

## Four-Jet Production at the Large Hadron Collider at Next-to-Leading Order in QCD

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We present the cross sections for production of up to four jets at the Large Hadron Collider, at next-to-leading order in the QCD coupling. We use the BLACKHAT library in conjunction with SHERPA and a recently developed algorithm for assembling primitive amplitudes into color-dressed amplitudes. We adopt the cuts used by ATLAS in their study of multi-jet events in  $pp$  collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 7$  TeV. We include estimates of nonperturbative corrections and compare to ATLAS data. We store intermediate results in a framework that allows the inexpensive computation of additional results for different choices of scale or parton distributions.

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Pure-jet events are abundant at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), providing a window onto new strongly interacting physics [1]. The wealth of data being accumulated by the LHC experiments motivates comparisons with precise theoretical predictions from first principles, based on a perturbative expansion in quantum chromodynamics (QCD) within the QCD-improved parton model. The leading order (LO) contribution in the QCD coupling,  $\alpha_s$ , does not suffice for quantitatively precise predictions, which require at least next-to-leading-order (NLO) accuracy in the QCD coupling.

The ATLAS [2] and CMS [3] collaborations have recently measured multijet cross sections in  $pp$  collisions at 7 TeV. In this Letter, we provide NLO QCD predictions for the production of up to four jets, and compare them to ATLAS data. Our study agrees with the earlier two- and three-jet studies performed by ATLAS collaboration [2] using NLOJET++ [4]; the four-jet computation is new.

NLO QCD predictions of jet production at hadron colliders have a 20-year history, going back to the original computations of single-jet inclusive and two-jet production [5, 6]. These were followed by results for three-jet production [4, 7]. A longstanding bottleneck to obtaining NLO predictions for a larger number of jets at hadron colliders, the evaluation of the one-loop (virtual) corrections, has been broken by on-shell methods [8–10], whose efficiency scales well as the number of external legs increases. Recent years have witnessed calculations with up to five final state objects [11], among many other new processes [12–14].

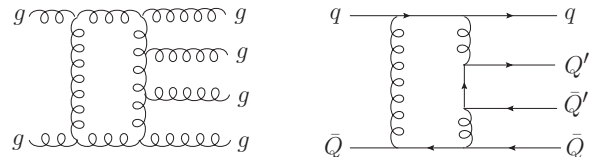


FIG. 1: Sample diagrams for the six-parton one-loop amplitudes for  $gg \rightarrow gggg$  and  $q\bar{Q} \rightarrow qq'\bar{Q}'\bar{Q}$ .

We illustrate the virtual contributions to four-jet production in fig. 1. To evaluate them we have made a number of significant improvements to the BLACKHAT package [15]. In particular, assembly of the color-summed cross sections for subprocesses from primitive amplitudes [16] has been automated [17], and the recomputation needed upon detection of numerical instabilities has been reduced [18]. The pure-gluon contributions dominate the total cross section, yet would be the most complex to compute in a traditional Feynman-diagram approach because of their high tensor rank. We include all subprocesses and the full color dependence in QCD in all terms. We treat the five light-flavor quarks as massless and drop the small (percent-level) effects of top quark loops.

We use AMEGIC++ [19], part of SHERPA [20], to evaluate the remaining NLO ingredients, the real-emission and dipole-subtraction terms [21]. We also used the COMIX package [22] as a cross-check on AMEGIC++. The phase-space integrator exploits QCD antenna structures [23, 24].

We have carried out extensive checks, including numer-

no. jets	ATLAS	LO	ME+PS	NLO	NP factor	NLO+NP
$\geq 2$	$620 \pm 1.3_{-66}^{+110} \pm 24$	$958(1)_{-221}^{+316}$	559(5)	$1193(3)_{-135}^{+130}$	0.95(0.02)	$1130(19)_{-129}^{+124}$
$\geq 3$	$43 \pm 0.13_{-6.2}^{+12} \pm 1.7$	$93.4(0.1)_{-30.3}^{+50.4}$	39.7(0.9)	$54.5(0.5)_{-19.9}^{+2.2}$	0.92(0.04)	$50.2(2.1)_{-18.3}^{+2.0}$
$\geq 4$	$4.3 \pm 0.04_{-0.79}^{+1.4} \pm 0.24$	$9.98(0.01)_{-3.95}^{+7.40}$	3.97(0.08)	$5.54(0.12)_{-2.44}^{+0.08}$	0.92(0.05)	$5.11(0.29)_{-2.32}^{+0.08}$

