

## **Evolution of short-range order in chemically and physically grown thin film bilayer structures for electronic applications**

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### *Electronic supplementary information*

#### Content

##### Section S1:

Details on the particular challenges in HfO<sub>2</sub> based resistive switching devices and on the development of optimised devices

##### Section S2 (Tables S1-2 and Figures S1-7):

Results from the film characterisation by x-ray reflectometry (XRR)

##### Section S3 (Table S3 and Figures S8-11):

Supplementary information for the PDF analysis of sample type (i) PZT on Pt

##### Section S4 (Tables S4-7 and Figures S12-16):

Supplementary information for the PDF analysis of sample type (ii) HfO<sub>2</sub> on TiN and sample type (iii) TiO<sub>x</sub> on HfO<sub>2</sub>

## **Section S1: Details on the particular challenges in HfO<sub>2</sub> based resistive switching devices and on the development of optimised devices**

Generally, after an initial electroforming step, HfO<sub>2</sub>-based ReRAM devices reveal filamentary-type bipolar switching of the resistance state between high and low values (ON and OFF states) triggered by voltage application (SET and RESET). The commonly accepted physical model considers a valence change of the transition metal ions, resulting from the creation, annihilation, drift and diffusion processes of oxygen vacancy defects. Therefore, controlling of the type and concentration of defects in the switching oxide material by means of process control and device design is of utmost importance. A challenge of memristive devices from a single layer of HfO<sub>2</sub> arises from considerable variations in the high resistance states and SET voltages from cycle-to-cycle. This high variability can lead to severe issues regarding read and write failures of the ReRAM devices. Hardtdegen et al. (ref. 34 in the main article) demonstrated that a bilayer structure with a thin TiO<sub>x</sub> interlayer added between the HfO<sub>2</sub> resistive switching layer and the oxygen exchange metal (here Ti) significantly improves the memristive performance. The layer stack of the electrical devices is built of a Pt bottom electrode, 3 nm HfO<sub>2</sub> by plasma assisted ALD, 3 nm TiO<sub>x</sub> by thermal ALD, 10 nm Ti oxygen exchange layer, and a Pt top electrode.

Studies of the ALD growth processes of HfO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>x</sub> revealed a linear change in thickness with increasing number of deposition cycles. In addition, under the process conditions chosen for HfO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>x</sub>, no change of the amorphous layer structure nor the films' low roughness values were observed for layer thicknesses increased from 3 nm to 50 nm. In order to enhance the signal for the total scattering experiments, the bilayer samples were thus fabricated from 30 nm TiO<sub>x</sub> on top of 35-40 nm HfO<sub>2</sub> deposited on the fused silica substrate.

## Section S2: Results from the film characterization by x-ray reflectometry (XRR)

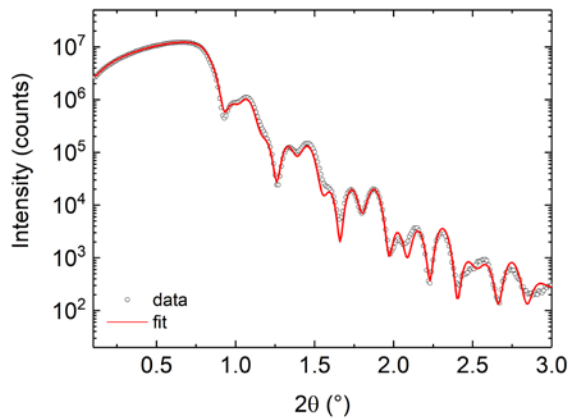
### (I) $\text{HfO}_2$ and TiN grown by reactive sputtering

(discussed in section '3.2  $\text{HfO}_2$  on TiN for ReRAM applications', respective PDFs shown in Fig. 3 of the main article)

The layer stack which was utilised for the fitting is given as follows from bottom to top: fused silica ( $\text{SiO}_2$ ) as substrate with TiN and  $\text{HfO}_2$  layers deposited by reactive sputtering. Table S1 gives a summary of the fitting results for the layers of this study. Figures S1 and S2 show the measured XRR data (black circles) and the fits (red lines).

