Session 1: Introduction

MESA School Leuven 2025

Convective Overshooting in Stars

Lecturer: Poojan Agrawal (KU Leuven)

TAs:

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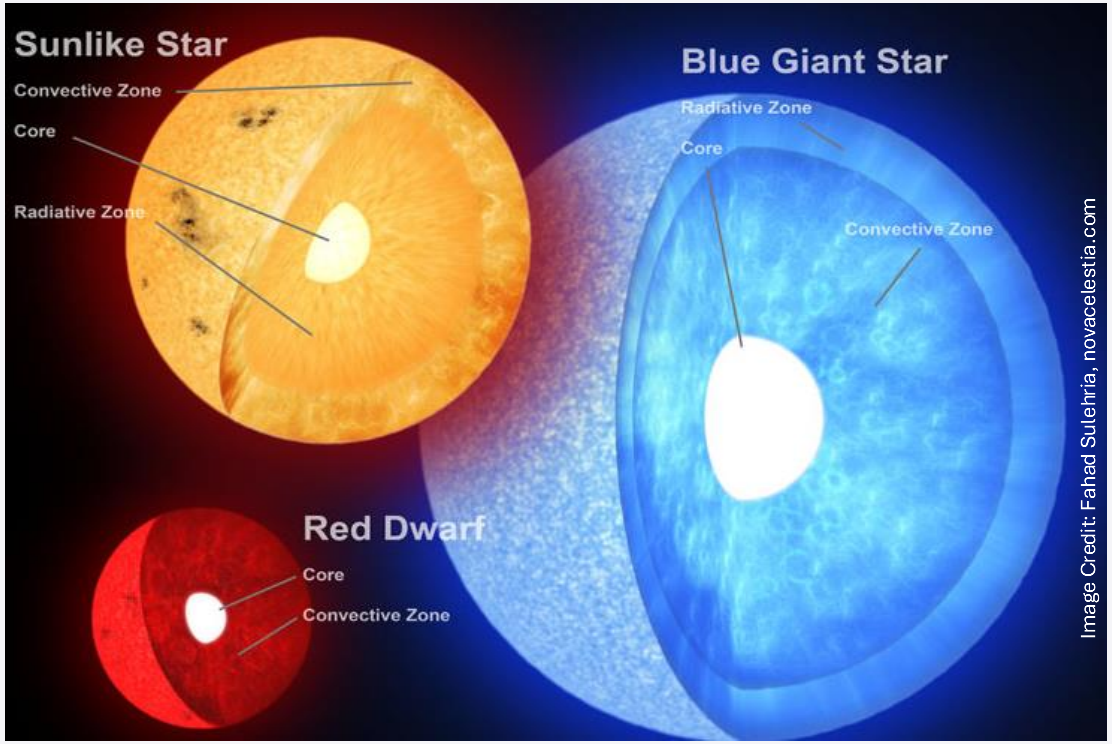
Daniel Pauli (KU Leuven)

Mathijs Vanrespaille (KU Leuven)

Sunny Wong (University of California Santa Barbara)



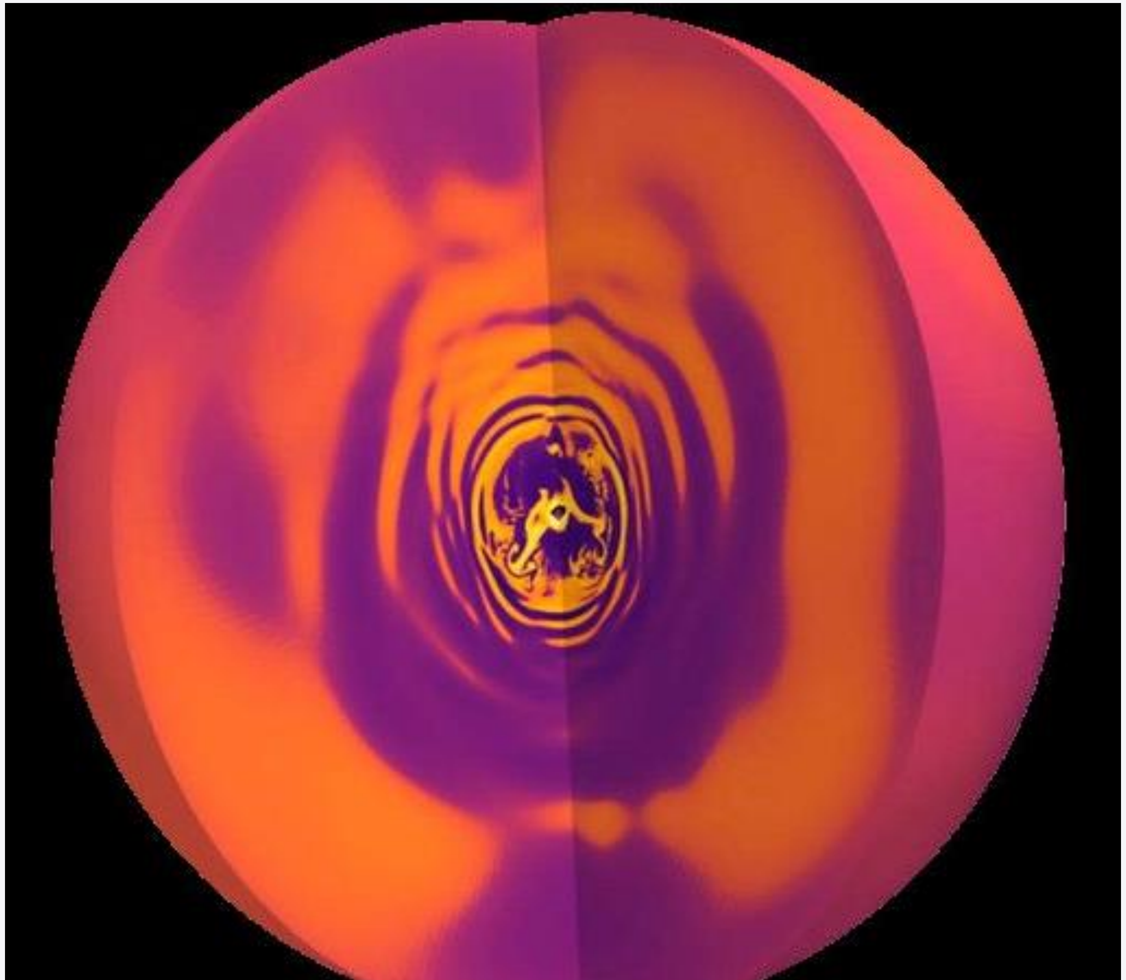
Funded by the European Union

Convection in everyday life

Credit: Getty Images

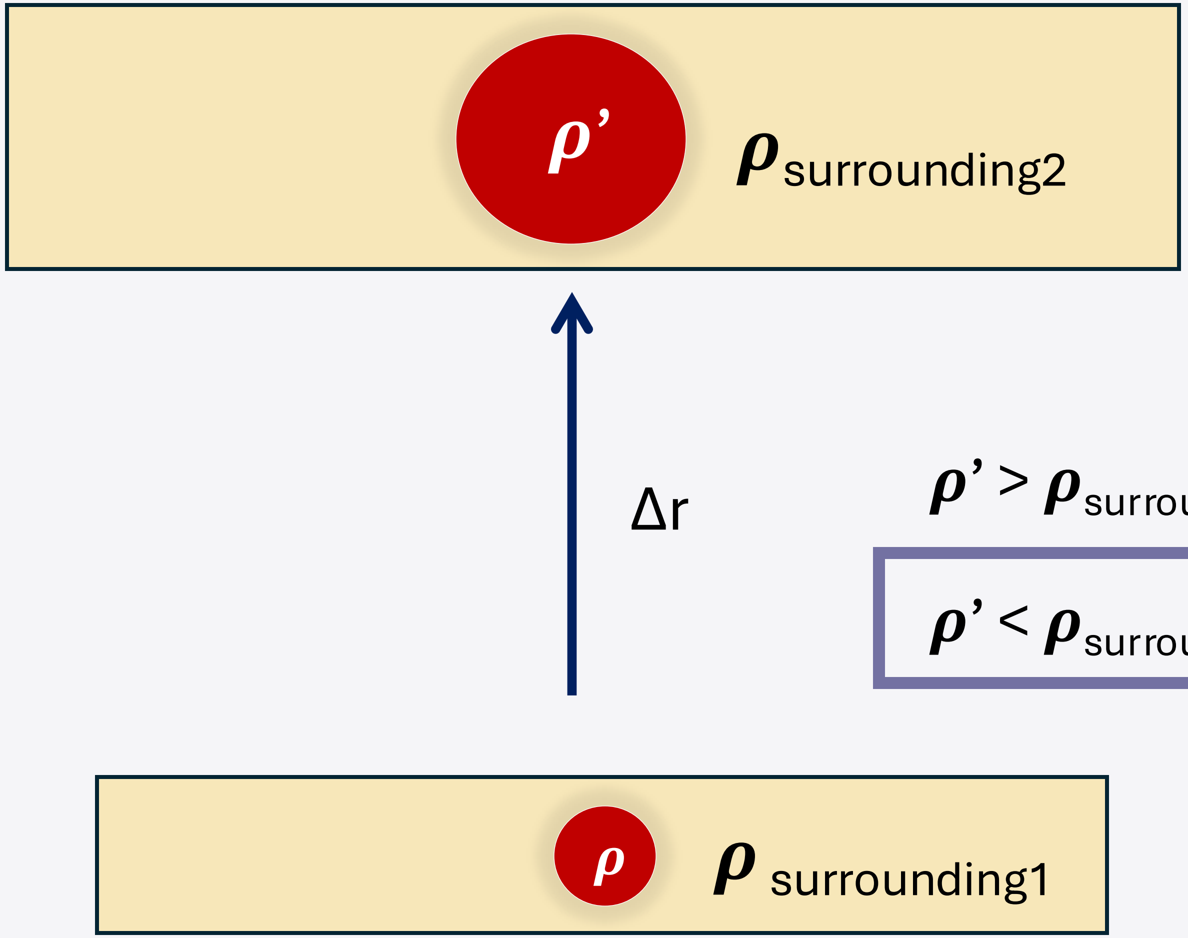
Modelling Convection

- Mode of transport of energy, matter and angular momentum
- Turbulent and dynamic process – best modelled in three-dimensions
- A simple approximation – Mixing length theory – (MLT, Böhm-Vitense, 1958)
- Used in Cox & Giuli 1968, Henyey, Vardya, and Bodenheimer 1965 amongst many others.



Snapshot from simulations of core convection, Credit: Edelmann et al. 2019

Convection - Density formulation



Heats up and expands

$\rho' > \rho_{surrounding2}$ → stable → oscillations

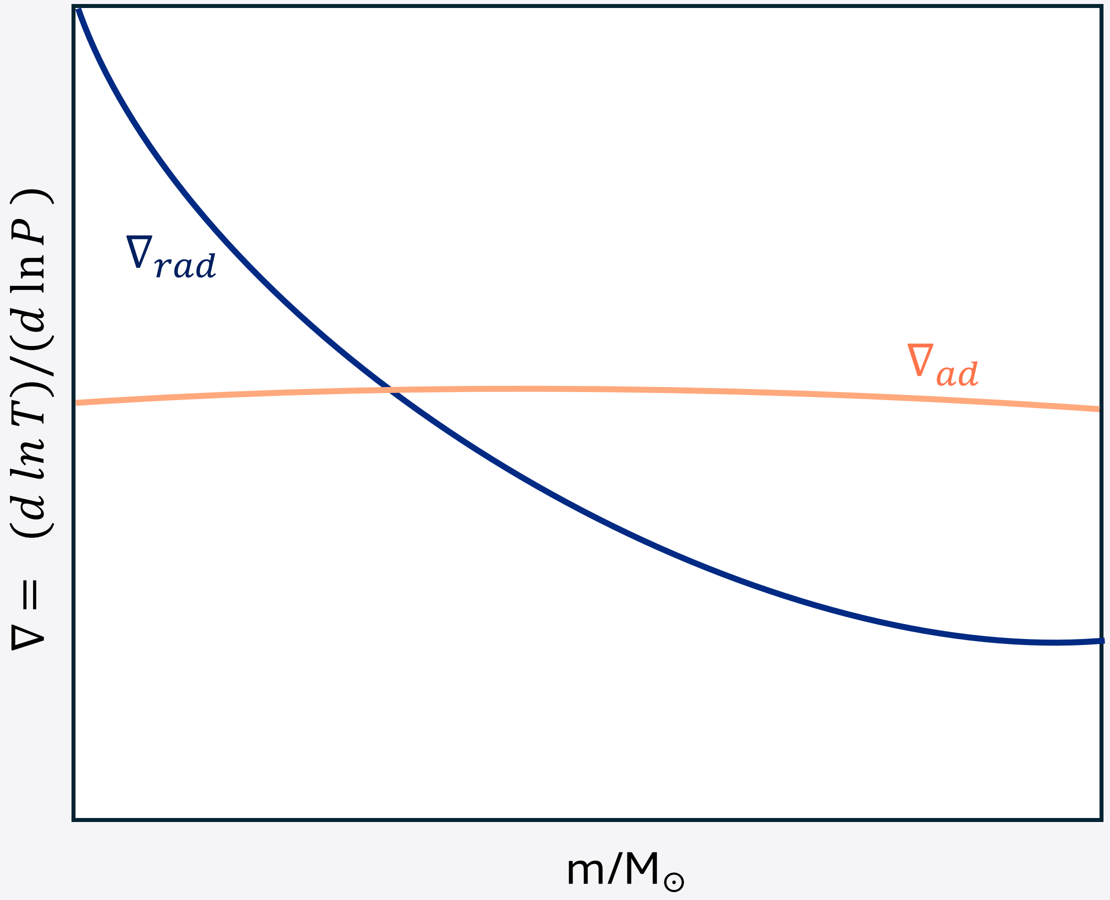
$\boxed{\rho' < \rho_{surrounding2} \rightarrow \text{unstable} \rightarrow \text{convection}}$

Convection - Temperature formulation

- Temperature gradient, $\nabla = \frac{d\ ln\ T}{d\ \ln\ P}$
- Radiative temperature gradient,

  ∇_{rad} – energy carried by radiative transfer
- Adiabatic temperature gradient,

  ∇_{ad} – energy carried by a parcel of gas without exchanging heat with its surroundings.



