(x)}{(\sigma_i(\alpha) - \sigma_k(\alpha))\sigma_j(x)} = 1.$$ 

The last equation becomes an $S$-unit equation $u_1 + u_2 = 1$ by writing $x = \mu\varepsilon$ with $\varepsilon \in U_E$ and $\mu \in \mathcal{O}_E$ from a finite set of non-associate solutions of $N(\mu) = c$. (Note that $S$-units are defined at the beginning of the next section.)

In the number field case one uses Baker type results on linear forms in logarithms, reduction theory and refined enumeration strategies for computing solutions. The fastest algorithm known is that of Bilu and Hanrot [1]. The function field case is discussed in detail in [5]. We just sketch the method below.

According to our present knowledge the resolution of unit equations in more than two variables is needed for solving norm equations in $2 < m < d$ variables. It is not known how to do this in number fields. Therefore it is somewhat surprising that a resolution is still possible in function fields. In [6] we considered the case $m = 3$ which we now generalize to arbitrary $m$. Also, the case $m = d$ will shortly be treated since we came up with some improvements over the known methods. We conclude with a small illustrative example.

In recent years, the construction of elliptic curves suitable for pairings has attracted increasing interest. The construction of Weil numbers in CM-fields, suitable for pairings, leads to systems of diophantine equations. In a current project we will apply the methods of this paper to obtain solutions in integers as well as polynomials.
2 Global fields: unit equations

Unit equations of type
\[ u_1 + \cdots + u_n = 1, \]
where the \( u_i \) are elements in a unit group of a function field, play an essential role in the theory and in applications of diophantine equations. We introduce several important notations.

Let \( k = \mathbb{F}_q \) be a finite field with \( q = p^\ell \) elements. Let \( E \) be a finite extension of the rational function field \( F = k(t) \) of degree \( d \) and genus \( g \). The integral closure of \( k[t] \) in \( E \) is denoted by \( o_E \). We assume that \( E \) is separably generated over \( k(t) \) by an element \( y \in o_E \) and that \( k \) is the full constant field of \( E \).

Any element \( f \in E \) has a unique presentation
\[ f = \sum_{i=1}^{d} h_i y^{i-1} \quad (h_i \in k(t)). \]

Conjugates of elements (fields) are denoted by upper case indices, i.e. we write \( x^{(j)} \) for \( \sigma_j(x) \) and \( E^{(j)} \) for \( \sigma_j(E) \). Let
\[ A := \begin{pmatrix} (y^{(j)})^{i-1} \end{pmatrix}_{1 \leq i,j \leq d} \in E^{d \times d} \]
have determinant \( D \). Since \( E \) is separably generated we have \( D \neq 0 \).

From the system of linear equations
\[ (f^{(1)}, \ldots, f^{(d)}) = (h_1, \ldots, h_d) A \]
we conclude that the \( h_i \) are rational functions in the \( f^{(j)}, (y^{(j)})^{i-1} \).

The set of all (exponential) valuations of \( E \) is denoted by \( V \), the subset of infinite valuations by \( V_{\infty} \). We write \( \deg v \) for the degree of the divisor belonging to the valuation \( v \in V \). For a non-zero element \( f \in E \) the value of \( f \) at \( v \) is denoted by \( v(f) \).

For integral elements this is the highest power of the divisor belonging to \( v \) that divides the divisor \( (f) \), and this concept is extended to rational elements in the usual way. The normalized valuations \( v_N(f) = v(f) \deg v \) satisfy the product formula:
\[ \sum_{v \in V} v_N(f) = 0 \quad \forall f \in E \setminus \{0\}. \]

The height of a non-zero element \( f \) of \( E \) is defined via
\[ H(f) := \sum_{v \in V} \max \{0, v_N(f)\}. \]

Because of the product formula this is tantamount to
\[ H(f) = -\sum_{v \in V} \min \{0, v_N(f)\} \quad (f \in E). \]
Let $V_0$ be a finite subset of $V$. We then consider the $V_0$-units $\gamma \in E$ with $v(\gamma) = 0$ for all $v \not\in V_0$.