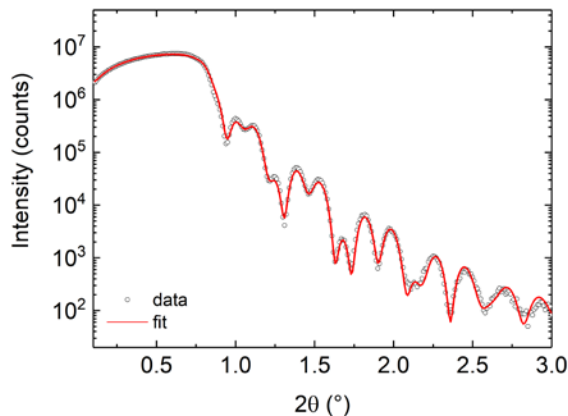
Table S1: Properties of the sputter deposited  $\text{HfO}_2$  on TiN layer stacks

sample description	XRR fitting			
	material	thickness / nm	roughness / nm	density / $\text{g}/\text{cm}^3$
$\text{HfO}_2$ as-deposited	$\text{HfO}_2$	18.4	1.4	9.8
	TiN	39.5	1.1	4.7
$\text{HfO}_2$ post-annealed	$\text{HfO}_2$	17.7	1.4	9.8
	TiN	36.9	1.0	4.8



material	thickness [nm]	density [ $\text{atoms}/\text{Å}^3$ ]	roughness [nm]
$\text{HfO}_2$	18.4	0.028	1.4
TiN	39.5	0.046	1.1
$\text{SiO}_2$ (fused silica)	0	0.023	0.4

Figure S1: XRR measurement and fit of the stack fused silica/TiN/ $\text{HfO}_2$  (as-deposited).



material	thickness [nm]	density [ $\text{atoms}/\text{Å}^3$ ]	roughness [nm]
$\text{HfO}_2$	17.7	0.028	1.4
TiN	36.9	0.047	1.0
$\text{SiO}_2$ (fused silica)	0	0.023	0.4

Figure S2: XRR measurement and fit of the stack fused silica/TiN/ $\text{HfO}_2$  (post-annealed).

(II)  $\text{TiO}_x$  and  $\text{HfO}_2$  grown by atomic layer deposition (ALD).

(discussed in section '3.3  $\text{TiO}_x$  on  $\text{HfO}_2$  for ReRAM applications', respective PDFs shown in Figures 4 and 5 of the main article)

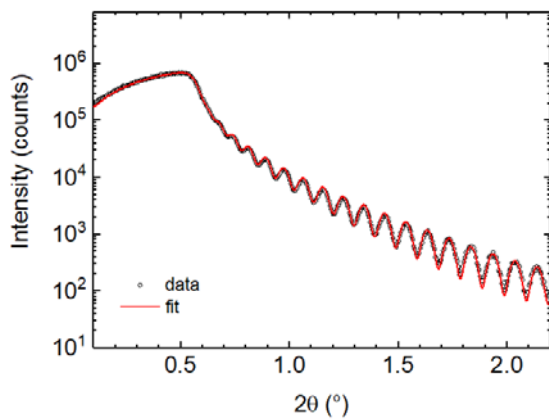
The analyses were performed on reference layers which were grown in the same run with the PDF samples, but on an oxidized silicon wafer instead of the fused silica substrate.

The layer stack which was utilised for the fitting is given as follows from bottom to top: silicon wafer with a thin layer of native  $\text{SiO}_2$  and the layer or layer stack grown by ALD. Table S2 gives a summary of the fitting results for the layers of this study. Figures S3-S7 show the measured XRR data (black circles) and the fits (red lines).

Table S2: Properties of the ALD grown  $\text{TiO}_x$  and  $\text{HfO}_2$  layers and stacks

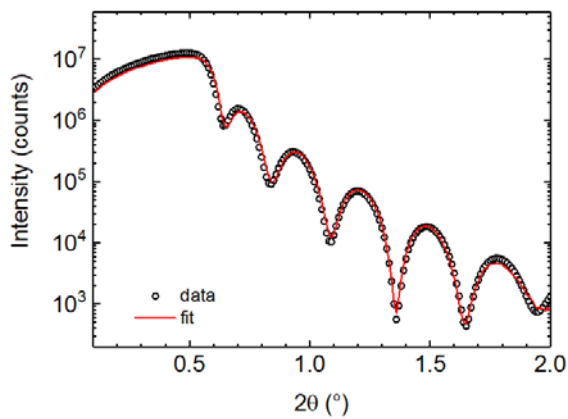
sample description	XRR fitting			
	material	thickness / nm	roughness / nm	density / $\text{g}/\text{cm}^3$
85 nm $\text{TiO}_x$	$\text{TiO}_2$	83.5	1.2	3.97
30 nm $\text{TiO}_x$	$\text{TiO}_2$	28.4	1.2	3.97
30 nm $\text{TiO}_x$ on $\text{HfO}_2$	$\text{TiO}_2$	29.7	1.3	3.97
	$\text{HfO}_2$	37.9	0.7	8.74
$\text{HfO}_2$ 200 °C	$\text{HfO}_2$	39.1	1.0	8.91
$\text{HfO}_2$ 300 °C	$\text{HfO}_2$	34.9	1.0	9.44

For the thermal  $\text{TiO}_x$  process and the plasma  $\text{HfO}_2$  processes at 200 °C and 300 °C, growth per cycle values of  $(0.040 \pm 0.006)$  nm,  $(1.10 \pm 0.03)$  nm, and  $(1.00 \pm 0.03)$  nm were determined, respectively. The increase in growth rate of the  $\text{HfO}_2$  films at lower temperature is attributed to approaching the limit of the ALD  $\text{HfO}_2$  process window towards low temperatures.