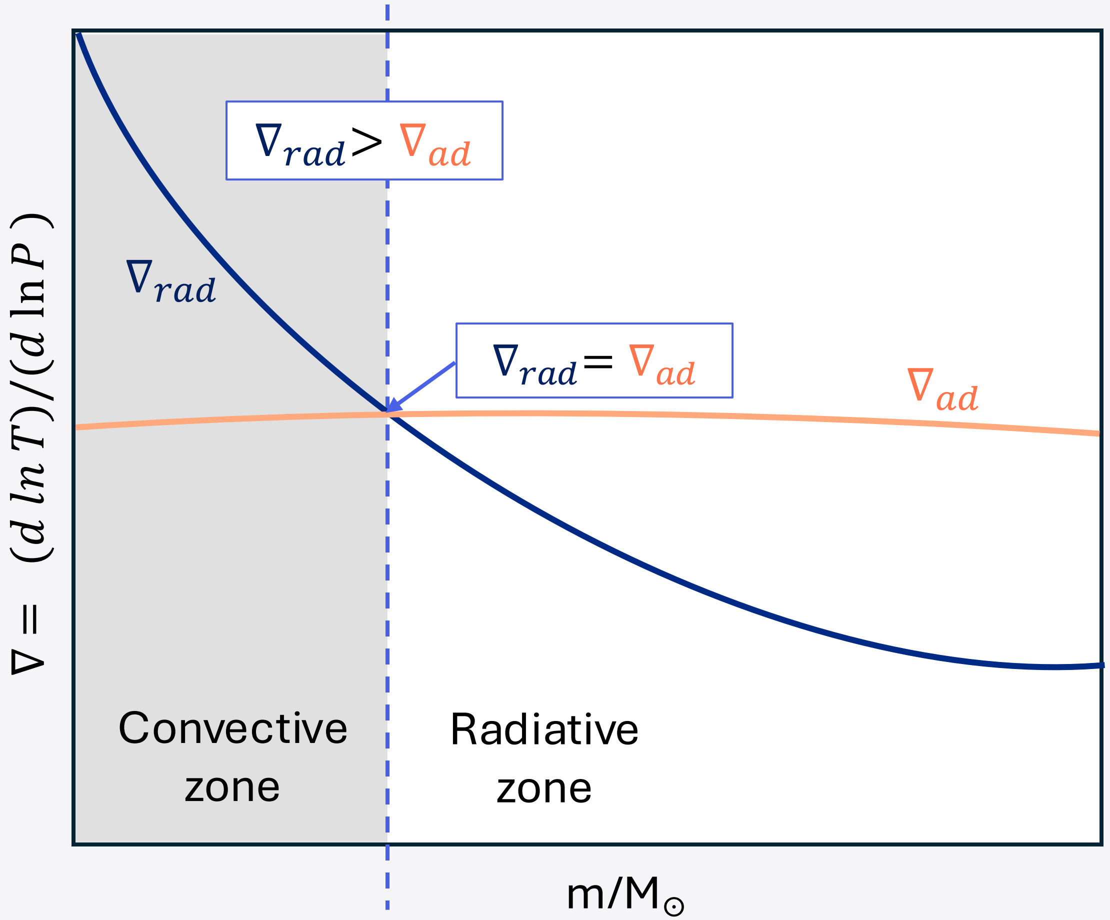
Convective boundaries

- Convection happens when:

  $\nabla_{rad} > \nabla_{ad}$ (Schwarzschild criteria-named after Karl Schwarzschild)

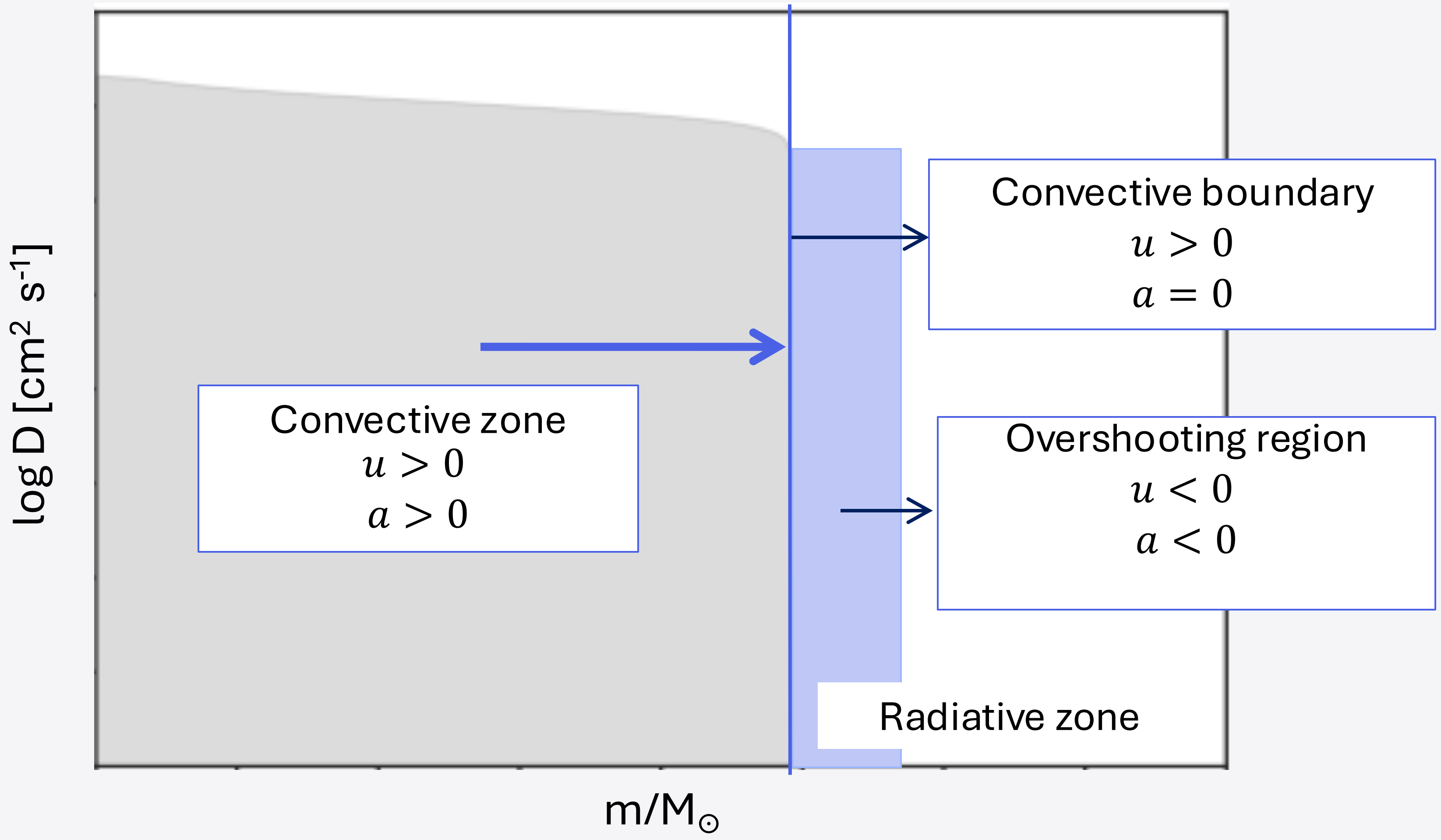
- Mixing Length, l = $\alpha_{\mathrm{MLT}} \times \mathrm{H_P}$
- Pressure Scale Height,

$$H_P = -\frac{d\,r}{d\ln P}$$



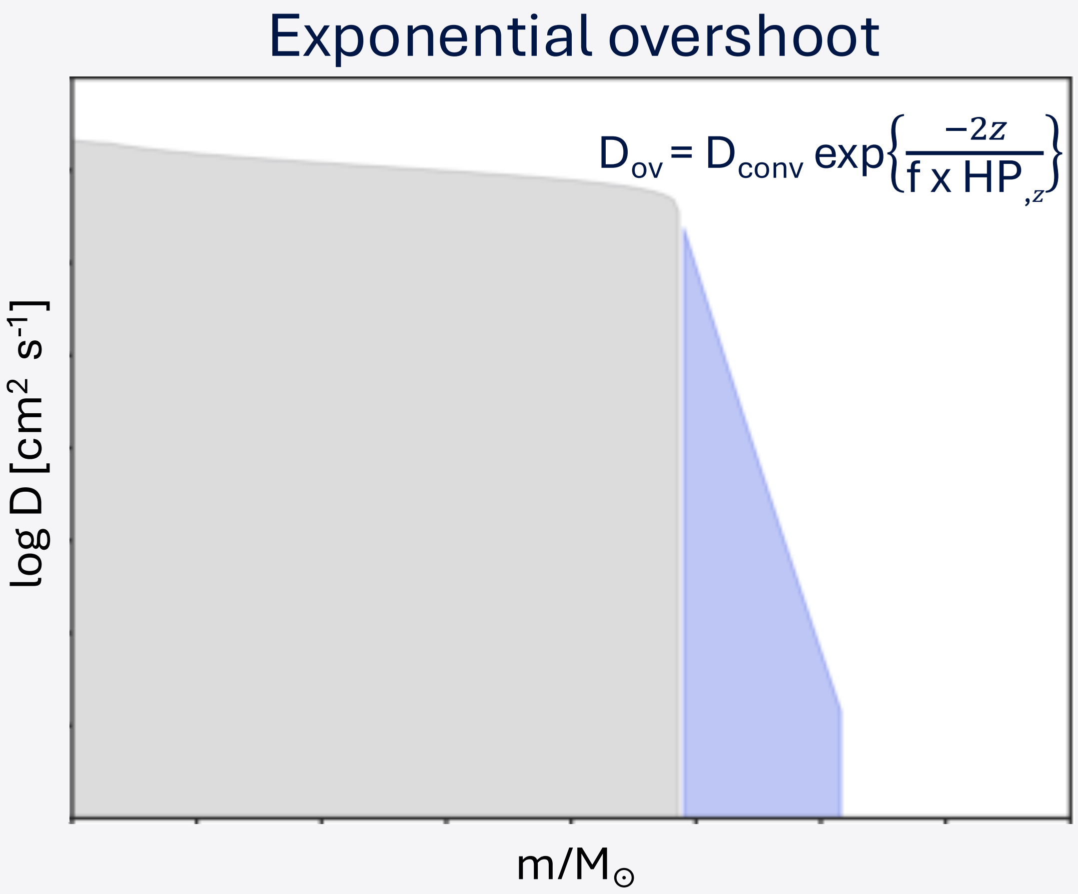
Convective Overshooting

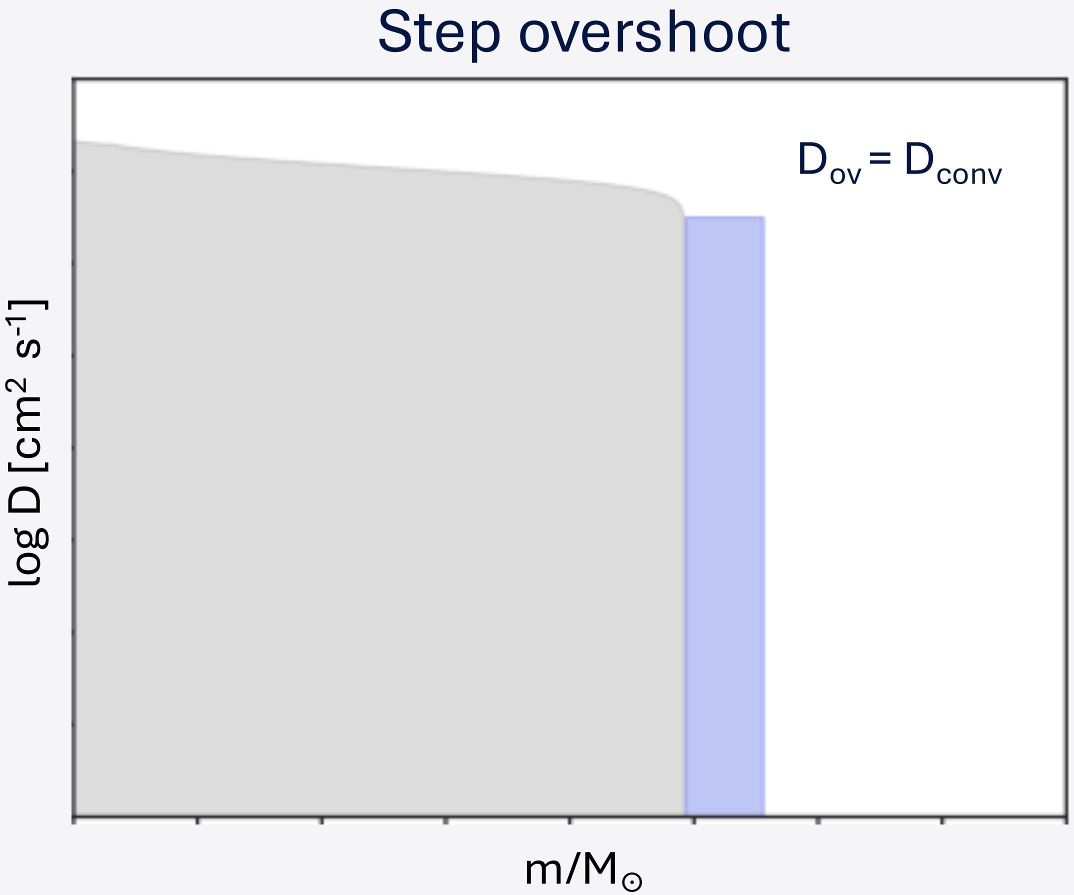
Extending mixing with convective overshoot



Note: Overshoot only aids chemical mixing but no heat transport.

Overshoot Schemes





For more overshooting schemes see e.g., Pols et al. (1998), Bressan et al. (1981)

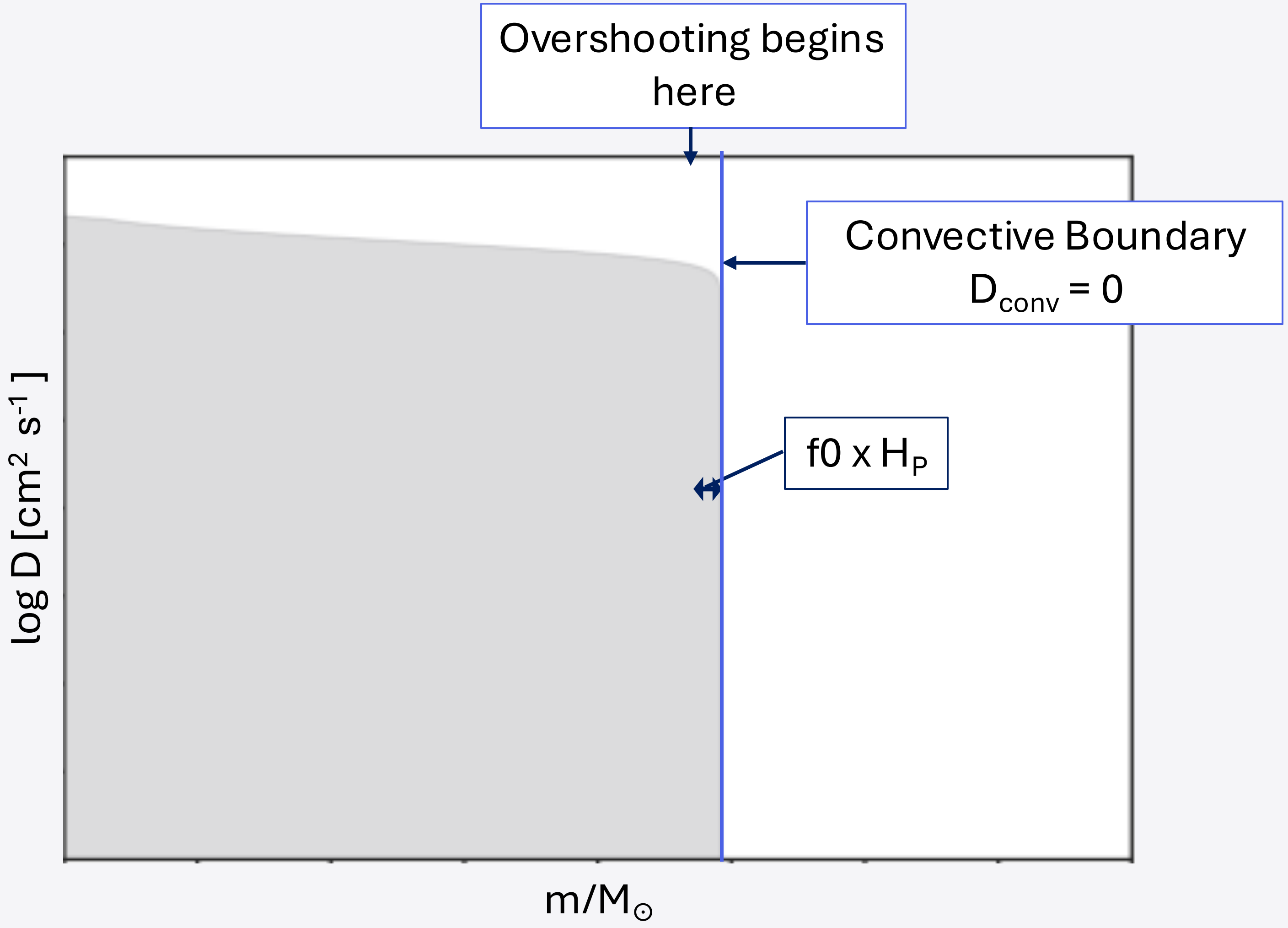
Overshooting: f and f0

Step overshoot:

$D_{ov} = D_{conv}$

Exponential overshoot:

$D_{ov} = D_{conv} \exp\left\{\frac{-2z}{f \times HP_{,z}}\right\}$



Overshooting: f and f0

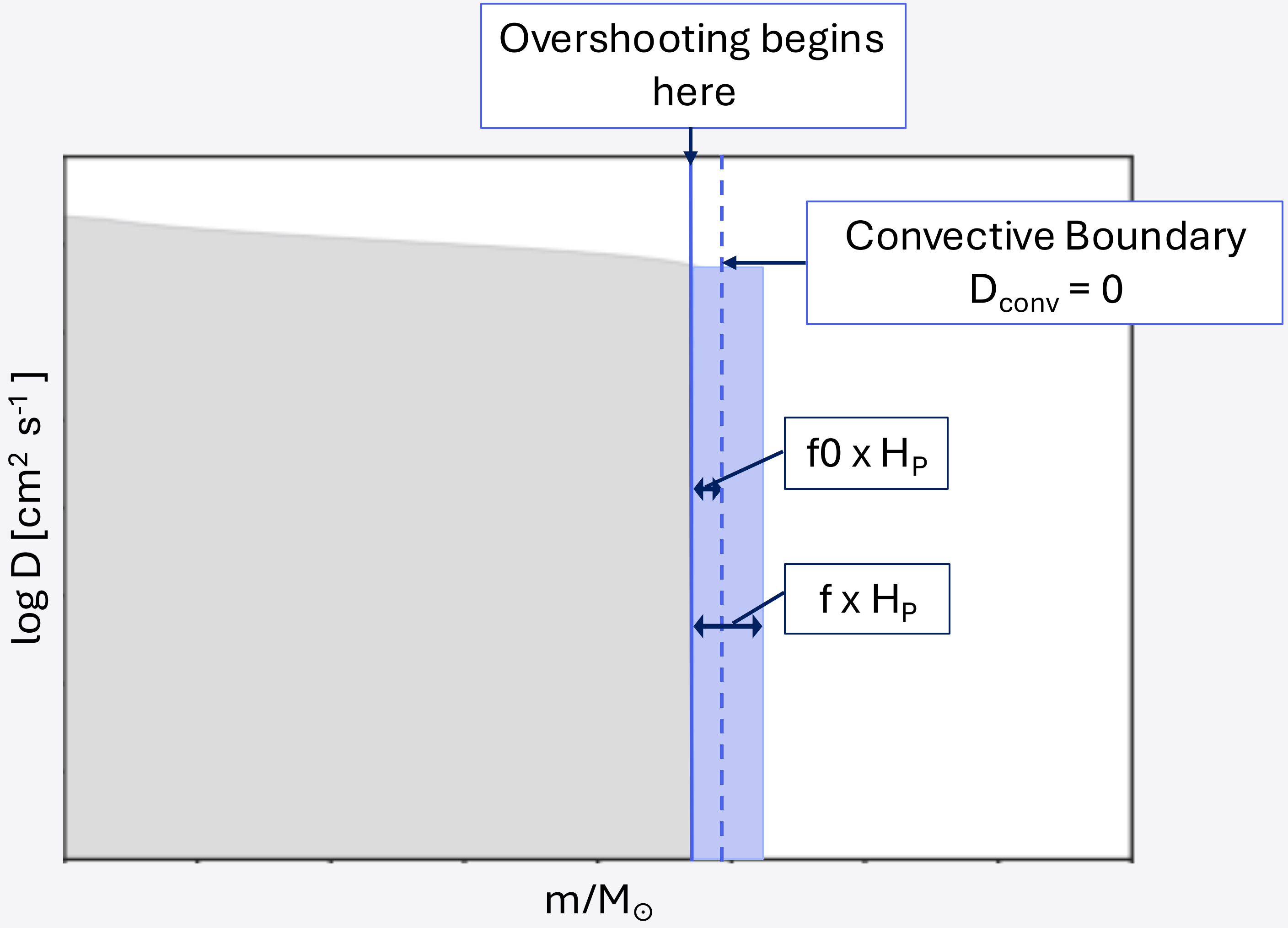
Step overshoot:

$D_{ov} = \mathbf{D_{conv,f0}}$

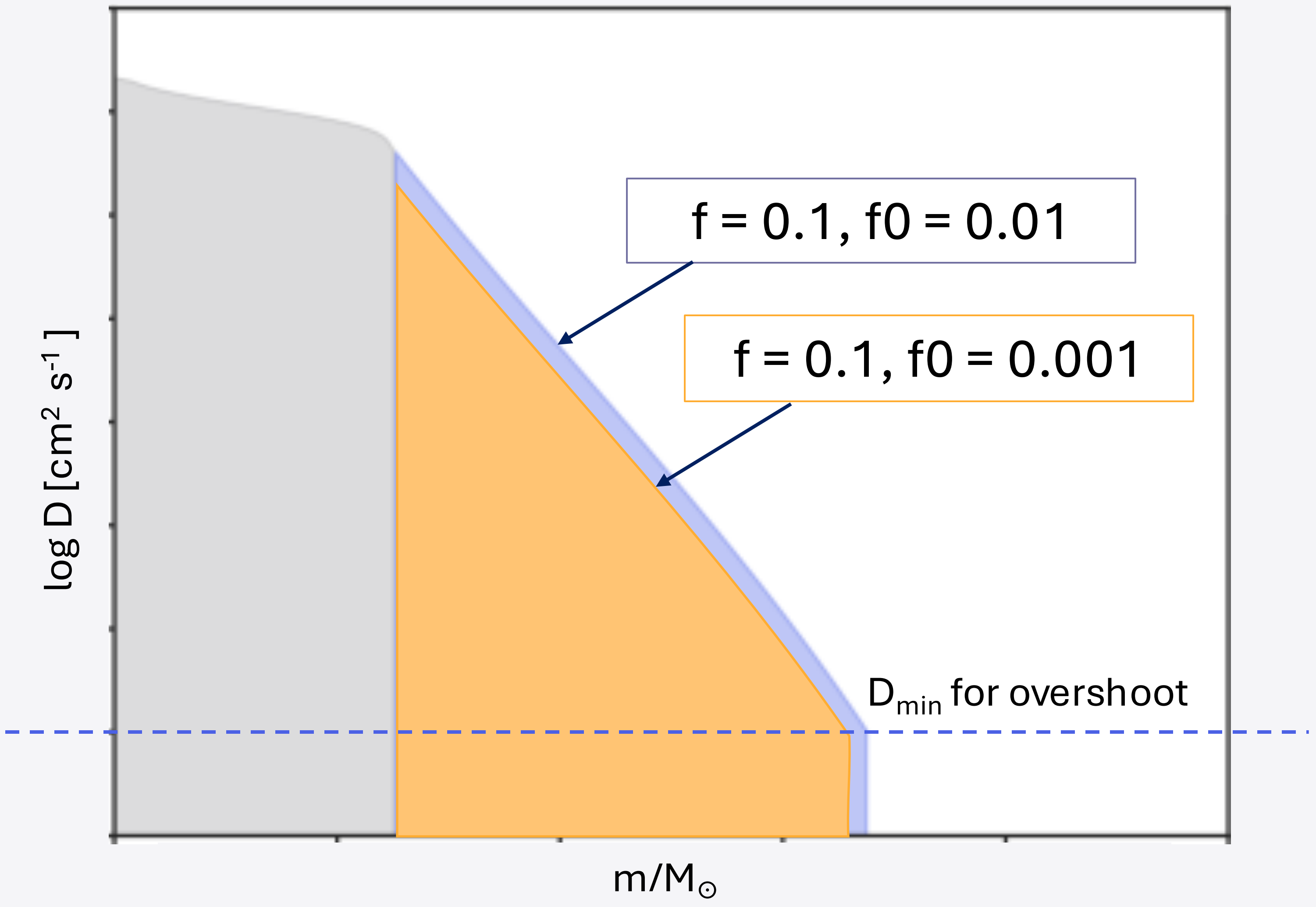
Exponential overshoot:

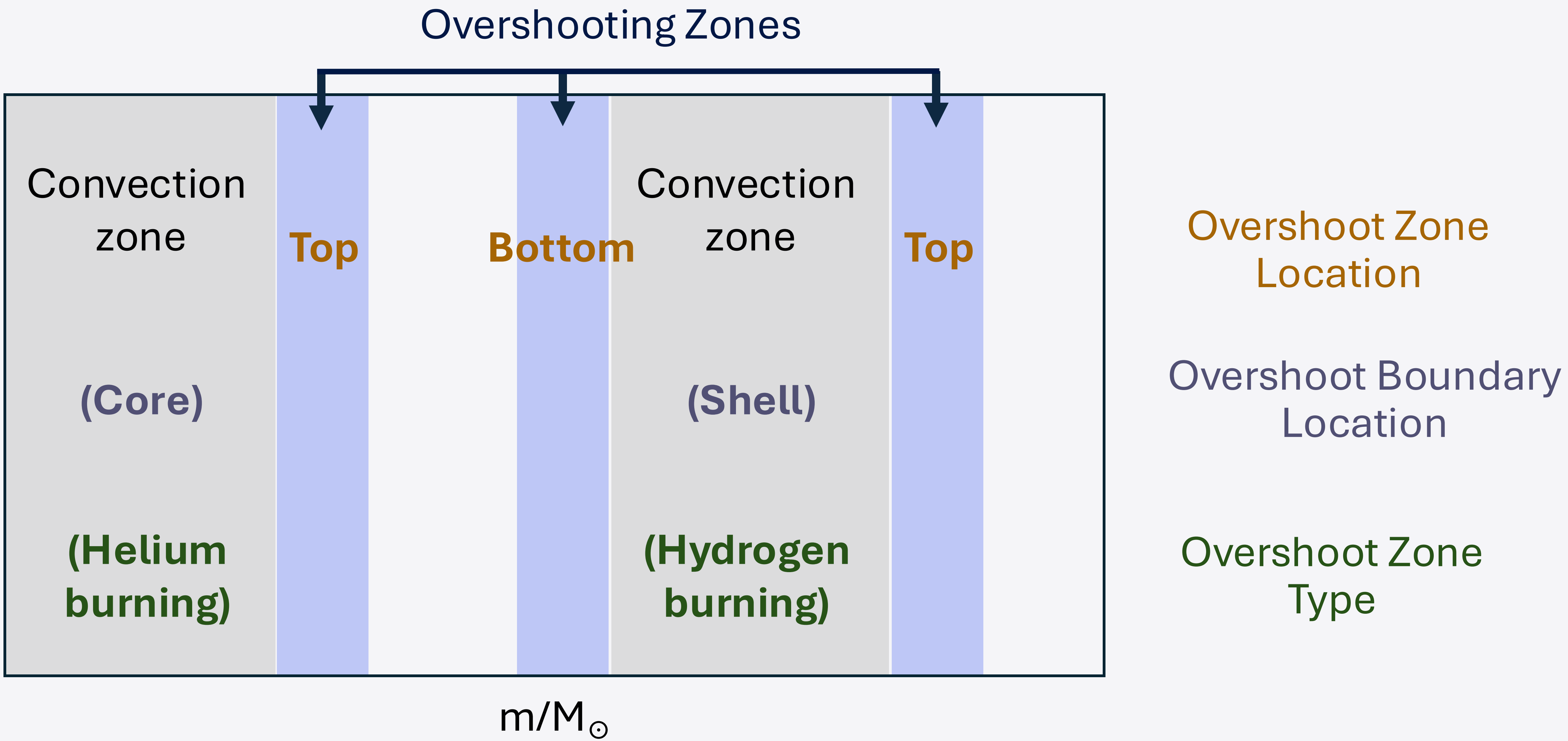
$D_{ov} = \mathbf{D_{conv,f0}} \exp\left\{\frac{-2z}{f \times HP_{,z}}\right\}$

f0 determines where overshooting begins
f determines how far overshooting extends



Varying f0




Overshooting Zones
Convection zone
Top
Bottom
Convection zone
Top
(Core)
(Shell)
(Helium burning)
(Hydrogen burning)
m/M$_\odot$
Overshoot Zone Location
Overshoot Boundary Location
Overshoot Zone Type

Overview of today's labs

MaxiLab 1

Modeling core overshooting in main-sequence stars

MiniLab 2

Overshooting during core helium burning (CHeB) phase

Work directory in MESA

Source Code

Input Files

src	**make**
inlist	mk
inlist_pgstar	clean
inlist_project	rn
README.rst	re

Executables for compiling and running MESA

Documentation

Source Folder ` src`

run.f90	Main program for MESA
run_star_extras.f90	Fortran Subroutine for adding your custom physics to MESA

Extending MESA with run_star_extras
Bill Wolf

Executables for compiling and running MESA

make	Folder containing makefile with instructions for compiling MESA
mk	Compiles the files in ‘src’ folder, links them against MESA, and produces the ‘star’ executable file.
rn	Runs MESA
re	Resume MESA run starting from a pre-saved photo
clean	Removes the compiled files (e.g., for a fresh compile)

Input Files

inlist	Default input file for MESA

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(1) = .true.
   extra_star_job_inlist_name(1) = 'inlist_project'
/ ! end of star_job namelist
```

```
&controls
   read_extra_controls_inlist(1) = .true.
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```

```
&eos
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```
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```

inlist_project