TABLE I: Total cross sections in nb for jet production at the LHC, using the anti- $k_T$  jet algorithm with  $R = 0.4$ . We compare ATLAS results against LO, ME+PS and NLO theoretical predictions. The penultimate column gives nonperturbative corrections estimated using a string fragmentation model. In all cases, numerical integration uncertainties are given in parentheses. The scale dependence shown with LO and NLO predictions is given as superscripts and subscripts. The three uncertainties shown with the ATLAS data are statistical, jet-energy scale, and detector unfolding; in addition there is a  $\pm 3.4\%$  luminosity uncertainty. The jet-energy scale uncertainty is asymmetric so they are given as subscripts and superscripts.

ical stability; independence of the phase-space separation parameter  $\alpha_{\text{dipole}}$  [4]; and cancellation of infrared singularities. Our results for two- and three-jet production agree with those obtained by running NLOJET++ [4] to within 1%. (For this comparison we used the  $k_T$  jet algorithm [25] and CTEQ6M partons [26] to match the default choices in NLOJET++.) We have compared the virtual matrix elements for two-, four-, and six-quark processes at selected points in phase space to HELAC-NLO [27]; they agree to 10 digits. In a supplementary file, we provide reference numerical values of the virtual matrix elements at a specific phase-space point.

In the fixed-order perturbative expansion of any observable, it is important to assess whether large logarithms of ratios of physical scales arise in special kinematic regions. Dijet production, in particular, suffers from a well-known instability at NLO [28]. If identical cuts on the transverse momentum  $p_T$  of the two jets are used, then soft-gluon radiation is severely restricted when the leading jet is just above the minimum  $p_T$ , while the virtual corrections are unaffected. This leads to a large logarithm and a divergence of the NLO corrections at the minimum  $p_T$ . Such logarithms can be resummed as discussed in ref. [29]. We do not carry out such resummation here, but instead follow ATLAS's approach [2] and use asymmetric cuts, with the minimum  $p_T$  of the leading jet larger than for additional jets. This mitigates the instability at the price of increased scale dependence: the asymmetric cuts cause the real radiation contributions to dominate the NLO cross section. It effectively becomes an LO quantity. This affects the inclusive two-jet results, but the production of three or more jets, and in particular the new NLO prediction for four-jet production, do not suffer from this problem.

In addition to fixed-order parton-level LO and NLO results, we also present results for a parton-shower calculation matched to fixed-order LO matrix elements (ME+PS) [30]. We obtained the latter results using a RIVET [31] analysis within the SHERPA framework. We also use SHERPA to estimate nonperturbative correction factors which we then apply to our NLO results. These correction factors are obtained by comparing

parton-level results, after showering, to fully hadronized predictions including a simulation of the underlying event. We use two different hadronization models, cluster fragmentation as implemented by SHERPA [20] and string fragmentation as implemented by PYTHIA 6.4 [32].

We consider the inclusive production of up to four jets in  $pp$  collisions at a center-of-mass energy  $\sqrt{s} = 7$  TeV. Jets are defined using the infrared-safe anti- $k_T$  algorithm [33]. We parallel ATLAS in presenting results for jet-size parameters  $R = 0.4$  and  $R = 0.6$ . We order the jets in  $p_T$ . We implement the ATLAS cuts from ref. [2]; we require all jets to have  $p_T^{\text{jet}} > 60$  GeV and the leading jet to have  $p_T^{\text{jet}} > 80$  GeV. Observed jets are also required to have rapidity  $|y| < 2.8$ . We use the MSTW2008 LO and NLO parton distribution functions (PDFs) [34] at the respective orders. We use a five-flavor running  $\alpha_s(\mu)$  and the value of  $\alpha_s(M_Z)$  supplied with the parton distribution functions.