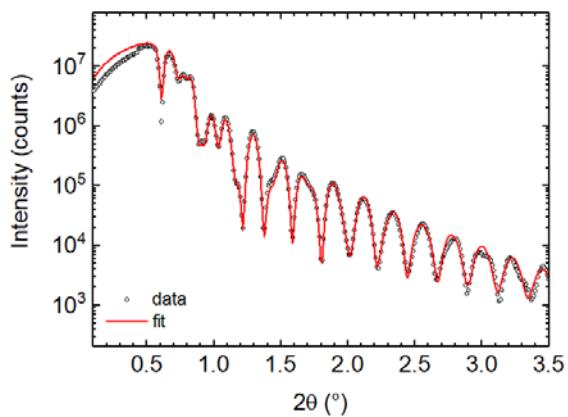
material	thickness [nm]	density [ $\text{atoms}/\text{\AA}^3$ ]	roughness [nm]
$\text{TiO}_2$	83.5	0.029	1.2
$\text{SiO}_2$ (native oxide)	1.9	0.023	0.24
Si	0	0.050	0.55

Figure S3: XRR measurement and fit of Si/native  $\text{SiO}_2$ / 83.5 nm  $\text{TiO}_x$  by thermal ALD.



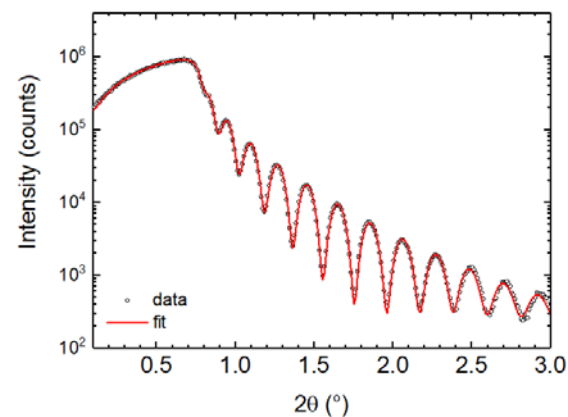
material	thickness [nm]	density [atoms/Å <sup>3</sup> ]	roughness [nm]
TiO <sub>2</sub>	28.4	0.029	1.2
SiO <sub>2</sub> (native oxide)	1.9	0.023	0.24
Si	0	0.050	0.55

Figure S4: XRR measurement and fit of Si/native SiO<sub>2</sub>/ 28.4 nm TiO<sub>x</sub> by thermal ALD.



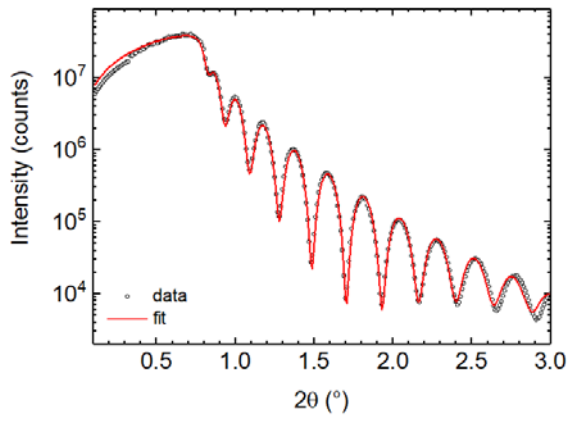
material	thickness [nm]	density [atoms/Å <sup>3</sup> ]	roughness [nm]
TiO <sub>2</sub>	29.7	0.029	1.3
HfO <sub>2</sub>	37.9	0.025	0.7
SiO <sub>2</sub> (native oxide)	1.9	0.023	0.24
Si	0	0.050	0.55

Figure S5: XRR measurement and fit of Si/native SiO<sub>2</sub>/ 37.9 nm HfO<sub>2</sub> (plasma-assisted ALD, 200 °C) / 29.7 nm TiO<sub>x</sub> (thermal ALD).



material	thickness [nm]	density [atoms/Å <sup>3</sup> ]	roughness [nm]
HfO <sub>2</sub>	39.1	0.025	1.0
SiO <sub>2</sub> (native oxide)	1.9	0.023	0.24
Si	0	0.050	0.55

Figure S6: XRR measurement and fit of Si/native SiO<sub>2</sub>/ HfO<sub>2</sub> (plasma-assisted ALD, 200°C).



material	thickness [nm]	density [atoms/Å <sup>3</sup> ]	roughness [nm]
HfO <sub>2</sub>	34.9	0.027	1.0
SiO <sub>2</sub> (native oxide)	1.9	0.023	0.24
Si	0	0.050	0.55

Figure S7: XRR measurement and fit of Si/native SiO<sub>2</sub>/ HfO<sub>2</sub> (plasma-assisted ALD, 300°C).