```
&pgstar
   read_extra_pgstar_inlist(1) = .true.
   extra_pgstar_inlist_name(1) = 'inlist_pgstar'
/ ! end of pgstar namelist
```

inlist_pgstar

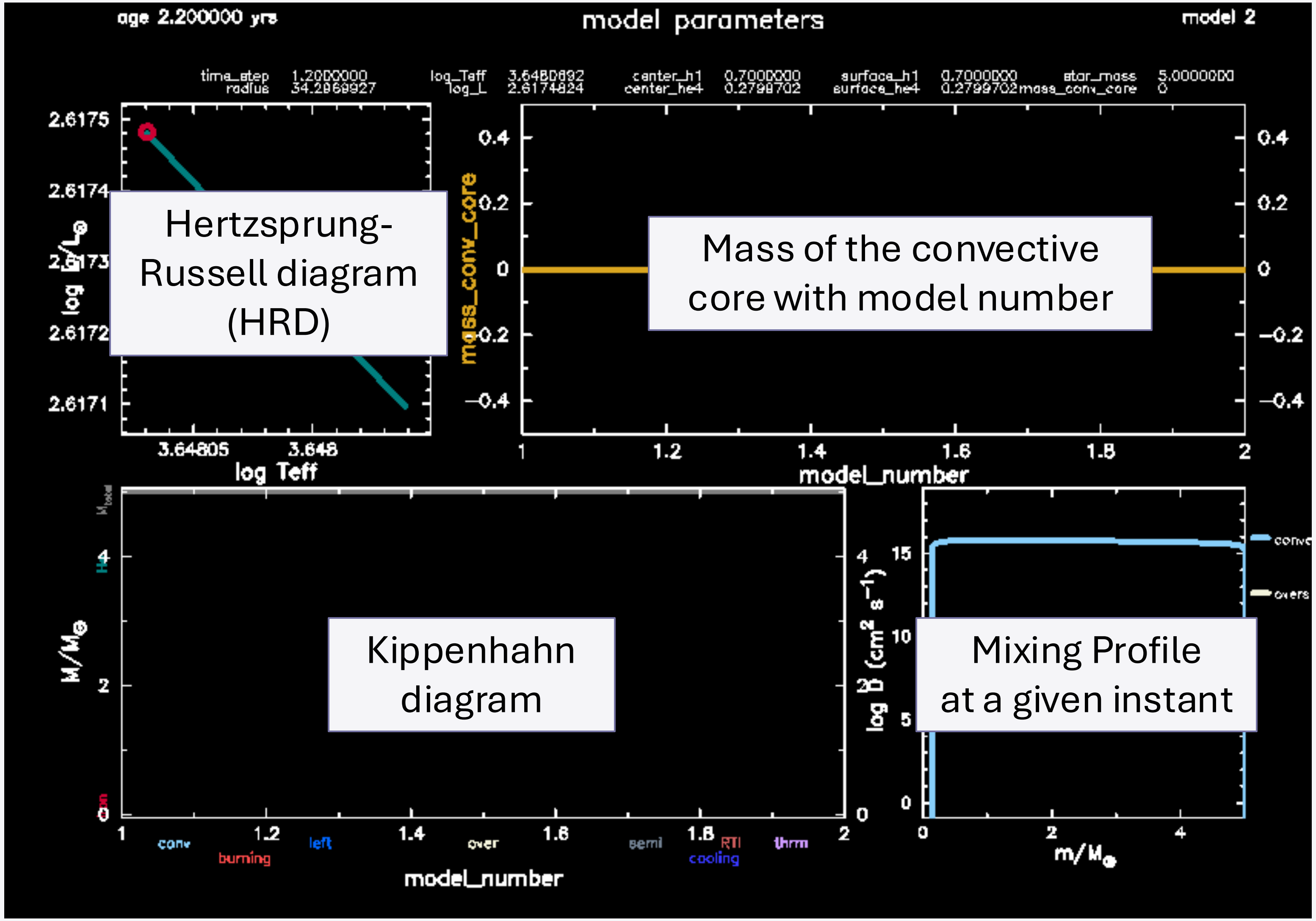
Lab 1
Session 1

Setting up inlists and 5$M_\odot$ model with overshooting

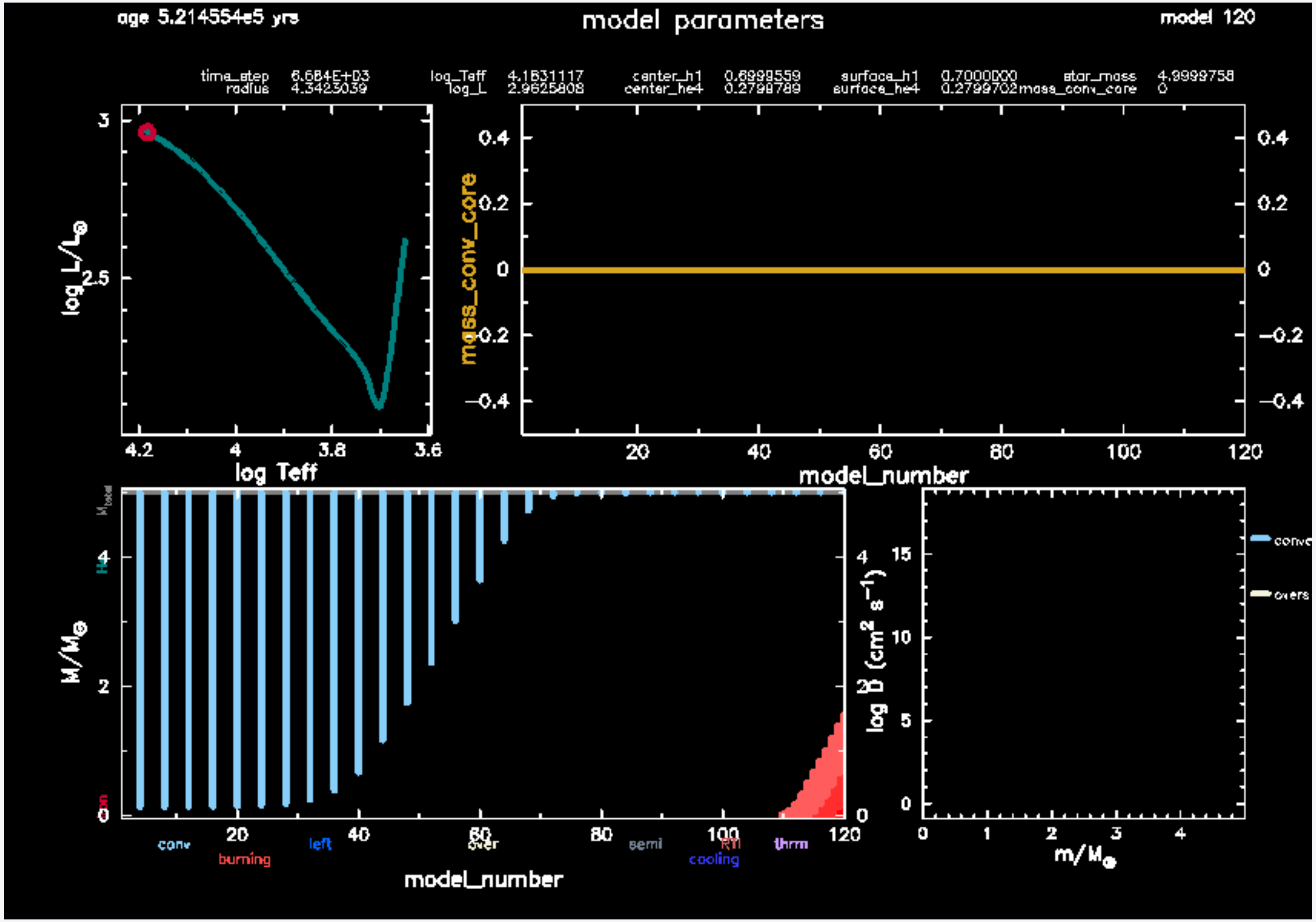
- Setting up your MESA work directory
- Modifying the input physics and saving your final model
- Monitoring the run and customizing output

Session 2: Introduction

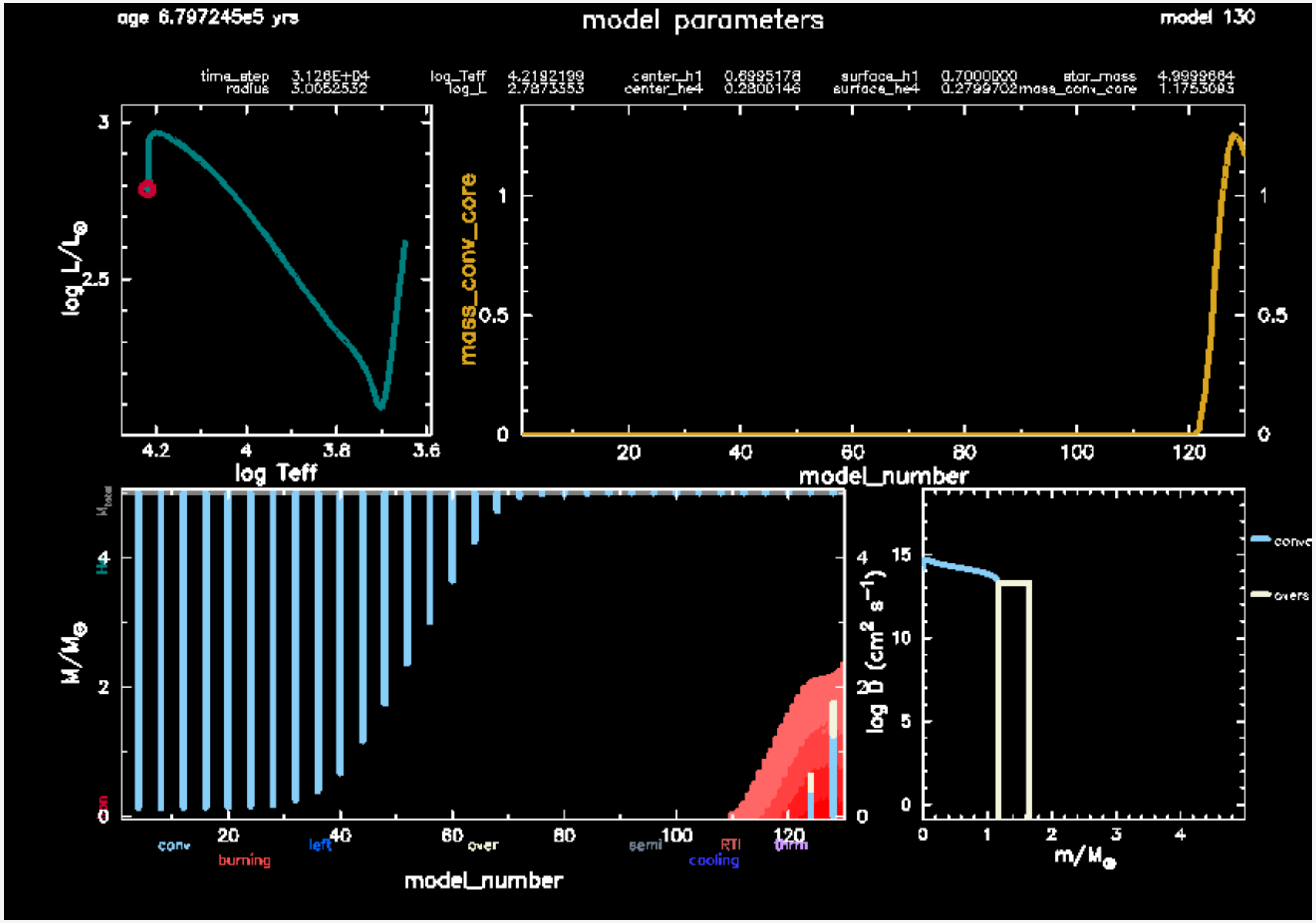
Initial pgplot- 5$M_{\odot}$ star



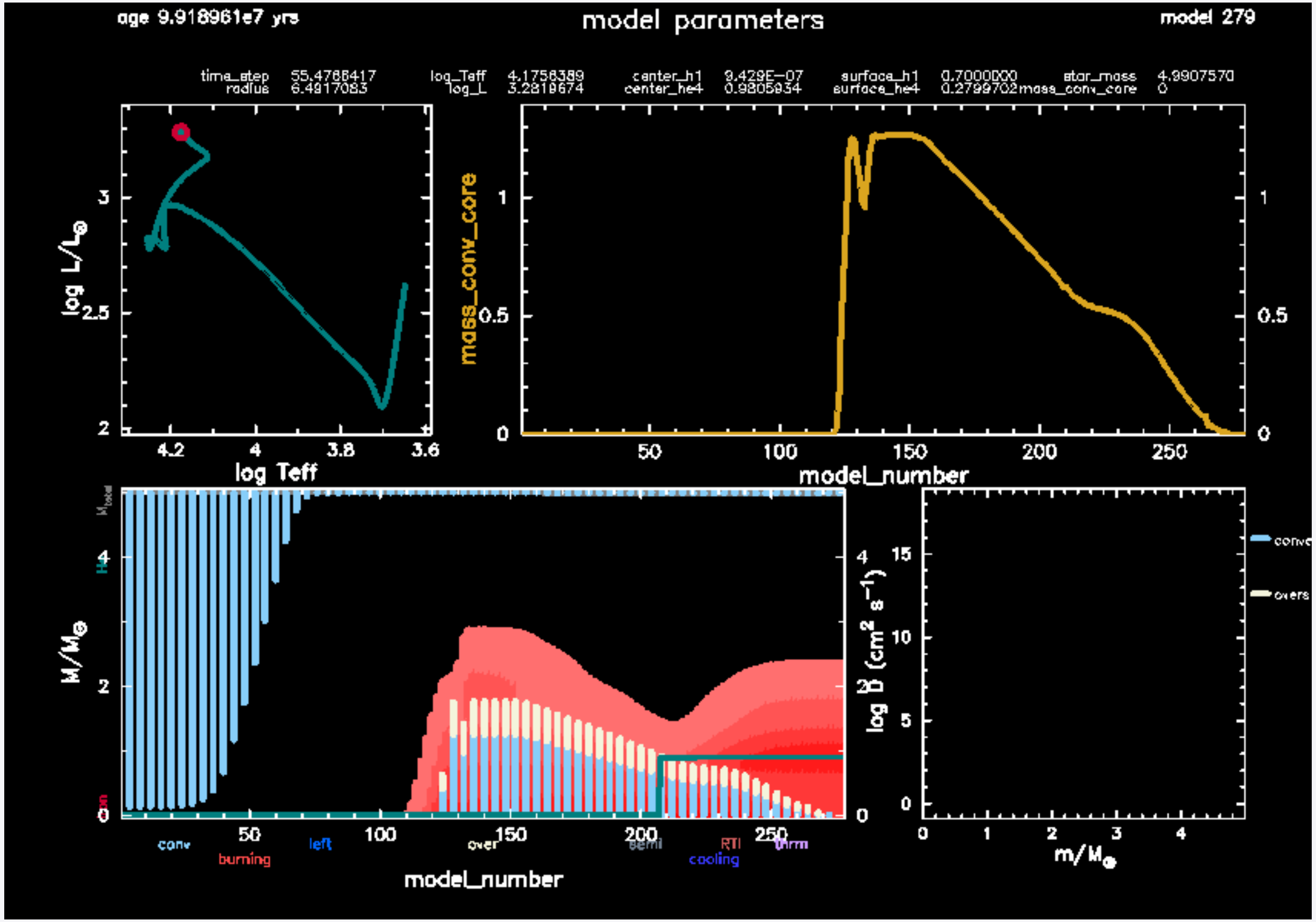
Beginning of hydrogen burning



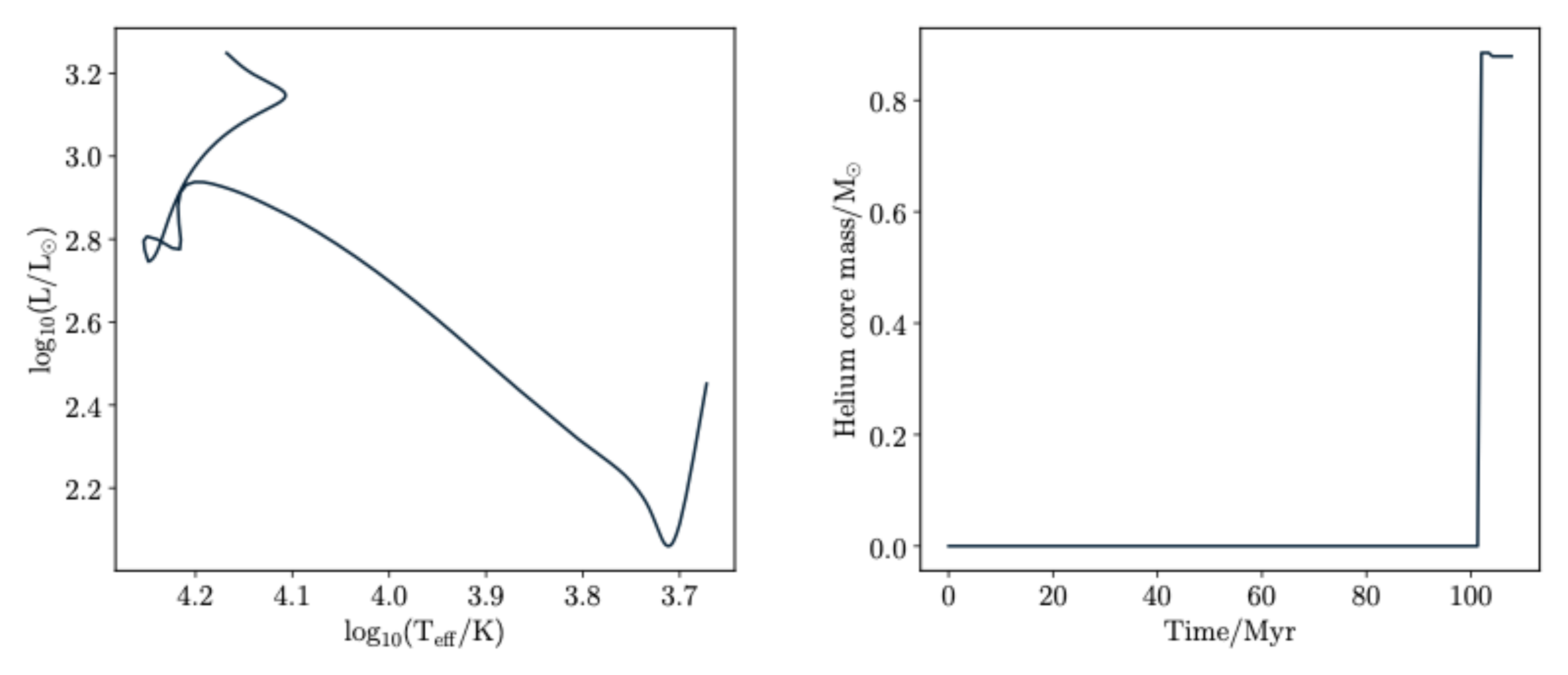
Formation of convective core



End of main-sequence



$5M_\odot$ star



3.2
3.0
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
$\log_{10}(L/L_\odot)$
4.2
4.1
4.0
3.9
3.8
3.7
$\log_{10}(T_{\rm eff}/K)$