The strong sensitivity of cross sections and distributions to the variation of the unphysical renormalization scale  $\mu_R$  and factorization scale  $\mu_F$  is significantly reduced at NLO. The wide range of scales probed in distributions requires us to use an event-by-event scale characteristic of the kinematics. We choose  $\mu_R = \mu_F \equiv \mu = \hat{H}_T/2$  as our central scale [13, 14], where  $\hat{H}_T \equiv \sum_i p_T^i$  and the sum runs over all final-state partons  $i$ . We use a standard procedure to assess scale dependence, varying the central scale up and down by a factor of two to construct scale-dependence bands as in ref. [11].

We present our predictions for the LO, ME+PS, and NLO parton-level inclusive cross sections for two-through four-jet production in table I. As shown in the table, the NLO values are less sensitive to scale variation than the LO ones, especially as the number of jets increases. (The ME+PS setup uses scales determined in the shower which cannot be varied easily.) In the penultimate column, we give the nonperturbative underlying event and hadronization (NP) correction factor using the PYTHIA-type string fragmentation model. The cluster fragmentation model gives essentially identical results, within our integration uncertainties, so we do not quote them. We use this factor as an estimate for the NP cor-

$p_T$	ATLAS	LO	ME+PS	NLO	NP factor	NLO+NP
60–80	$170 \pm 1.8^{+61}_{-33} \pm 12$	$399(1)^{+295}_{-157}$	157(4)	$219(6)^{+4}_{-100}$	0.92(0.06)	$202(14)^{+4}_{-93}$
80–110	$24 \pm 0.56^{+5}_{-3.8} \pm 2.3$	$57.6(0.1)^{+42}_{-23}$	23.7(0.7)	$32.6(0.8)^{+0.3}_{-12.9}$	0.93(0.05)	$30.3(1.9)^{+0.3}_{-12.0}$
110–160	$2.6 \pm 0.15^{+0.79}_{-0.47} \pm 0.31$	$5.25(0.01)^{+3.9}_{-2.1}$	2.28(0.08)	$3.3(0.1)^{+0.0}_{-0.9}$	0.89(0.06)	$2.9(0.2)^{+0.0}_{-0.9}$
160–210	$0.15 \pm 0.035^{+0.047}_{-0.034} \pm 0.026$	$0.395(0.001)^{+0.29}_{-0.16}$	0.18(0.01)	$0.24(0.01)^{+0.0}_{-0.06}$	0.93(0.08)	$0.22(0.02)^{+0.0}_{-0.06}$

TABLE II: The LO, ME+PS and NLO predictions for the distribution  $d\sigma/dp_{T,4}$  [pb/GeV] in the transverse momentum of the fourth jet,  $p_{T,4}$ , for  $R = 0.4$ , compared to ATLAS data. The penultimate column gives the nonperturbative correction factor using the string model. The final column gives the NLO prediction including this factor.

rection to the NLO cross section as well, shown with the correction in the last column. (As NLO parton-shower programs are developed beyond the dijet case [35], it will become possible to carry out estimates of nonperturbative corrections in a manner more compatible with NLO calculations.) These nonperturbative corrections are of order 10% or less for the production of four or fewer jets. For dijet production the LO and NLO theory predictions are not in good agreement with the data; as discussed above, this is not surprising given the kinematic constraints as well as the soft-radiation instability. In contrast, for the three- and four-jet cases, both the NLO and ME+PS predictions agree with the data, within the experimental uncertainties, whether or not we account for the small nonperturbative corrections.

Ratios of cross sections typically reduce both theoretical and experimental uncertainties. In particular, we have compared the ratio of four- to three-jet cross sections appearing in table I to the value obtained by ATLAS:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ATLAS: } & 0.098 \pm 0.001^{+0.004}_{-0.005} \pm 0.005, \\ \text{ME+PS: } & 0.100(0.003), \quad \text{NLO: } 0.102(0.002), \end{aligned}$$

where the quoted ATLAS uncertainties are respectively statistical, jet energy scale and detector unfolding [2]. We display only the statistical integration errors for the theoretical predictions; in the ratio, the (correlated) scale dependence cancels and is not a useful estimate of uncertainty. We have not included the nonperturbative corrections; they also largely cancel in jet ratios. We estimate the residual theoretical uncertainty by comparing ME+PS and NLO results; from here we deduce that the residual theoretical uncertainty is under 5%. This is within our numerical integration uncertainty and also smaller than the experimental uncertainty.