### Section S3: Supplementary information for the PDF analysis of sample type (i) PZT on Pt

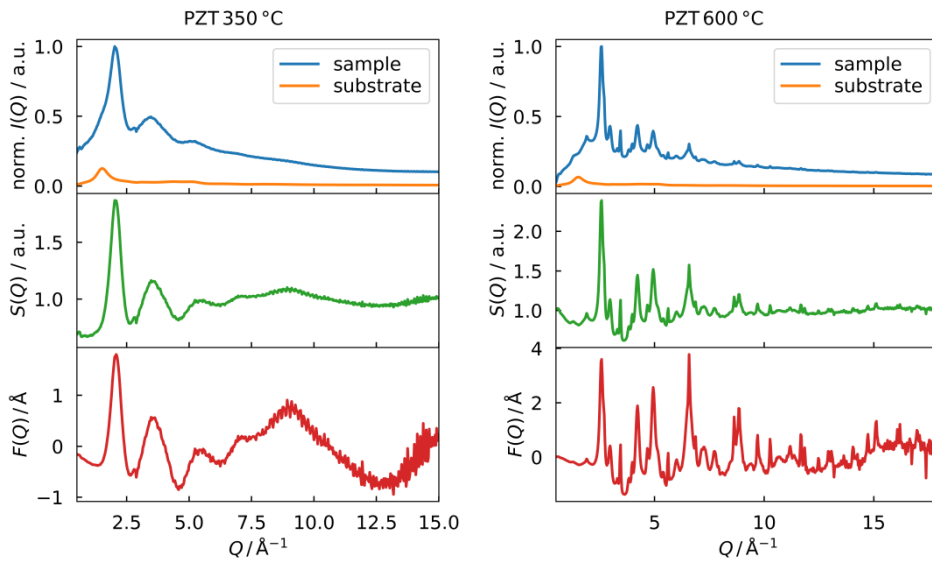


Figure S8:  $I(Q)$  of sample and scaled  $I(Q)$  of substrate, resulting  $S(Q)$ , and  $F(Q)$  for the PZT on Pt samples. The  $Q$  axis is scaled to the respective  $Q_{\max}$  used for the Fourier transform into the PDF.

Table S3: References for PZT and related phases from the ICSD database.

composition	crystal symmetry	space group	ICSD reference code
$\text{Pb}(\text{Zr}_{0.53}\text{Zr}_{0.47})\text{O}_3$	rhombohedral	$R\bar{3}m$	90700
$\text{Pb}(\text{Zr}_{0.52}\text{Zr}_{0.48})\text{O}_3$	cubic	$Pm\bar{3}m$	153401
	tetragonal	$P4mm$	90478
	monoclinic	$Cm$	51705
PbO	orthorhombic	$Pbcm$	40180
	tetragonal	$P4/nmm$	15466
$\text{ZrO}_2$	monoclinic	$P2_1/c$	658755

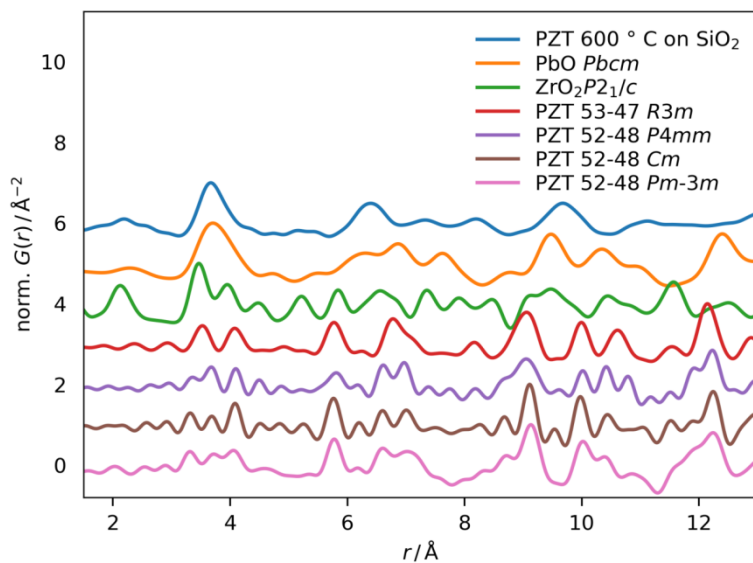


Figure S9: PDF obtained for a PZT layer deposited directly on fused silica and annealed at 600 °C, with PDFs calculated for reference phases for PZT, PbO, and  $\text{ZrO}_2$ .