As we saw in the introduction, the resolution of various Diophantine equations, for example, Thue equations, can often be reduced to that of equations of the form

$$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3 = 0,$$

where the $\gamma_i$ are $V_0$-units for a suitable set $V_0$. We excerpt the following crucial lemma from [4].

Lemma 2.1. Let $V_0$ be a finite subset of $V$ and let $\gamma_i \ (1 \leq i \leq 3)$ be $V_0$-units the sum of which equals $0$. Then either $\gamma_1 \gamma_3$ is in $E_p$ or its height is bounded:

$$H\left(\frac{\gamma_1}{\gamma_3}\right) \leq 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0} \deg v.$$

Setting $\Phi = -\gamma_1/\gamma_3$, $\Psi = -\gamma_2/\gamma_3$, we obtain a unit equation in two variables

$$\Phi + \Psi = 1,$$

with $V_0$-units $\Phi, \Psi$. Because of the characteristic $p$ the number of solutions of such a unit equation is in general infinite.

For example, if $V_0$ is just the set of infinite valuations and $\eta, 1 - \eta$ are both units of $o_E \setminus k$, then also $\eta^\kappa, (1 - \eta)^\kappa$ is a solution for every exponent $\kappa = p^\tau$. Hence, there exist solutions of arbitrary large heights in this situation.

The subsequent corollary shows that for any finite subset $V_0$ of $V$ the group of $V_0$-units of $E$ contains only a finite number, say $\sigma$, of $V_0$-units $\eta$ which are not $p^{\tau}$th powers and for which also $1 - \eta$ is a $V_0$-unit. We denote the set of these units by $\{\eta_1, \ldots, \eta_\sigma\}$.

Corollary 2.2. Let $V_0$ be a finite subset of $V$. We assume that a $V_0$-unit $\Phi$ in $E$ is a solution of a unit equation in two variables. If $\Phi$ is not a $p^{\tau}$th power of an element $\eta_i \ (1 \leq i \leq \sigma, \tau \in \mathbb{Z}^{>0})$, then $\Phi$ belongs to a finite subset of $E$ which can be effectively calculated.

For the proof we refer to [7, Page 98, Lemma 11]. The proof starts by assuming that $\Phi$ is not a $p^{\tau}$th power in $K$ and therefore also provides the means to calculate the $\eta_i$. For an example of a Thue equation with infinitely many solutions see [5].

Next we consider unit equations in more than two variables. Again, $V_0$ denotes a finite subset of $V$ containing the infinite valuations. Let $\gamma_i \ (1 \leq i \leq n)$ be $V_0$-units. The equation

$$\gamma_1 + \ldots + \gamma_n = 0 \quad (2.1)$$

is equivalent to the unit equation

$$\left(-\frac{\gamma_1}{\gamma_n}\right) + \ldots + \left(-\frac{\gamma_{n-1}}{\gamma_n}\right) = 1 \quad (2.2)$$

in $n - 1$ variables. We note that we only need to postulate that all fractions in the last equation must be $V_0$-units.
Those unit equations are of importance since several well-known Diophantine equations (e.g. norm form equations) can be reduced to unit equations in more than two variables. From the results in [6] we easily deduce the following theorem.

**Theorem 2.3.** Let $V_0$ be a finite subset of $V$ and let $\gamma_i$ (1 $\leq$ $i \leq$ $n$) be $V_0$-units satisfying (2.1). Assume that no proper subsum of the sum in (2.1) vanishes. Then we can explicitly construct a finite subset $N$ of $V$, such that

$$\frac{\gamma_i}{\gamma_n} = x_{in} \cdot \Phi_i,$$

where $x_{in}$ is a solution of a unit equation

$$x_1 + x_3 + \cdots + x_{n-1, n} = 1$$

with $V_0 \cup N$-units $x_{in}$ ($i = 1, 3, \ldots, n - 1$), and a $V_0 \cup N$-unit $\Phi_i$ satisfying

$$H(\Phi_i) \leq 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0} \deg v. \quad (2.4)$$

Hence, the solution of a unit equation in $n - 1$ $V_0$-units is reduced to determining the solutions of unit equations in $n - 2$ $V_0 \cup N$-units. In [6] only the case $n = 4$ was considered. The generalization to arbitrary $n$ is done here for the first time.