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
Helium core mass/$M_\odot$
0
20
40
60
80
100
Time/Myr

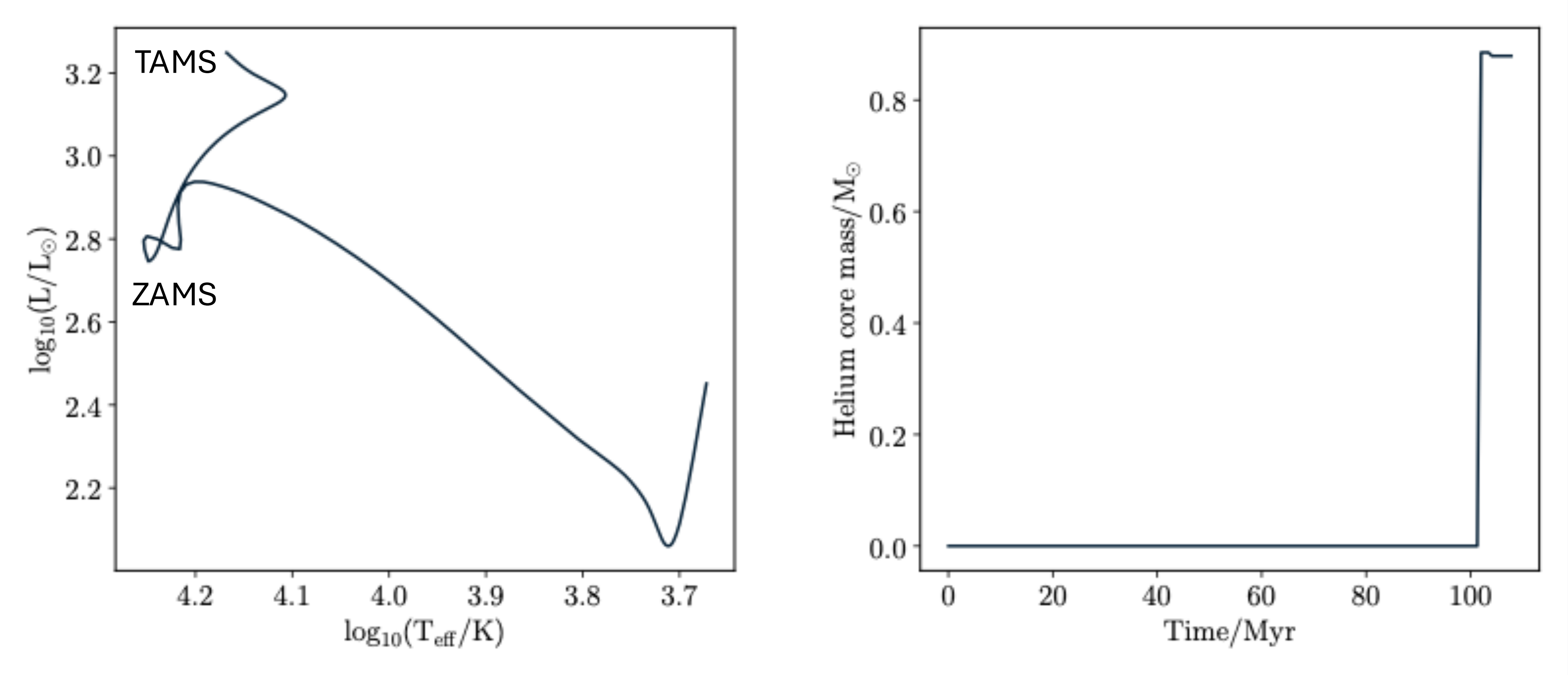
Lab 1 Session 2

Trying different the overshoot settings

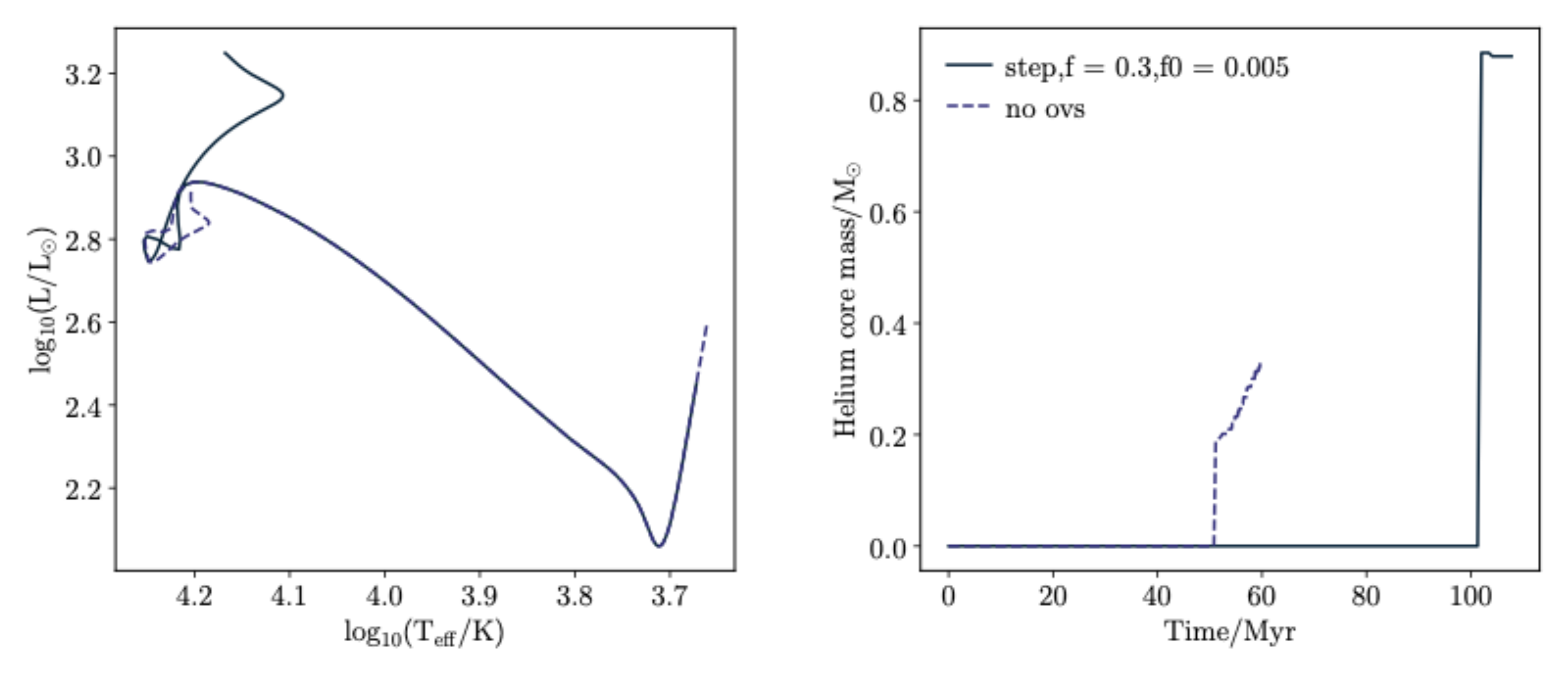
- How does changing overshooting changes stellar evolution?
- Pick a value from the spreadsheet, put your name /initials to mark that the values have been taken
- Make your own plots

Session 2: Wrap-Up

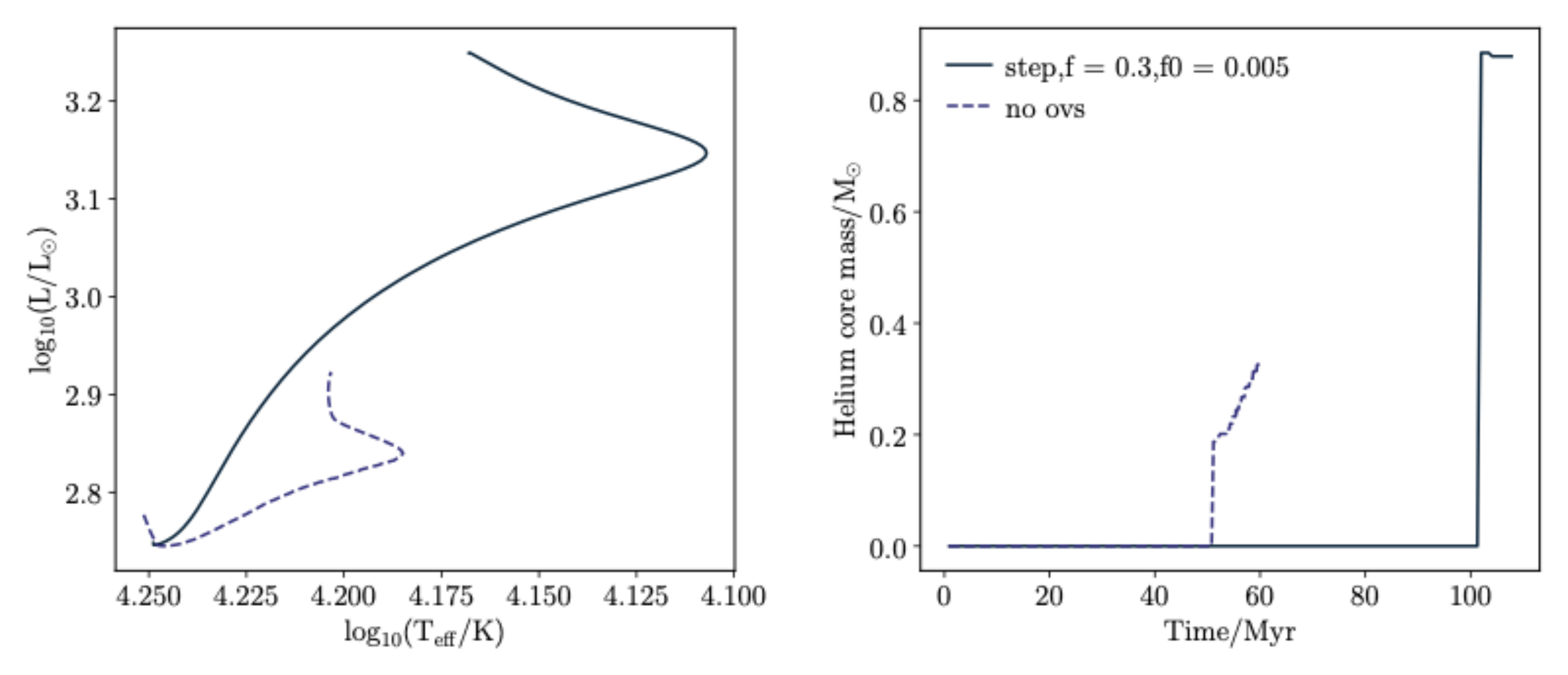
$5M_\odot$ star


TAMS
ZAMS
3.2
3.0
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
$\log_{10}(L/L_\odot)$
4.2
4.1
4.0
3.9
3.8
3.7
$\log_{10}(T_{eff}/K)$
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
Helium core mass/$M_\odot$
0
20
40
60
80
100
Time/Myr

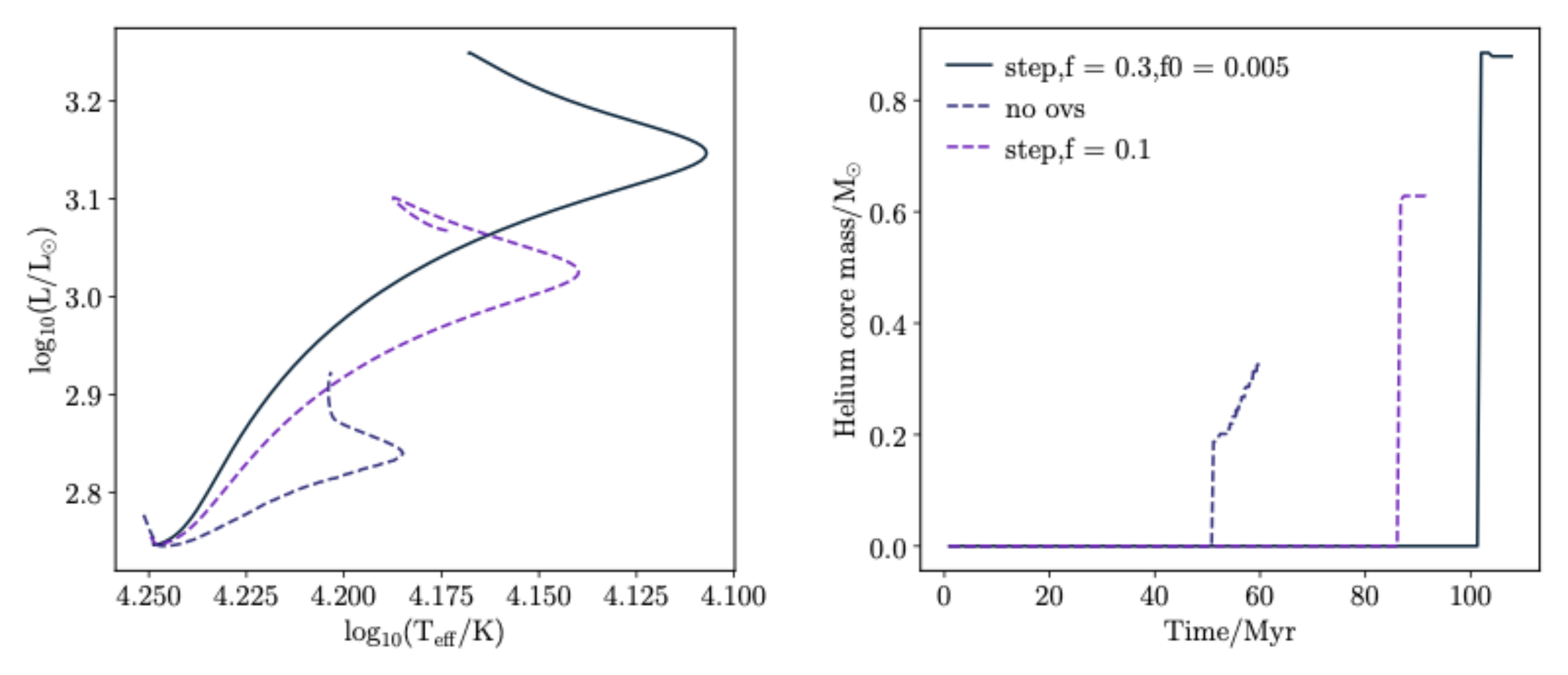
$5M_\odot$ model with and without overshooting



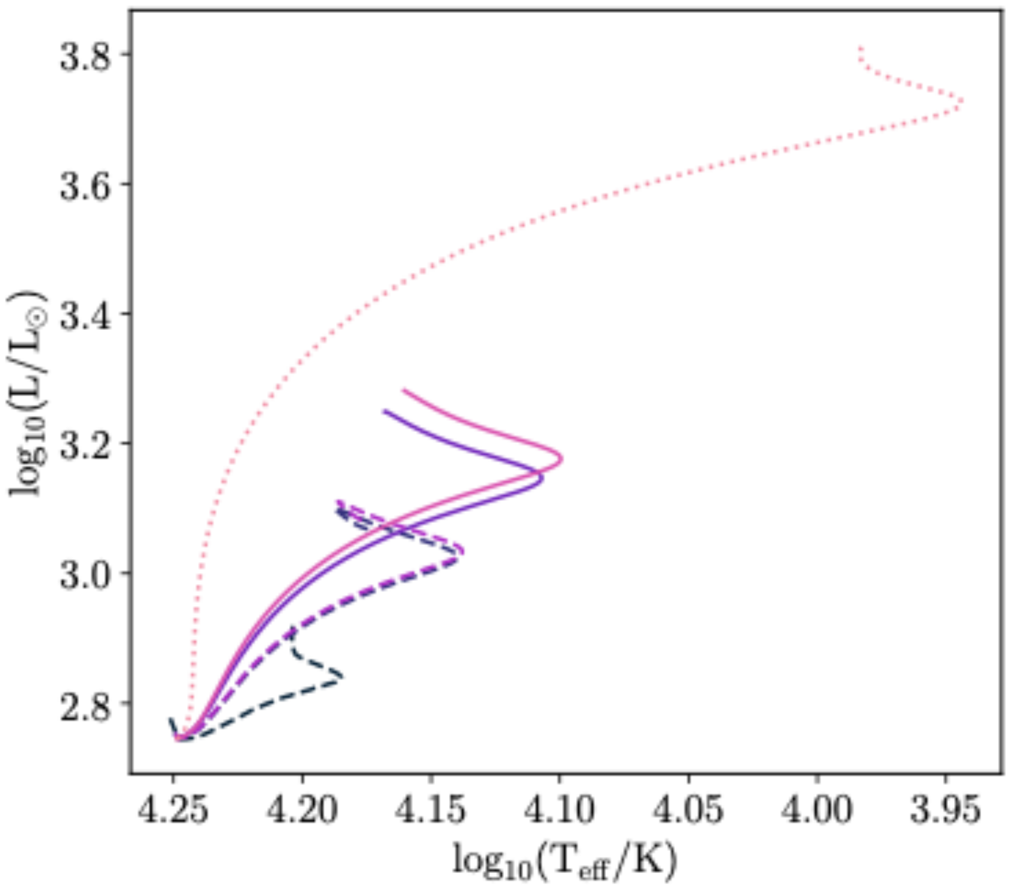