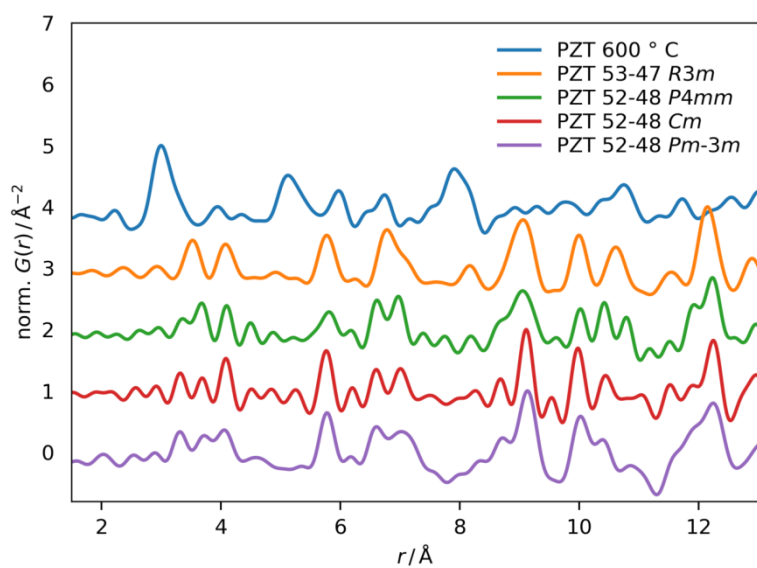


Figure S10: PDF obtained for a PZT layer deposited on Pt and annealed at 600 °C, with PDFs calculated for different reference phases for PZT of similar compositions as indicated.

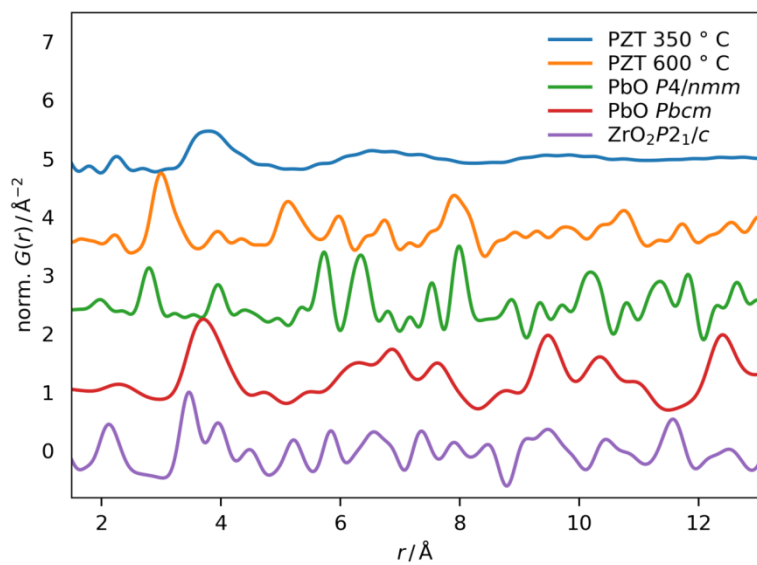


Figure S11: PDFs obtained for the PZT layers deposited on Pt and annealed at 350 °C and 600 °C, with calculated PDFs for reference phases of PbO and ZrO<sub>2</sub>.



**Section S4: Supplementary information for the PDF analysis of sample type (ii) HfO<sub>2</sub> on TiN and sample type (iii) TiO<sub>x</sub> on HfO<sub>2</sub>**