If we replace the $\gamma_i/\gamma_n$ in the original unit equation (2.2) via (2.3), then we get

$$\sum_{i \neq 2} \sum_{i = 1}^{n-1} x_{in} \Phi_i = -1. \quad (2.5)$$

We need to consider several cases. The main ingredient is to deduce solutions of unit equations from those of unit equations in fewer variables. We remark that this discussion does not include the case in which all $x_{in}$, $\Phi_i$ are in $k$ (compare also the premises in Theorem 2.3).

I. If any of the elements $x_{in}$ ($i = 1, 3, \ldots, n - 1$), say $x_{1n}$, is not a $p$th power, then they are obtained from a finite set of solutions of an $S$-unit equation in $n - 2$ variables (compare Theorem 2.3). Also, the $\Phi_1, \ldots, \Phi_{n-1}$ can attain only finitely many values by that theorem. This reduction needs to be carried out until we get unit equations in at most 3 variables, a case which is already treated in [6].

II. If all $x_{in}$ ($i = 1, 3, \ldots, n - 1$) are $p$th powers, then using local derivation at an arbitrary valuation we get from (2.5) equations

$$\sum_{i \neq 2} \sum_{i = 1}^{n-1} x_{in} \Phi_i^{[j]} = 0 \quad (j \in \mathbb{N}), \quad (2.6)$$

where $\Phi_i^{[j]}$ denotes the $j$th derivative of $\Phi_i$. We note that the derivatives of the $x_{in}$ vanish in this case. We need to discuss subcases (A), (B).
(A) If all $\Phi_i$ ($i = 1, 3, \ldots, n - 1$) are $p$th powers (especially, if they all are in $k$), then equation (2.6) is meaningless but both sides of (2.5) are $p$th powers and we can take $p$th roots to make the valuations of the $x_{in}$, $\Phi_i$ smaller. This can be applied repeatedly until we end up in case I.

(B) Without loss of generality, we assume $\Phi_1 \notin k$ with $\Phi_1^{[1]} \neq 0$. Because of our assumption, in this case we have at least one index $\mu > 1$ with $\Phi_1^{[\mu]} \neq 0$. We compute equations (2.6) for $j = 1, 2, \ldots$ and obtain a linear system of equations for the $x$ in $\Phi_i$. If there are $n - 2$ independent equations for the $x$ in $\Phi_i$ then that system has only the trivial solution and there does not exist a solution of (2.5) for this case. Otherwise, those equations can be used for eliminating variables. We end up in case II but with fewer variables.

3 Application to norm form equations

As before, let $E$ be a finite extension field of $F = k(t)$ of degree $d \geq 3$ and denote by $o_E$ the integral closure of $k[t]$ in $E$. Then $o_E$ has an $o_F$-basis (integral basis), say $\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_d$.

3.1 Norms from $o_E$

This subsection improves the results of [10]. In that thesis the reduction theory of W. Schmidt in characteristic 0 was generalized to arbitrary characteristics. However, the case when the infinite prime is wildly ramified remained open. In [8] we also showed how to treat that case. Here, we shortly discuss the whole reduction procedure.