Omitting pre-main-sequence

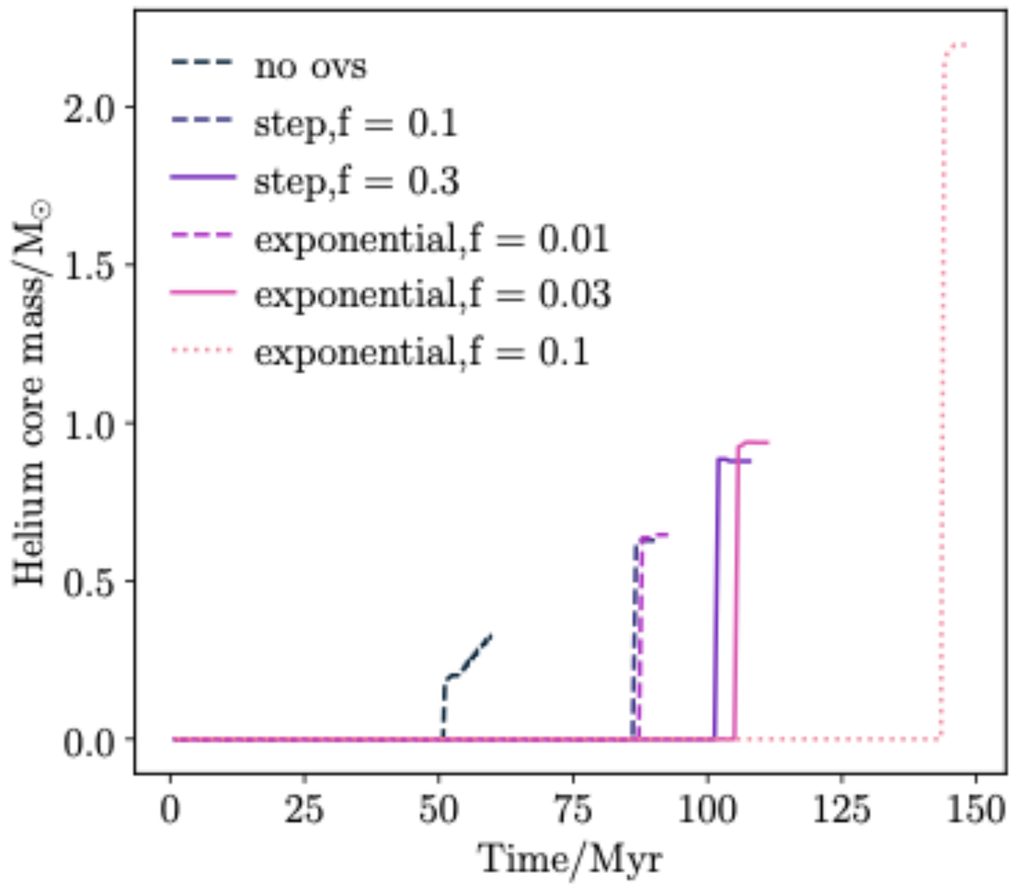


Changing overshoot value

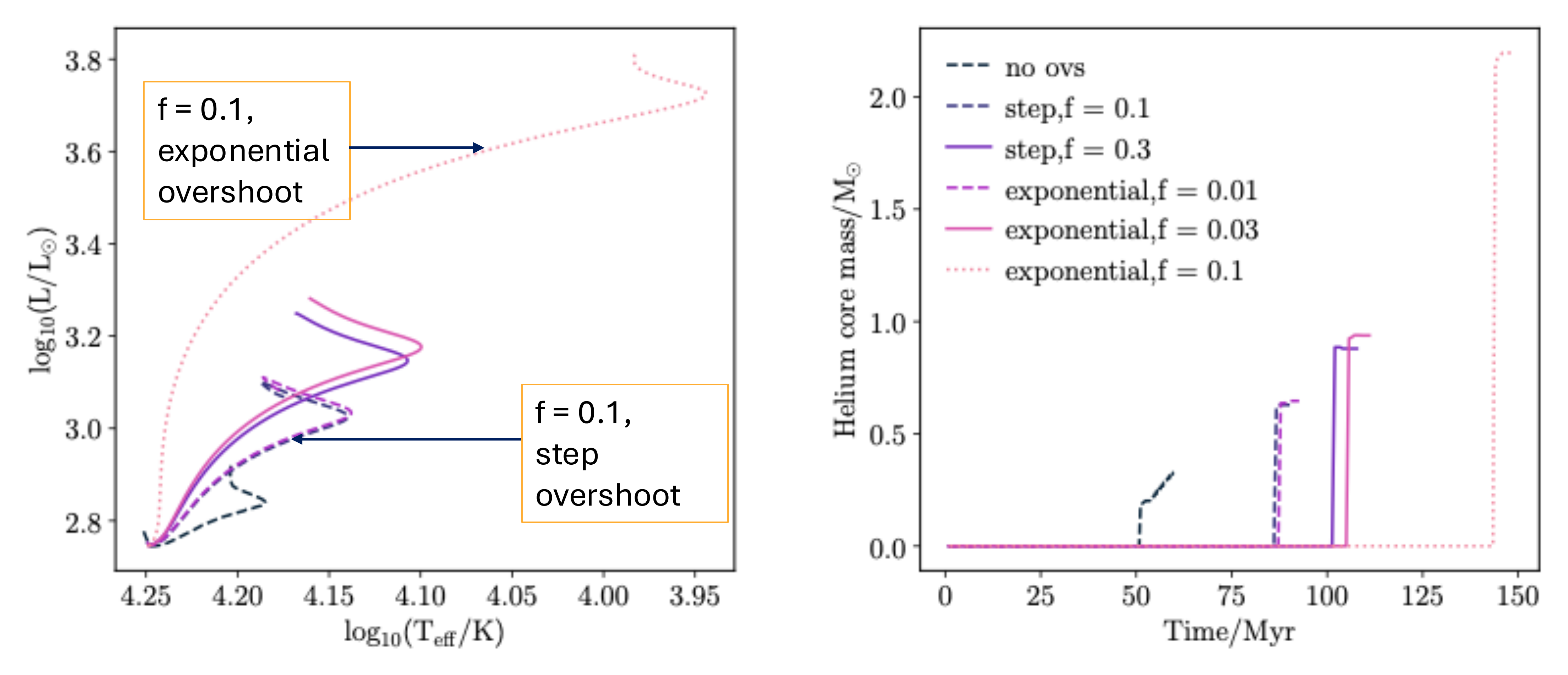


Changing overshoot scheme

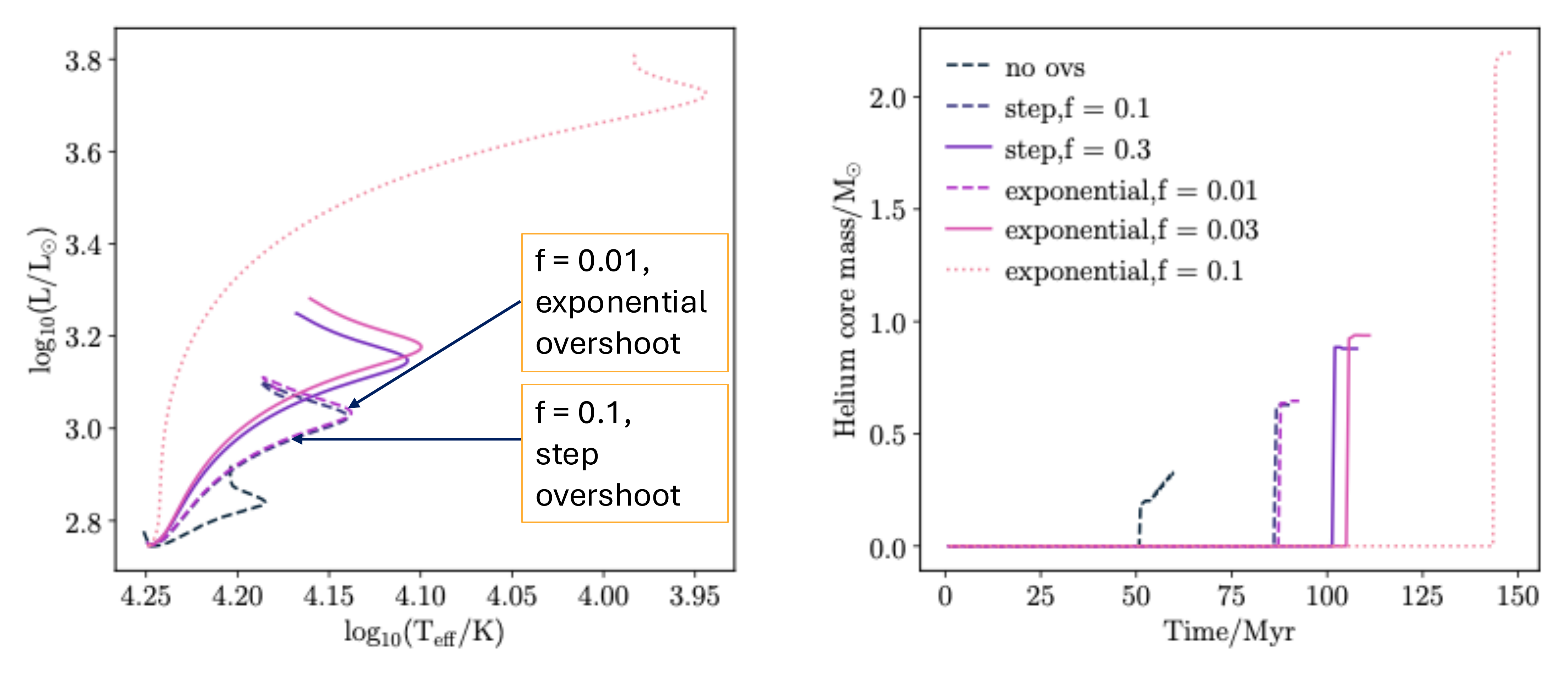




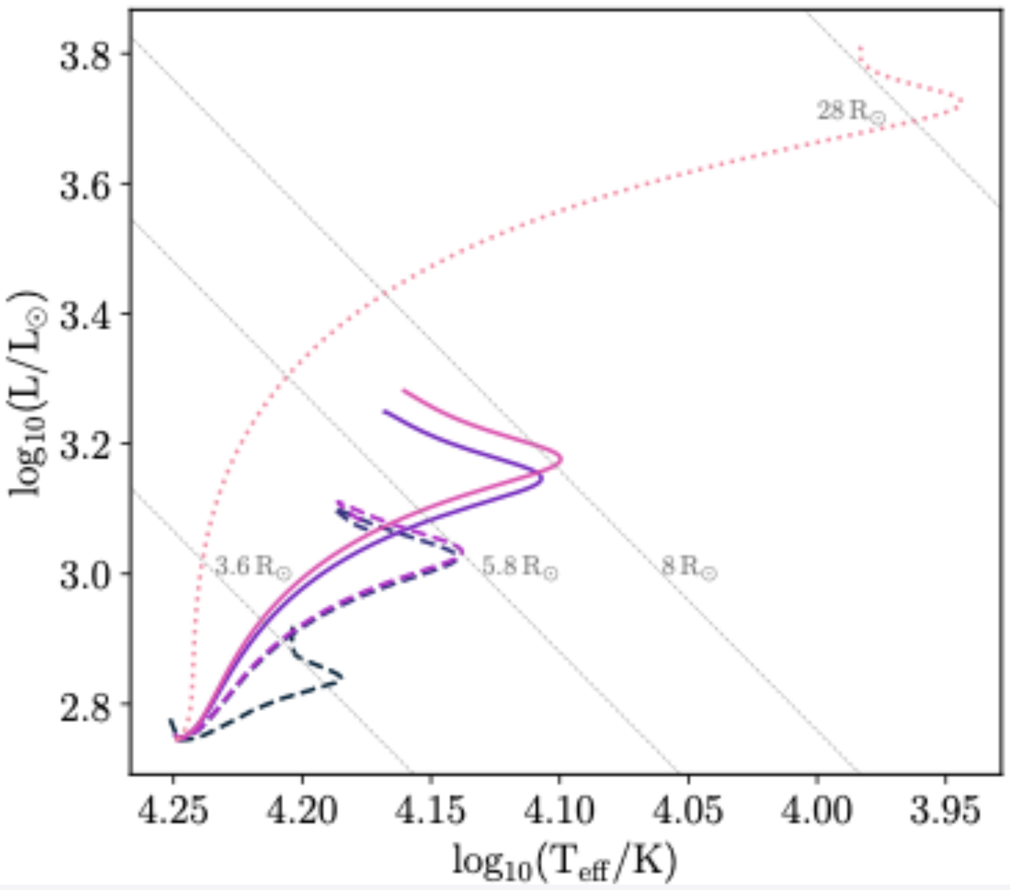
Changing overshoot scheme

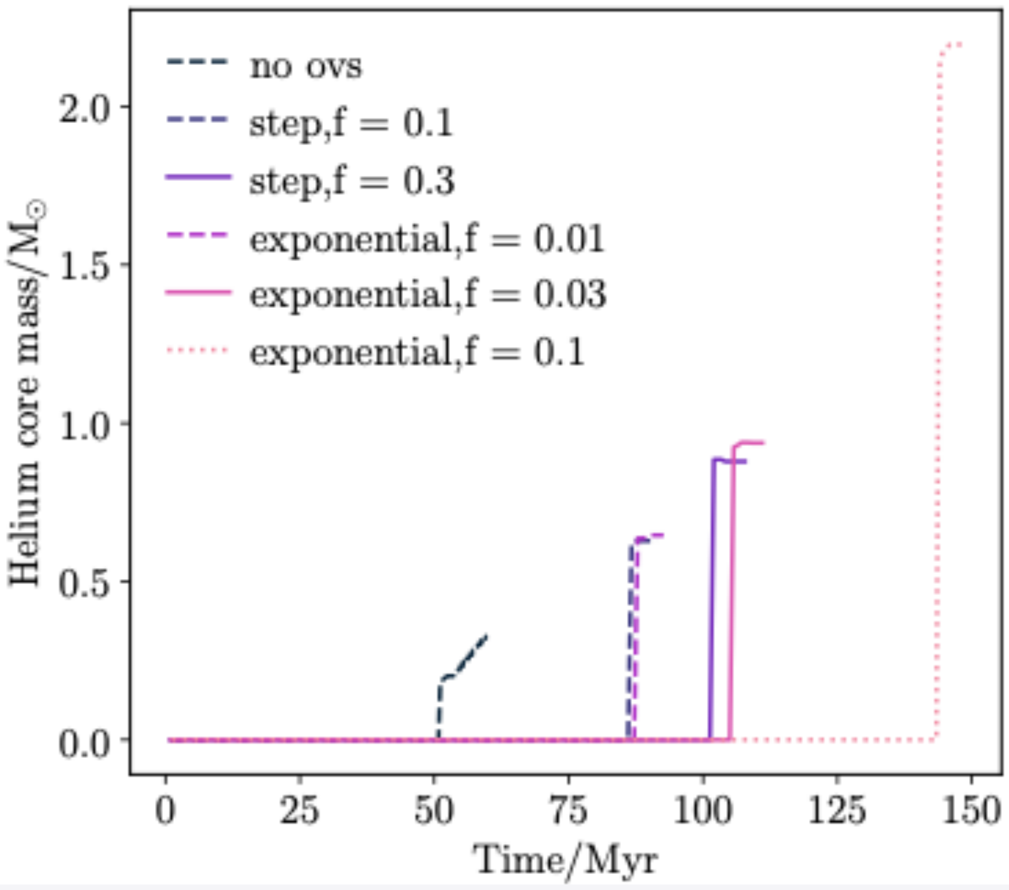


Changing overshoot scheme

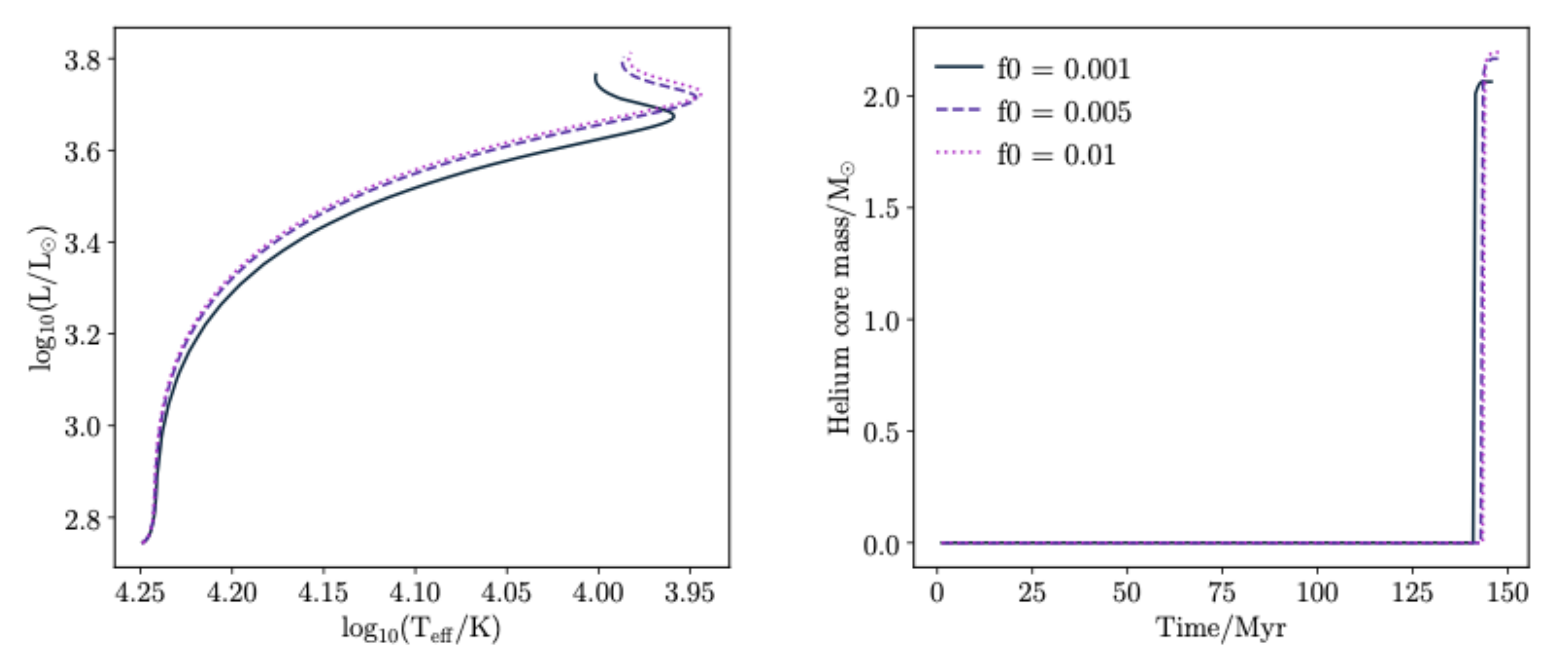


Changing overshoot scheme

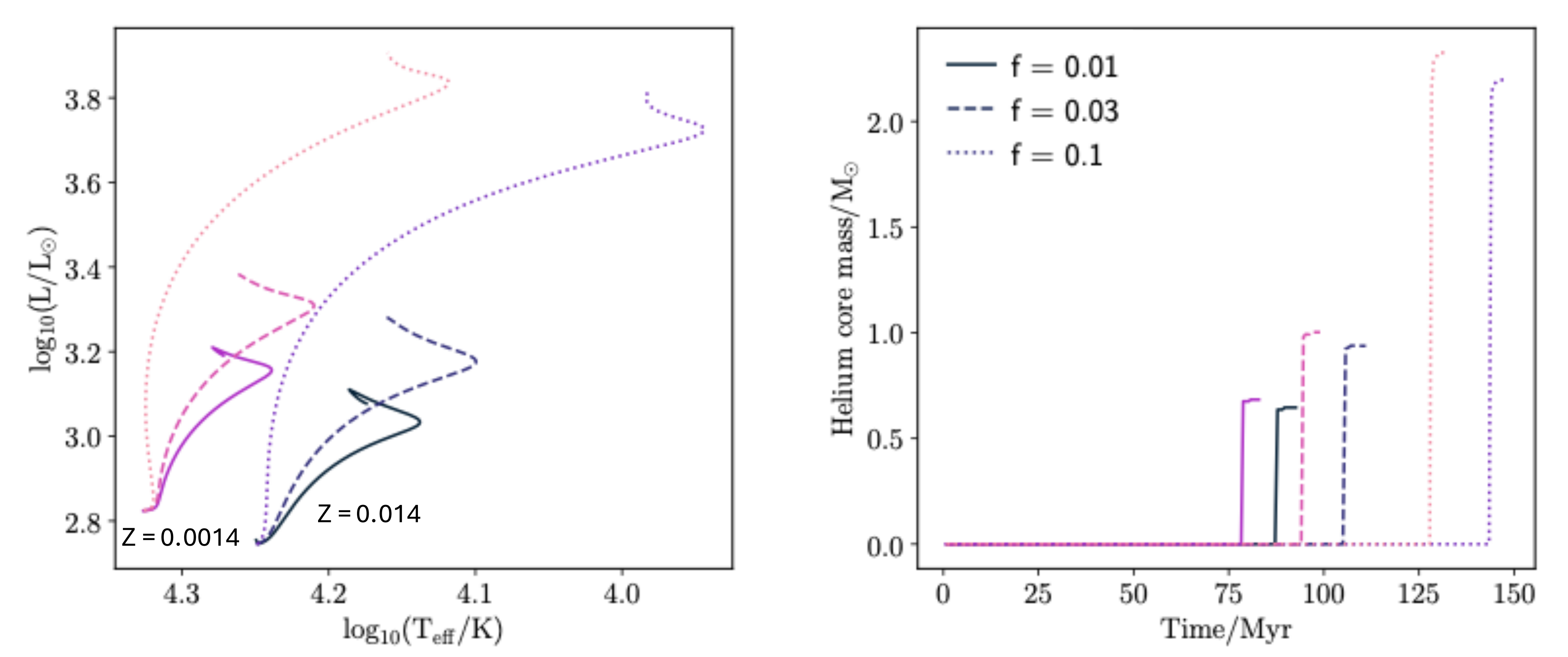




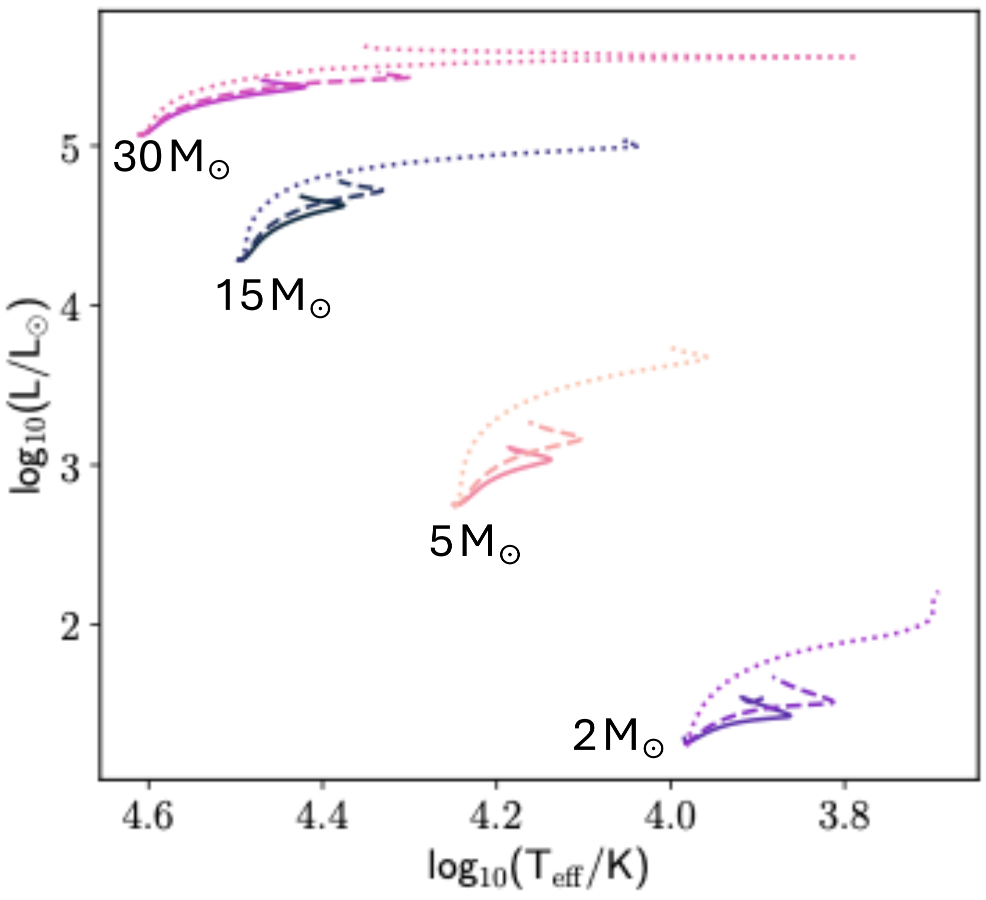
Changing f0 for f = 0.1, exponential overshooting

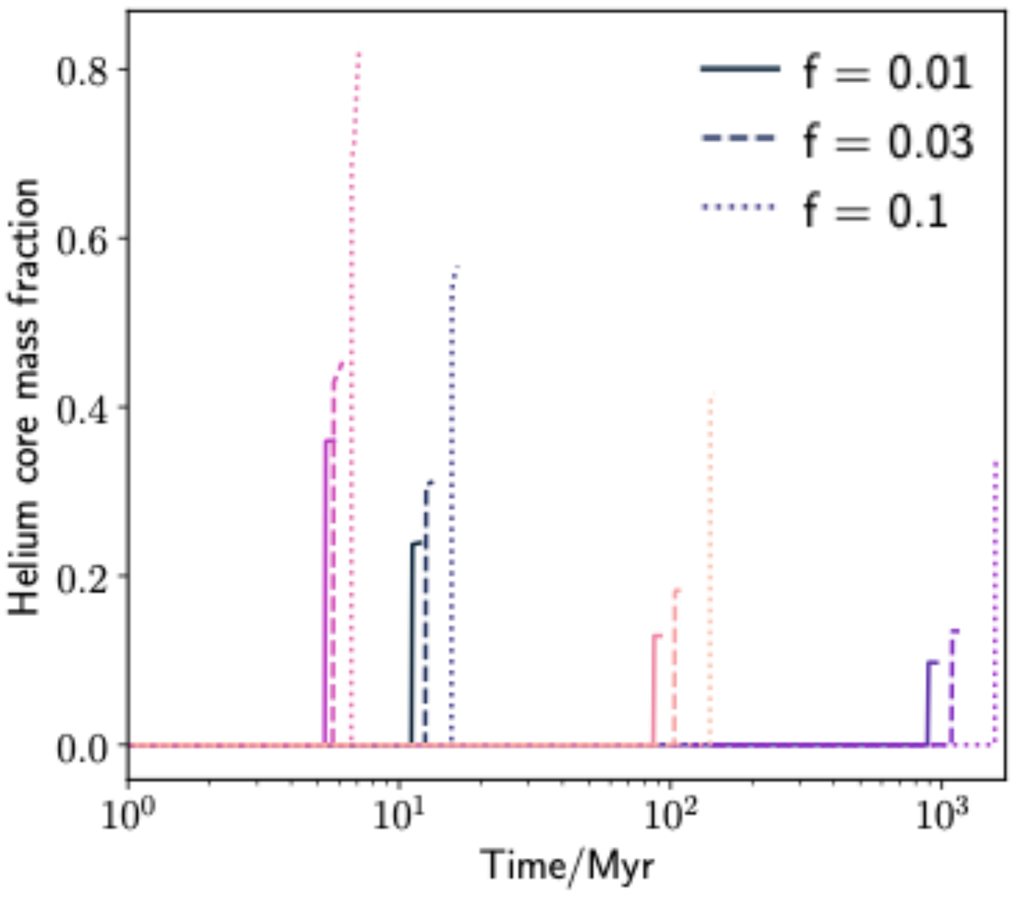


Changing metallicity



Changing mass



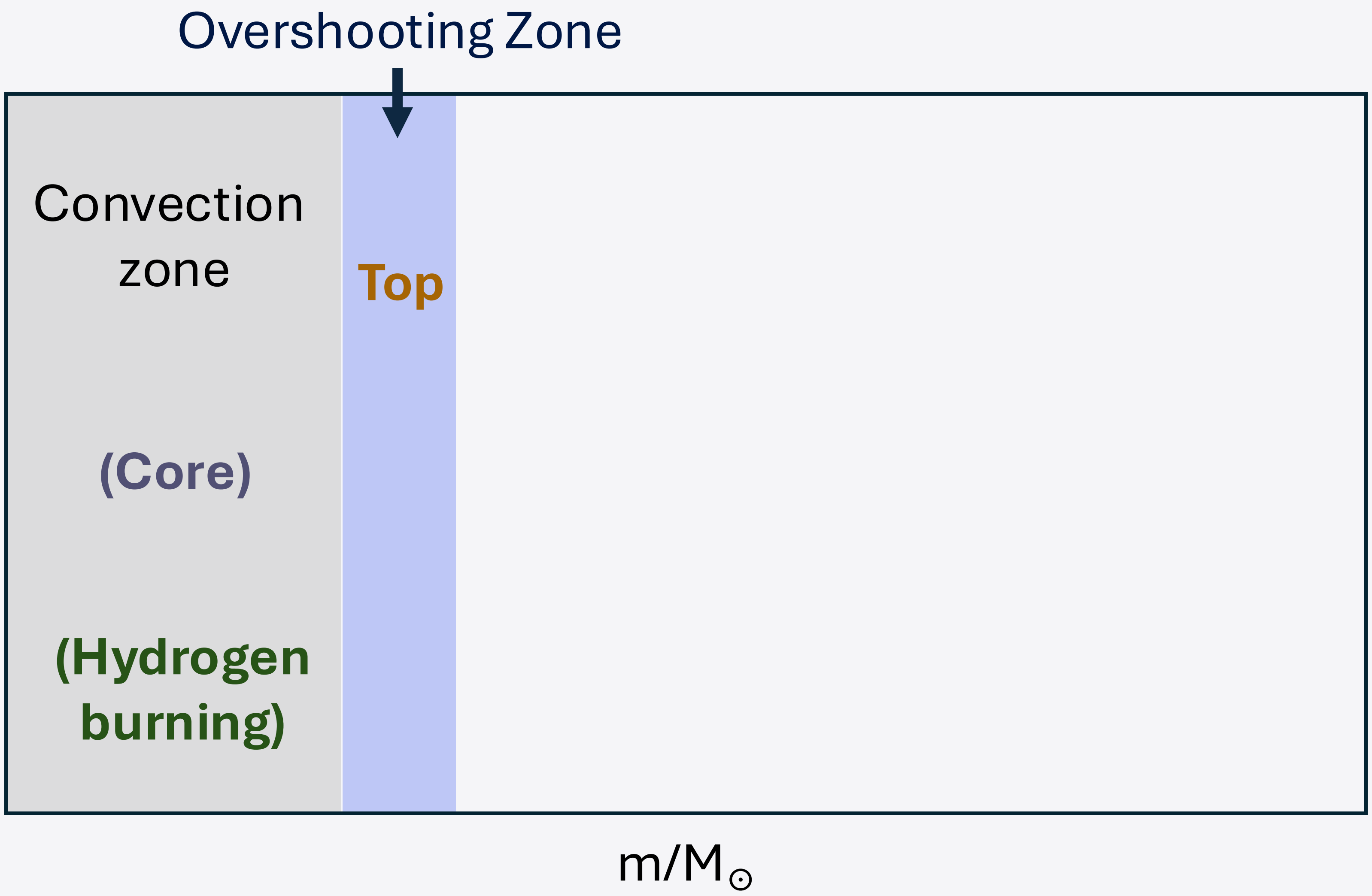


Lab 1: Key Takeaways

Effect	Without Overshooting	With Overshooting
Main Sequence(H,He) lifetime	Shorter	Longer
Core mass (He, CO)	Smaller	Larger
Radius, Luminosity	Lower	Higher