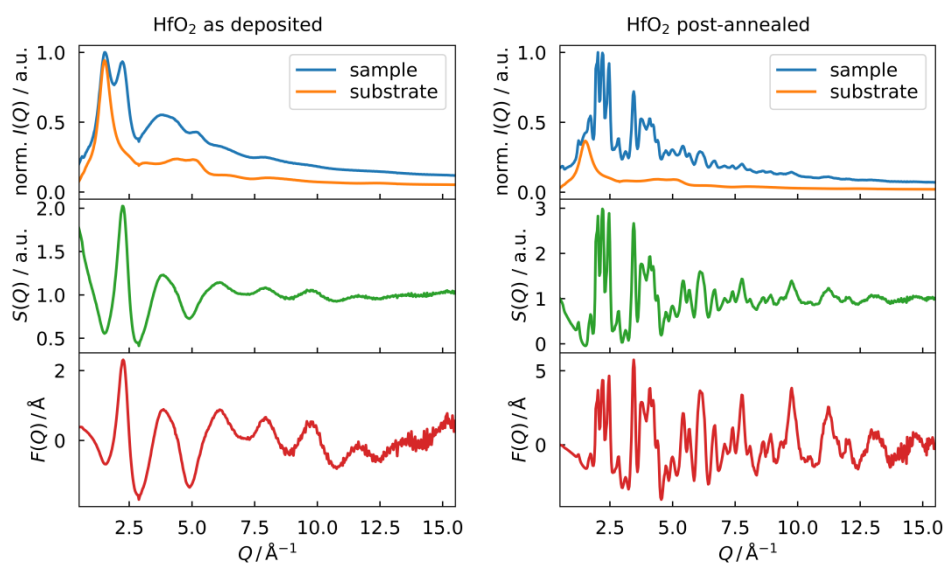


Figure S12:  $I(Q)$  of sample and scaled  $I(Q)$  of substrate, resulting  $S(Q)$ , and  $F(Q)$  for the HfO<sub>2</sub> on TiN bilayers as representative datasets for disordered and crystallised HfO<sub>2</sub> films of samples type (ii) and (iii). The  $Q$  axis is scaled to the respective  $Q_{\max}$  used for the Fourier transform into the PDF.

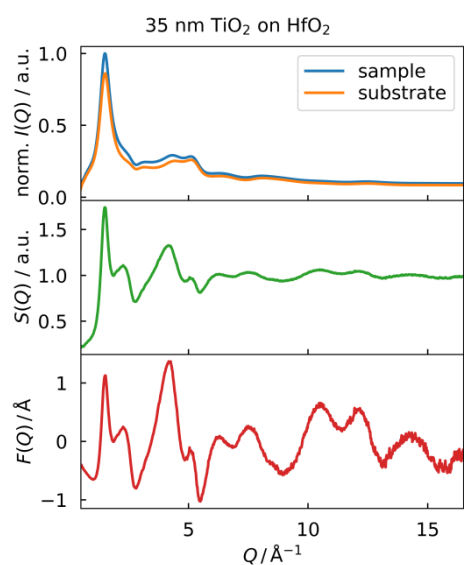


Figure S13:  $I(Q)$  of sample and scaled  $I(Q)$  of substrate, resulting  $S(Q)$ , and  $F(Q)$  for the TiO<sub>x</sub> on HfO<sub>2</sub> as a representative dataset for the disordered TiO<sub>x</sub> films of samples type (iii). The  $Q$  axis is scaled to the  $Q_{\max}$  used for the Fourier transform into the PDF.

Table S4: References for the HfO<sub>2</sub> phases from the ICSD database.

composition	crystal symmetry	space group	ICSD reference code
HfO <sub>2</sub>	monoclinic	$P2_1/c$	27313
	tetragonal	$P4_2/nmc$	173966

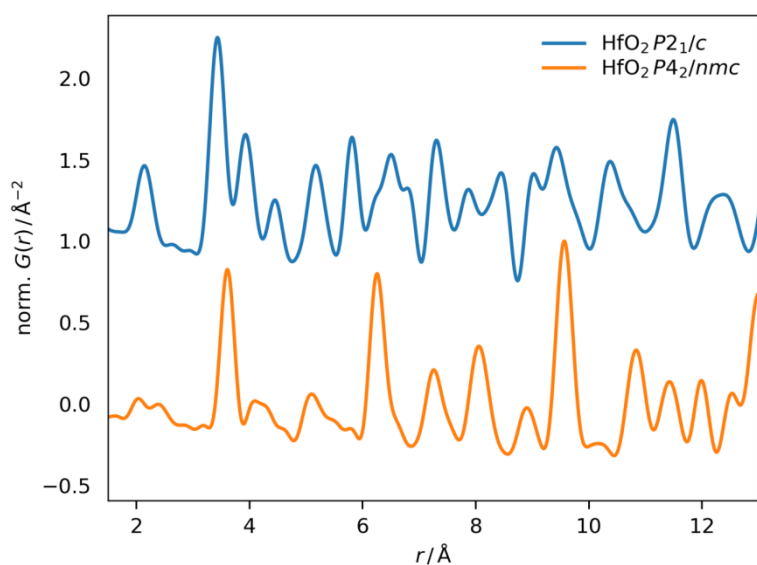


Figure S14: Calculated PDFs for selected HfO<sub>2</sub> phases.