Let $\alpha \in o_E$ be a solution of $N_{E/F}(\alpha) = c$ for $c \in o_F$. Then also $\alpha \epsilon$ is a solution for any unit $\epsilon$ of the unit group $U_F$ with $N_{E/F}(\epsilon) = 1$. We are therefore only interested in non-associate solutions of the original norm equation, i.e. solutions which do not differ by a unit. Scaling such a solution with a power product of the generators of $U_E$ (fundamental units) we obtain a solution in an appropriate finite dimensional $F$-vector space. For this we need a system of fundamental units $\epsilon_1, \ldots, \epsilon_{s-1}$ and a reduced basis for $o_E$, where $s$ denotes the number of infinite primes. A system of fundamental units can be computed with Kash or Magma. The full reduction procedure was originally developed in [8]. We sketch the ideas.

We make use of the fact that the non-zero elements $v$ of $E$ admit series expansions (Puiseux series, respectively, Hamburger–Noether series) of the form

$$
\Sigma(v) := \sum_{i=m}^{\infty} \phi_i t^{-\nu_i}
$$

with rational exponents $\nu_m < \nu_{m+1} < \ldots$ and coefficients $\phi_i \in \mathbb{F}_q$. (We note that this is a simplification, in general the $\phi_i$ may belong to a small finite extension of $\mathbb{F}_q$ of degree $e$, where $e$ is the least common multiple of the ramification indices of the infinite primes in $E$.) We need to assume that $E$ over $F$ is separately generated (which can always be achieved by the choice of $F$). We then have $E = F(y)$ for a suitable
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We consider an element \( y \) whose minimal polynomial in \( o_E[t] \) has \( d \) different zeros. Each zero admits a series expansion so that we obtain a total of \( d \) series expansions corresponding to the conjugates of \( E \) over \( F \). The isomorphic embeddings of \( E \) into the algebraic closure \( \overline{F} \) are denoted by \( \sigma_1(y), \ldots, \sigma_d(y) \), as usual. In each case we obtain an exponential valuation on \( E \) via

\[
\text{ord} : F \to \mathbb{Q} : v \mapsto \begin{cases} 
\nu v & \text{for } v \neq 0, \\
\infty & \text{for } v = 0.
\end{cases}
\]

We denote the exponential valuations belonging to \( \sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_d \) by \( \text{ord}_1, \ldots, \text{ord}_d \), respectively.

Now let \( B = \{ v_1, \ldots, v_d \} \) be a basis of a non-zero ideal \( A \) of \( o_E \). We denote by \( v_j = (v_{ij})_{1 \leq i \leq d} \) the vector whose components \( v_{ij} \) are the \( d \) series expansions \( \sigma_i(v_j) \) \( (1 \leq i \leq d) \). We set

\[
\text{ord}(v_j) := \min \{ \text{ord}_i(v_{ij}) : 1 \leq i \leq d \} =: \nu_j.
\]

For each basis element \( v_j \) we therefore obtain a vector \( \Phi_j = (\phi_{ij})_{1 \leq i \leq d} \) of coefficients of the leading term of the series expansions, i.e. \( \phi_{ij} \) is the coefficient of \( t^{-\nu_j} \) in the expansion \( \sigma_i(v_j) \).

We then set

\[
\text{ord}(A) := \text{ord} \left( \det \left( (v_{ij})_{1 \leq i,j \leq d} \right) \right)
\]

(in the sense of (3.2)) and

\[
\psi(B) := \text{ord}(A) - \sum_{j=1}^{d} \text{ord}(v_j).
\]

The basis \( B \) is called reduced if the non-negative value \( \psi(B) \) vanishes. We have

**Lemma 3.1.** An ideal basis \( B = \{ v_1, \ldots, v_d \} \) of an ideal \( A \) is reduced if and only if for all \( (f_1, \ldots, f_d) \in \mathbb{F}_q[t]^n \),

\[
\text{ord} \left( \sum_{i=1}^{d} f_i v_i \right) = \min_{1 \leq i \leq d} \text{ord}(f_i v_i).
\]

If a basis \( \{ v_1, \ldots, v_d \} \) of an ideal \( A \) is reduced and ordered subject to \( -\text{ord}(v_1) \leq -\text{ord}(v_2) \leq \ldots \leq -\text{ord}(v_d) \), then the values \( -\text{ord}(v_i) \) are the successive minima of the ideal \( A \).