Following core nuclear burning lifetime (He,C)	Longer	Shorter

Session 3: Introduction

Overshooting during main sequence

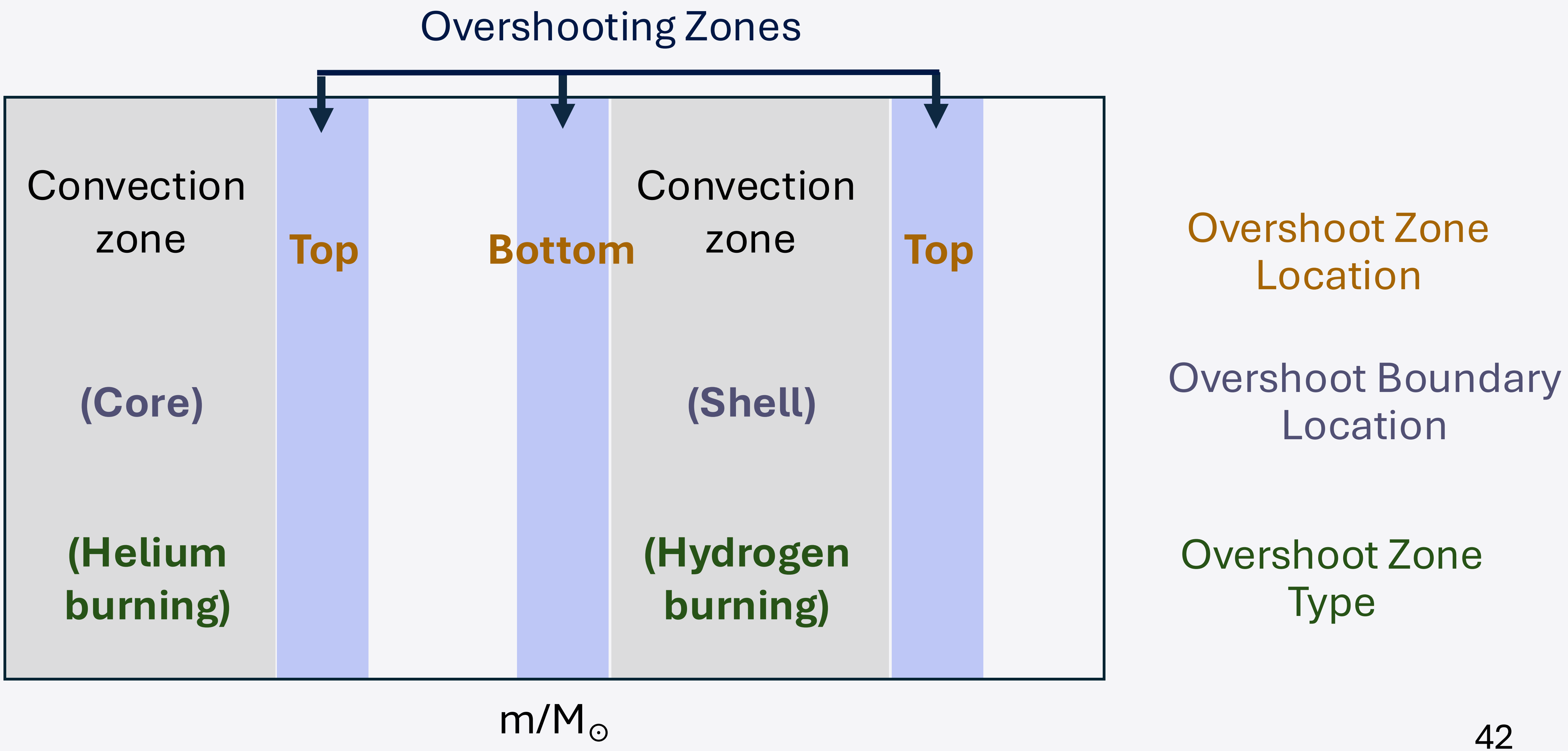


Overshoot Zone Location

Overshoot Boundary Location

Overshoot Zone Type

Overshooting post-main sequence



Resuming a run in MESA

Photo

- Default - saved in directory `photos`
- complete snapshot of the internal state -guaranteed to give the same results
- Version dependent

Model

- Default – None
- Incomplete snapshot of the internal state – not guaranteed to give the same results
- Work across different mesa versions

Resuming MESA - Inlists

Load pre-saved model : M5_Z0014_fov030_f0ov0005_TAMS.mod

Don’t need initial conditions anymore but do need conditions for sustaining the run

initial_mass = 5 ! in Msun units
initial_z = 0.014d0

✗

use_Type2_opacities = .true.
Zbase = 0.014d0

✓

Input Files

inlist	Default input file for MESA