In table II we present the LO, ME+PS and NLO  $p_T$  distribution of the fourth-leading jet, comparing to ATLAS data [2]. The penultimate column gives the nonperturbative correction factor, estimated using SHERPA, as discussed above. The final column displays the NLO results including this factor. From this table we see that both ME+PS and NLO results are in good agreement with the data, within uncertainties. The estimated non-

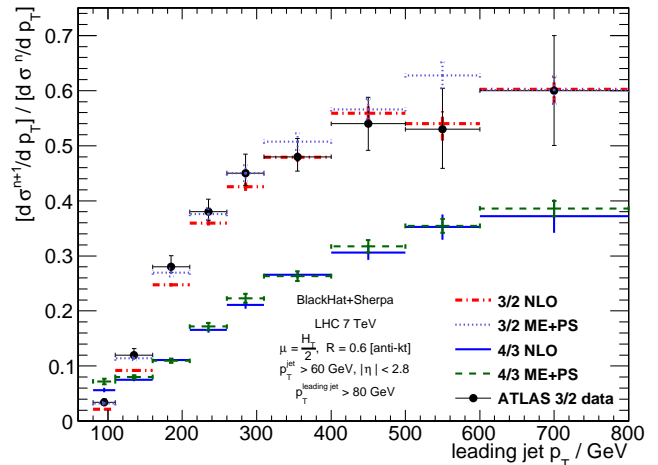


FIG. 2: A comparison of the 3/2 and 4/3 jet-production ratios to ATLAS data [2] for  $R = 0.6$ . We show the NLO and ME+PS predictions for these ratios. Vertical bars on the theory predictions represent Monte Carlo statistical uncertainties.

perturbative corrections are smaller than current experimental uncertainties.

We also consider the  $(n+1)/n$  jet production ratios,  $[d\sigma^{n+1}/dp_T]/[d\sigma^n/dp_T]$ , as a function of the leading-jet  $p_T$ . Fig. 2 displays the 3/2 and 4/3 jet production ratios for  $R = 0.6$ , comparing the 3/2 ratio with ATLAS data. For the 3/2 ratio we find very good agreement between NLO theory and the ATLAS data [2], except for the first bin, where the denominator is affected by the kinematic constraint and soft-radiation instability mentioned earlier. The agreement remains good even with increasing leading-jet  $p_T$ , where the ratios grow to 0.6 and 0.35 for the 3/2 and 4/3 ratios respectively. Fitting these large ratios as described in ref. [14] exposes substantial single powers of  $\ln(p_T/p_T^{\min})$ , which nonetheless do not spoil the agreement with data. The ME+PS prediction is also in very good agreement with data and consistent with NLO, implying that these processes are under good theoretical control. It will be interesting to compare our theoretical predictions for the 4/3 ratio to future LHC data.

We estimate the PDF uncertainty using the MSTW2008 68% error sets, finding 1.2% for two-jet production, 1.6% for three-jet production, and 2.5% for four-jet production. At high  $p_T$  the uncertainty grows somewhat, but remains smaller or comparable to our numerical-integration errors.

We have studied the dependence of the jet cross sections on the jet size parameter  $R$  for anti- $k_T$ . LO multi-jet cross sections always decrease with increasing  $R$ , because whenever two partons are merged the event is lost. At NLO, the  $R$  dependence is a dynamical question. We find that the NLO three-jet cross section increases with  $R$  for our usual range of scale variation. Whether the four-jet cross section increases or decreases with  $R$  is sensitive to the choice of scale.

For each event we generate, we record the squared matrix element, the momenta of all partons, and the coefficients of various functions that control the dependence of the final result on the renormalization and factorization scales, as well as on the PDFs. We store this information in ROOT-format  $n$ -tuple files [37]. The availability of these intermediate results in a standard format makes it computationally inexpensive to evaluate cross sections and distributions for different scales and PDF error sets. They also offer an easy and reliable way of furnishing our theoretical predictions to experimental collaborations, while allowing them to modify cuts or compute additional distributions [36].

In this study of pure-jet processes, we have imposed cuts typical of Standard-Model measurements at the LHC. The same tools used here can also be used to study backgrounds to new physics signals, such as those arising from colored resonances or higher-dimension effective operators. The improved efficiencies developed in the course of our study should allow us to continue increasing the number of jets accessible to NLO predictions.

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