Table S5. Parameters of the PDFgui refinements for the HfO<sub>2</sub> films described in Sections 3.2 (shown in Figure 3b) and Section 3.3 (shown in Figure 5b). For comparison, the corresponding values for the reference data are given. Since uncertainties were not propagated in the data processing, the given uncertainties are not reliable and quoted here for rough comparison only. Parameters m1-9 are defined in Table S6.

parameter	sputter deposited HfO <sub>2</sub> post-annealed	ALD-HfO <sub>2</sub> 300 °C post-annealed	monoclinic HfO <sub>2</sub> space group $P2_1/c$
$a / \text{Å}$	5.1658 (0.0071)	5.1381 (0.0091)	5.1126
$b / \text{Å}$	5.2057 (0.0064)	5.1665 (0.0094)	5.1722
$c / \text{Å}$	5.3524 (0.0061)	5.3197 (0.0083)	5.2948
$\beta / ^\circ$	99.10 (0.11)	99.17 (0.15)	99.18
scale factor	0.685 (0.026)	0.184 (0.019)	
m1	0.2755 (0.0011)	0.2744 (0.0023)	0.2759
m2	0.4643 (0.0012)	0.462 (0.002)	0.4588
m3	0.7080 (0.0015)	0.7063 (0.0026)	0.7078
m4	0.074 (0.023)	0.105 (0.024)	0.073
m5	0.211 (0.018)	0.158 (0.021)	0.154
m6	0.848 (0.029)	0.824 (0.023)	0.832
m7	0.380 (0.032)	0.456 (0.022)	0.446
m8	0.799 (0.024)	0.768 (0.024)	0.752
m9	0.93 (0.02)	0.950 (0.018)	0.988
$U_{\text{iso}}$ (Hf)	0.0086 (0.0006)	0.00400 (0.00083)	0.00569932
$U_{\text{iso}}$ (O)	0.050 (0.022)	0.0095 (0.0084)	0.00569932
$\delta_2$	3.52 (0.59)	3.7 (3.8)	
spherical particle diameter / Å	56.2 (3.4)	102 (30)	
refinement range / Å	1.5-60	1.5-100	
$R_w$	23 %	40 %	

Table S6. Refinement parameters for atomic coordinates based on symmetry constraints for the monoclinic phase, space group  $P2_1/c$ , as listed in Table S5.

site	x	y	z
Hf1	m1	m2	m3
Hf2	-m1 + 1	m2 + 0.5	-m3 + 1.5
Hf3	-m1 + 1	-m2 + 1	-m3 + 1
Hf4	m1	-m2 + 0.5	m3 - 0.5
O1	m4	m5	m6
O2	-m4 + 1	m5 + 0.5	-m6 + 1.5
O3	-m4 + 1	-m5 + 1	-m6 + 1
O4	m4	-m5 + 0.5	m6 - 0.5
O5	m7	m8	m9
O6	-m7 + 1	m8 - 0.5	-m9 + 1.5
O7	-m7 + 1	-m8 + 1	-m9 + 1
O8	m7	-m8 + 1.5	m9 - 0.5

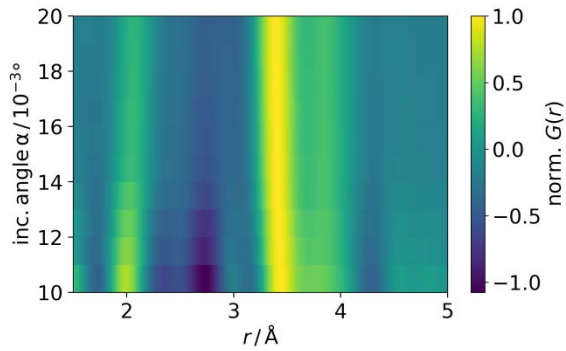


Figure S15: PDFs of the as-deposited  $\text{TiO}_x$  on  $\text{HfO}_2$  (ALD, 300 °C) bilayer in dependence on the incidence angle  $\alpha$ .

Table S7: References for the  $\text{TiO}_x$  phases from the ICSD database.

composition	crystal symmetry	space group	ICSD reference code
TiO	hexagonal	$P\bar{6}2m$	196273
	monoclinic	$A2/m$	15327
TiO <sub>2</sub> (anatase)	tetragonal	$I4_1/amd$	9852
TiO <sub>2</sub> (brookite)	orthorhombic	$Pbca$	36408
TiO <sub>2</sub> (rutile)	tetragonal	$P4_2/mnm$	9161
Ti <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> (corundum)	rhombohedral	$R\bar{3}c$	1462
Ti <sub>3</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	monoclinic	$C2/m$	26492
	orthorhombic	$Cmcm$	50984
	orthorhombic	$I2/c$	35148
	orthorhombic	$P2/a$	194465
Ti <sub>4</sub> O <sub>7</sub>	triclinic	$A\bar{1}$	10148
Ti <sub>5</sub> O <sub>9</sub>	triclinic	$P\bar{1}$	9038
	triclinic	$P1$	653560
Ti <sub>6</sub> O <sub>11</sub>	monoclinic	$C2/m$	90958
	triclinic	$P\bar{1}$	35121
Ti <sub>7</sub> O <sub>13</sub>	triclinic	$I\bar{1}$	35122
Ti <sub>8</sub> O <sub>15</sub>	triclinic	$I\bar{1}$	35123
Ti <sub>9</sub> O <sub>17</sub>	triclinic	$P\bar{1}$	9042