In [8] we developed an algorithm for computing a reduced basis which runs in polynomial time in the input data.

From now on, we stipulate that we know a reduced basis \( \omega_1, \ldots, \omega_d \) of \( o_E \). It is of importance for calculating fundamental units of \( E \) [10] and of elements of bounded maximum norm (see below) which we need for calculating a maximal set of non-associate solutions of \( N_{E/F}(\alpha) = c \) for \( c \in o_F \).

In the following, the places of \( F \) are denoted by lower case boldface letters, those of \( E \) by upper case boldface letters. The infinite place of \( F \) which corresponds to
the degree valuation is written as $p_\infty$. For $P|p$ the integers $e_{P|p}$, $f_{P|p}$ and $\nu_{P|p}$ denote the ramification index, the residue class degree and the local degree, respectively. $N(P)$ is the number of elements in the residue class field of $P$. The exponential valuation belonging to $P$ is denoted by $\nu_P$. For every element $f \in E$ we then set

$$|f|_P := N(P)^{-\nu_P(f)/n_{P|p}}.$$ 

This normalization has the effect that $|\cdot|_P$ is a prolongation of $|\cdot|_p$ and that the product formula is still valid.

**Definition 3.2.** The maximum norm of an element $f \in E$ is defined by

$$\|f\|_\infty := \max_{P|p_\infty} |f|_P.$$ 

We note that according to [10] a reduced basis $\omega_1, \ldots, \omega_d$ of $o_E$ satisfies

$$\|f\|_\infty = \max \{|\lambda_i|_\infty \|\omega_i\|_\infty : 1 \leq i \leq n\}$$

for any $f = \sum_{i=1}^{d} \lambda_i \omega_i \in o_E$. (This is the analogue of the previous lemma.)

We want to compute a full set of non-associate solutions of $N_{E/F}(\alpha) = c$ for $c \in o_F$. For number fields the conjugates $\alpha(j)$ of a solution $\alpha$ of $N_{E/F}(\alpha) = |c|$ satisfy

$$\log \left( \frac{\alpha(j)}{|c|^{1/n}} \right) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} x_i \log |\varepsilon_i(j)| \quad (x_i \in \mathbb{R}, 1 \leq j \leq d)$$

for a full set of fundamental units $\varepsilon_1, \ldots, \varepsilon_r$ of $o_E$. (We note that $r = s - 1$ and that a full set of independent units suffices.) In the function field case we let $P$ be one of the infinite primes of $E$ and obtain for a solution $\alpha$ of $N_{E/F}(\alpha) = |c|$ analogous

$$\nu_P(\alpha) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} x_i \nu_P(\varepsilon_i) + \frac{1}{d} \nu_P(c).$$

We note that the coefficients $x_i$ are independent from the choice of $P|p$. Substituting $\alpha$ by an associate element just changes the coefficients $x_i$ by rational integers. Such a substitution is supposed to yield small bounds $B$ for $\log \left( \frac{\alpha(j)}{|c|^{1/n}} \right)$, respectively for

$$|\alpha|_P = N(P)^{-\nu_P(\alpha)/n_{P|p}}$$

and hence for $\|\alpha\|_\infty$. This amounts to calculate the maximum distance of an element in the fundamental parallelootope of the lattice spanned by the vectors

$$\left( \log |\varepsilon_i(j)| \right)_{1 \leq j \leq d} \quad (i = 1, \ldots, r),$$

respectively

$$\left( \nu_P(\varepsilon_i) \right)_{P|p} \quad (i = 1, \ldots, r),$$

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to any lattice point. That task does not cause problems in the dimensions $r$ for which independent (fundamental) units can be presently calculated. Knowing $B$ the calculation of the corresponding solutions $\alpha$ of the norm equation is straightforward by the methods in [9], respectively, in the function field case $B$ yields bounds for the height of $\alpha$.

