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THERMALLY RESPONSIVE ASSOCIATIVE WATER-SOLUBLE POLYMERS BASED ON TACTICITY CONTROL

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An important group of water soluble polymers are associative ones in which hydrophobic parts of the polymer molecules interact, self-assemble and enhance the viscosity of aqueous solutions even at low polymer concentrations. For many applications it would be beneficial to be able to combine the associative behaviour with stimuli-responsiveness. Among water-soluble stimuli-responsive polymers, poly(N-isopropylacrylamide), (PNIPAM), has attracted attention due to its sharp and reversible transition behavior and well-defined demixing temperature in aqueous medium.

Atactic PNIPAM is water-soluble at room temperature, while stereoregular PNIPAMs have rather different solubility, isotactic PNIPAM being insoluble in water and syndiotactic PNIPAM being only barely soluble.¹ As recent advances in controlled radical polymerization methods have made the tailoring of stereoregularity possible, so called stereoblock copolymers based on the same monomer may be realised.

By utilising reversible addition-fragmentation transfer polymerization (RAFT) ABA stereoblock copolymers of PNIPAM having stereoregular blocks have been synthesized.² The properties of aqueous solutions of these stereoblock copolymers were studied with respect to the molecular characteristics, *eg.* order of the blocks, block lengths and molecular weight.³

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