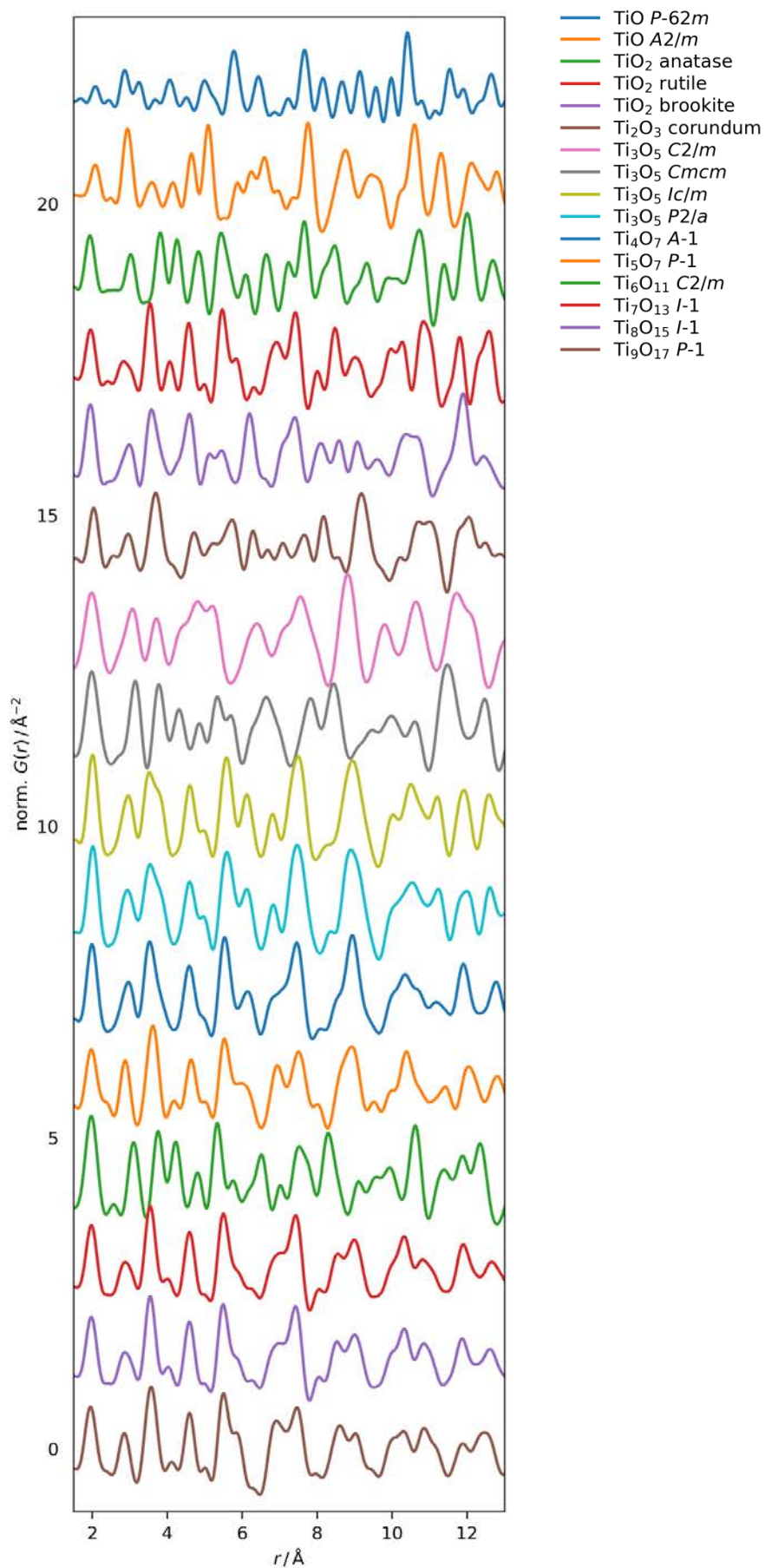


Figure S16: Calculated PDFs for different  $Ti_nO_{2n-1}$  phases for the range  $1 \leq n \leq 9$ .