We note that the methods of this subsection also hold for arbitrary orders of $E$, not just the maximal order $o_E$.

### 3.2 Norms from free modules of degree less than $d$

We let $2 \leq m < d$ and $\alpha_i$ ($i = 1, \ldots, m$) be $F$-linearly independent elements of $o_E$ with $E = F(\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_m)$. For $0 \neq \mu \in o_F$ we consider the norm form equation in $m$ variables

$$N_{E/F} \left( \sum_{i=1}^{m} x_i \alpha_i \right) = \mu \quad (x_i \in o_F, 1 \leq i \leq m). \quad (3.3)$$

We recall that $\alpha_j$ ($j = 1, \ldots, d$) denote the conjugates of $\alpha_i$ over $F$. For any distinct indices $1 \leq i_1 < i_2 < \ldots < i_m \leq d$, the linear forms

$$\delta_{i_j}(X_1, \ldots, X_m) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} X_i \alpha_i^{(j)}$$

are linearly independent over $E$. It is easy to calculate $\gamma_{i_j} \in o_E$ ($1 \leq j \leq m$) such that any solution $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ of equation (3.3) satisfies

$$\sum_{j=1}^{m} \gamma_{i_j} \delta_{i_j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m) = 0.$$

Dividing by the last summand on the left-hand side, we obtain an $S$-unit equation in $m - 1$ variables:

$$- \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} \frac{\gamma_{i_j} \delta_{i_j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)}{\gamma_{i_m} \delta_{i_m}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)} = 1. \quad (3.4)$$

Let $V_0$ be the set of valuations of $E$ containing the infinite valuations and the valuations occurring in $\mu$. Then all $\delta_{i_j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)$ are $V_0$-units. Let $V_1$ be an extension of the set $V_0$ containing also the valuations occurring in any of the $\gamma_{i_j} \in E$ ($j = 1, \ldots, m$). Then all fractions in equation (3.4) are $V_1$-units and we can apply the results of the previous section. Usually $p$th powers can be excluded if there exist valuations (not contained in $V_0$) which only occur in $\gamma_{i_j}/\gamma_{i_m}$ with values not divisible by $p$, but cannot occur in $\delta_{i_j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)/\delta_{i_m}(x_1, \ldots, x_n)$ or by considering Galois automorphisms (see [6]).

In this way we can calculate elements $\nu_{i_j}$ such that

$$\delta_{i_j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m) = \nu_{i_j} \delta_{i_m}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)$$
for \( j = 1, \ldots, m \). Substituting them into equation (3.3), we get
\[
\left( \prod_{j=1}^{m} \nu_j \right) \delta_{i,m}(x_1, \ldots, x_m)^m = \mu,
\]
from which we calculate \( \delta_{i,m}(x_1, \ldots, x_m) \) and subsequently all \( \delta_{i,j}(x_1, \ldots, x_m) \). By solving systems of linear equations, we can then determine all possible solutions \((x_1, \ldots, x_m)\) of equation (3.3).

**Remark.** We note that increasing the number of variables in the unit equation makes our procedure less efficient since the number of valuations usually increases drastically. The amount of calculations to be performed grows roughly exponential with the growth of the number of variables in the unit equation (see the construction in Theorem 2.3).

### 4 Example

Let \( k = \mathbb{F}_5 \) and let \( \alpha = \alpha_1 \) be a root of
\[
p(z) = z^5 - z - t = 0.
\]

Let \( E = k(t)(\alpha) \) and denote by \( o_E \) the integral closure of \( k[t] \) in \( E \). The field \( E \) has genus \( g = 0 \). This field is a Galois (Artin–Schreier) extension, the cyclic Galois group is generated by \( \sigma \):
\[
\alpha_{i+1} = \sigma(\alpha_i) = \alpha_i + 1 \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, 4).
\]

Let \( r \) be a non-zero constant (in \( k \)) and consider the solutions of the equation
\[
N_E/k[t](x_1 + \alpha x_2 + \alpha^2 x_3 + \alpha^3 x_4 + \alpha^4 x_5) = r \quad \text{in} \quad x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5 \in k[t]. \quad (4.1)
\]

Set \( \ell_i(x) = x_1 + \alpha_i x_2 + \alpha^2_i x_3 + \alpha^3_i x_4 + \alpha^4_i x_5 \), then we have the identity
\[
\ell_1(x) + \ell_2(x) + \ell_3(x) + \ell_4(x) + \ell_5(x) = 0.
\]

The function field \( E \) has one infinite valuation \( v_\infty \) of degree 1. Let \( V_0 = \{ v_\infty \} \). Then for any solution \( x = (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5) \in (k[t])^5 \) of equation (4.1), the terms in
\[
-\frac{\ell_1(x)}{\ell_5(x)} - \frac{\ell_2(x)}{\ell_5(x)} - \frac{\ell_3(x)}{\ell_5(x)} - \frac{\ell_4(x)}{\ell_5(x)} = 1
\]
are \( V_0 \)-units. (We note that in case of zero subsums we still get the same solutions.) By [6] we have
\[
\frac{\ell_i(x)}{\ell_5(x)} = x_i \cdot \Phi_i,
\]
where \( x_i, \Phi_i \) are \( V_0 \cup N_1 \)-units,
\[
x_1 + x_2 + x_3 = 1, \quad (4.2)
\]
and

\[ H(\Phi_i) \leq 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0 \cup N_1} \deg v. \]

Constructing the set of valuations \( N_1 \), we find that \( \sum_{v \in N_1} \deg v \) can be estimated from above (see [6]) by

\[ 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0} \deg v = -1, \]

hence \( N_1 \) is empty. Therefore \( x_i, \Phi_i \) are \( V_0 \)-units, and by \( H(\Phi_i) = 0 \) the \( \Phi_i \) are constants.

We describe now the solutions of (4.2). By [6] we have

\[ x_i = y_i \cdot \Psi_i, \]

where \( y_i, \Psi_i \) are \( V_0 \cup N_1 \cup N_2 \)-units, \( y_1, y_2 \) are solutions of the unit equation \( y_1 + y_2 = 1 \) and

\[ H(\Psi_i) \leq 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0 \cup N_1 \cup N_2} \deg v. \]

The set \( N_2 \) of valuations is again empty, since \( \sum_{v \in N_2} \deg v \) can be estimated from above by

\[ 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0 \cup N_1} \deg v = -1. \]

Therefore, \( y_i, \Psi_i \) are \( V_0 \)-units, and by \( H(\Psi_i) = 0 \) it follows that the \( \Psi_i \) are constants.

Finally, we consider the \( V_0 \)-unit equation in two variables \( y_1 + y_2 = 1 \). The solutions either satisfy

\[ H(y_i) \leq 2g - 2 + \sum_{v \in V_0 \cup N_1 \cup N_2} \deg v = -1 \]

or they are powers of such elements. Hence the \( y_i \) are also constants.

If all fractions

\[ \frac{\ell_i(x)}{\ell_5(x)} \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, 4) \]

attain constant values, then by equation (4.1) also \( \ell_5(x) \) is a constant, as well as \( \ell_5(x) \).

Finally, if all the linear forms

\[ \ell_i(x) \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) \]

attain constant values, then we get only the solutions \( (i, 0, 0, 0, 0) \) with \( i = 1, 2, 3, 4 \) of equation (4.1).

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Author information

István Gaál, University of Debrecen, Mathematical Institute
H-4010 Debrecen Pf. 12, Hungary.
Email: igaal@math.klte.hu

Michael E. Pohst, Technische Universität Berlin, Institut für Mathematik MA 8-1
Straße des 17. Juni 136, 10623 Berlin, Germany.
Email: pohst@math.tu-berlin.de