```
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/ ! end of star_job namelist
```

```
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```

```
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inlist_pgstar

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→ inlist_project

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```

→ inlist_pgstar

Nested inlists

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(1) = .true.
   extra_star_job_inlist_name(1) = 'inlist_common'
/ ! end
```

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(2) = .true.
   extra_star_job_inlist_name(2) = 'inlist_specific'
/ ! end
```

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(3) = .true.
   extra
/ ! end
```

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(4) = .true.
   extra_s
/ ! end of
```

```
&star_job
   read_extra_star_job_inlist(5) = .true.
   extra_star_job_inlist_name(5) = 'inlist_extremely_specific'
/ ! end of star_job namelist
```

Lab 2

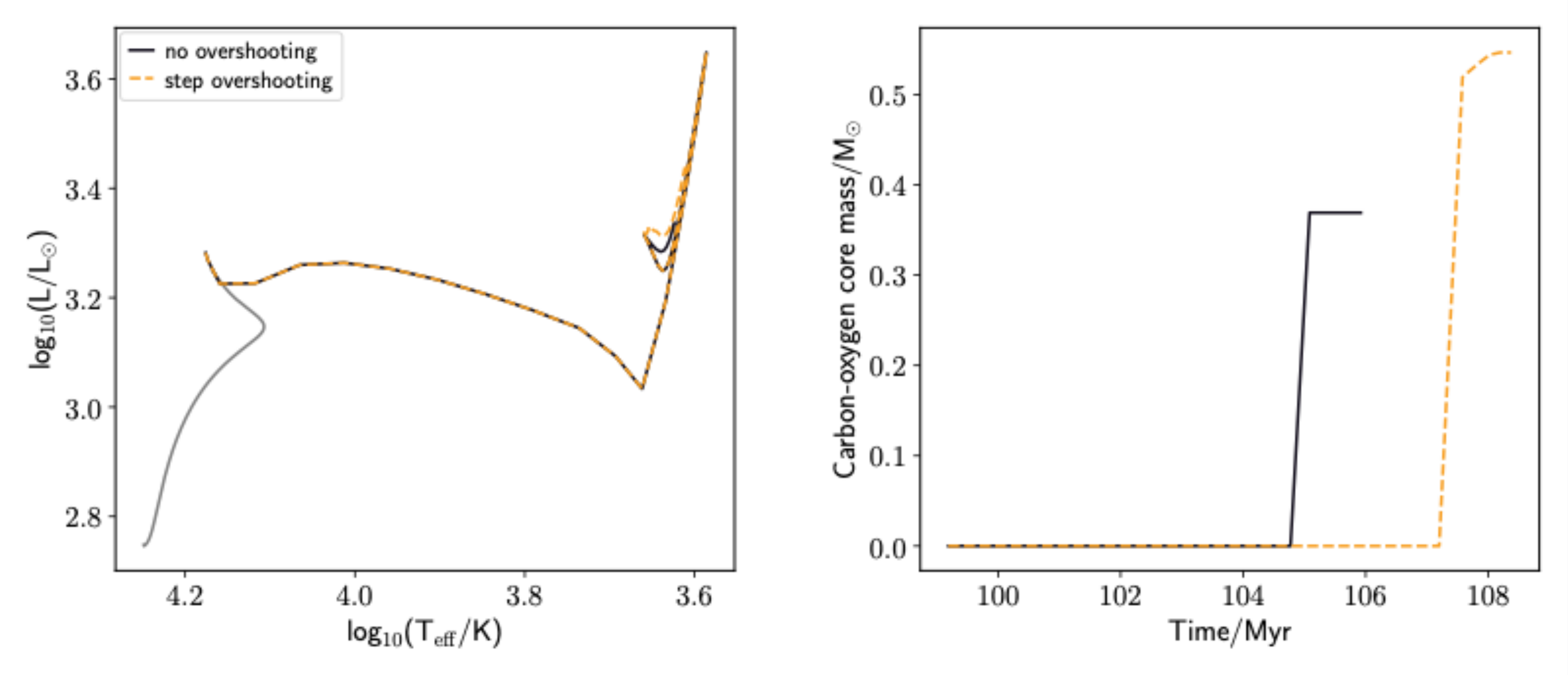
How overshooting affects different stellar phases

Evolve $5M_\odot$ model from Session 1 until the end of core helium burning:

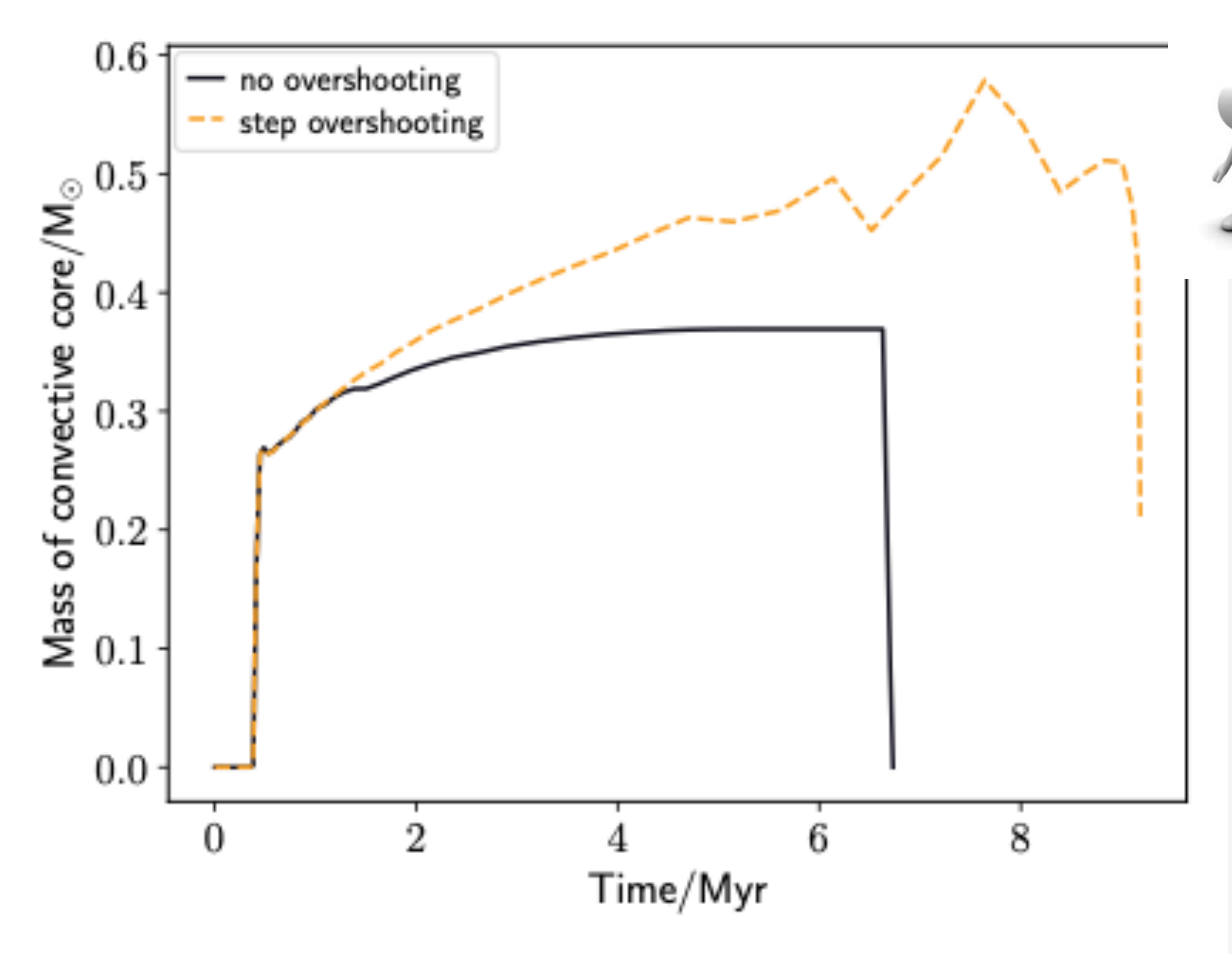
- Without core overshooting
- With step overshooting
- Limit core overshooting in regions with strong chemical gradients

Session 3: Wrap-Up

Overshooting during core helium burning



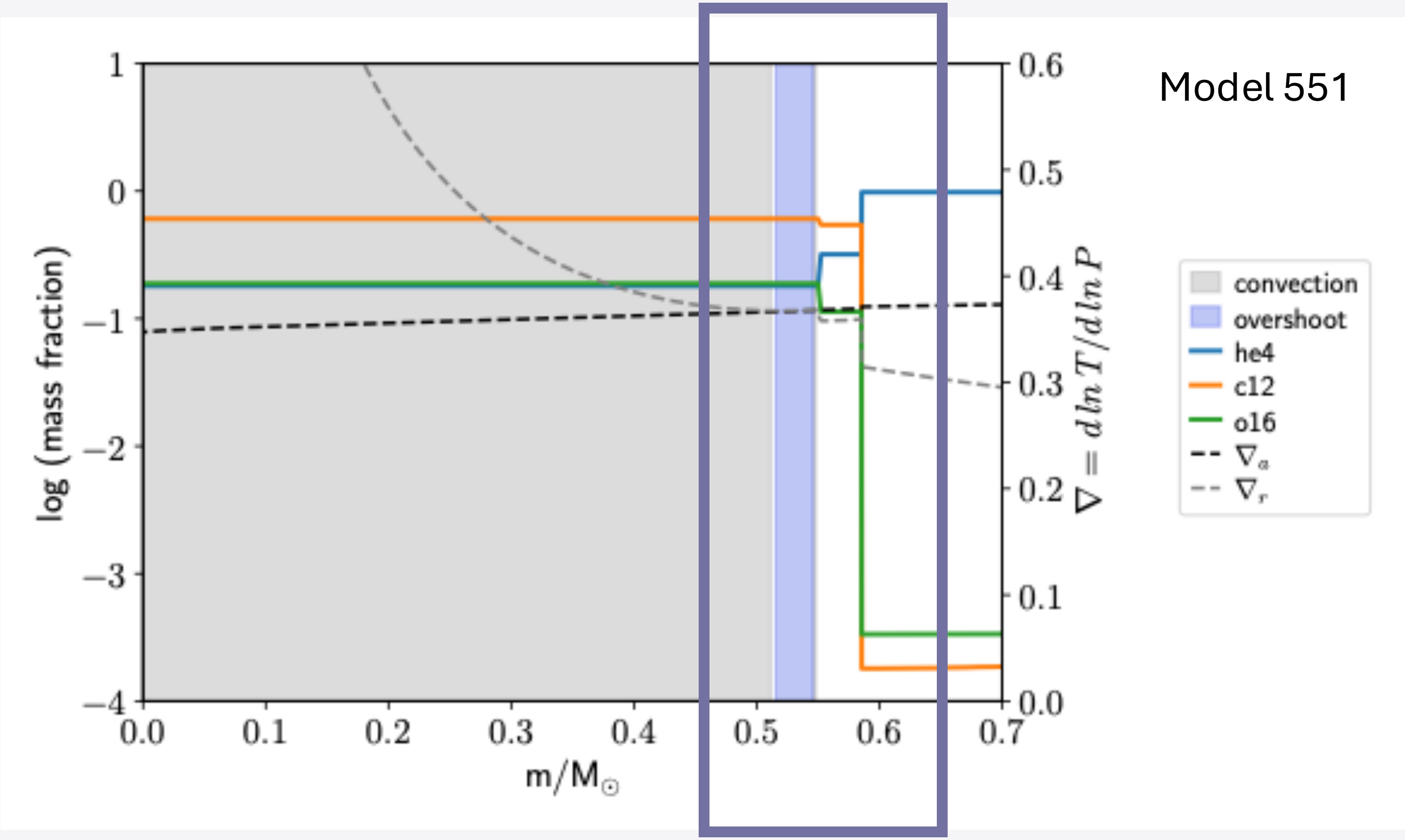
Overshooting during core helium burning



Breathing Pulses

Result of

- Overshoot mixing
- $^{12}C\ (\alpha, \gamma)^{16}O$ reaction
- Free-free opacity (Dominant in low & intermediate mass stars ($<8\,M_{\odot}$).



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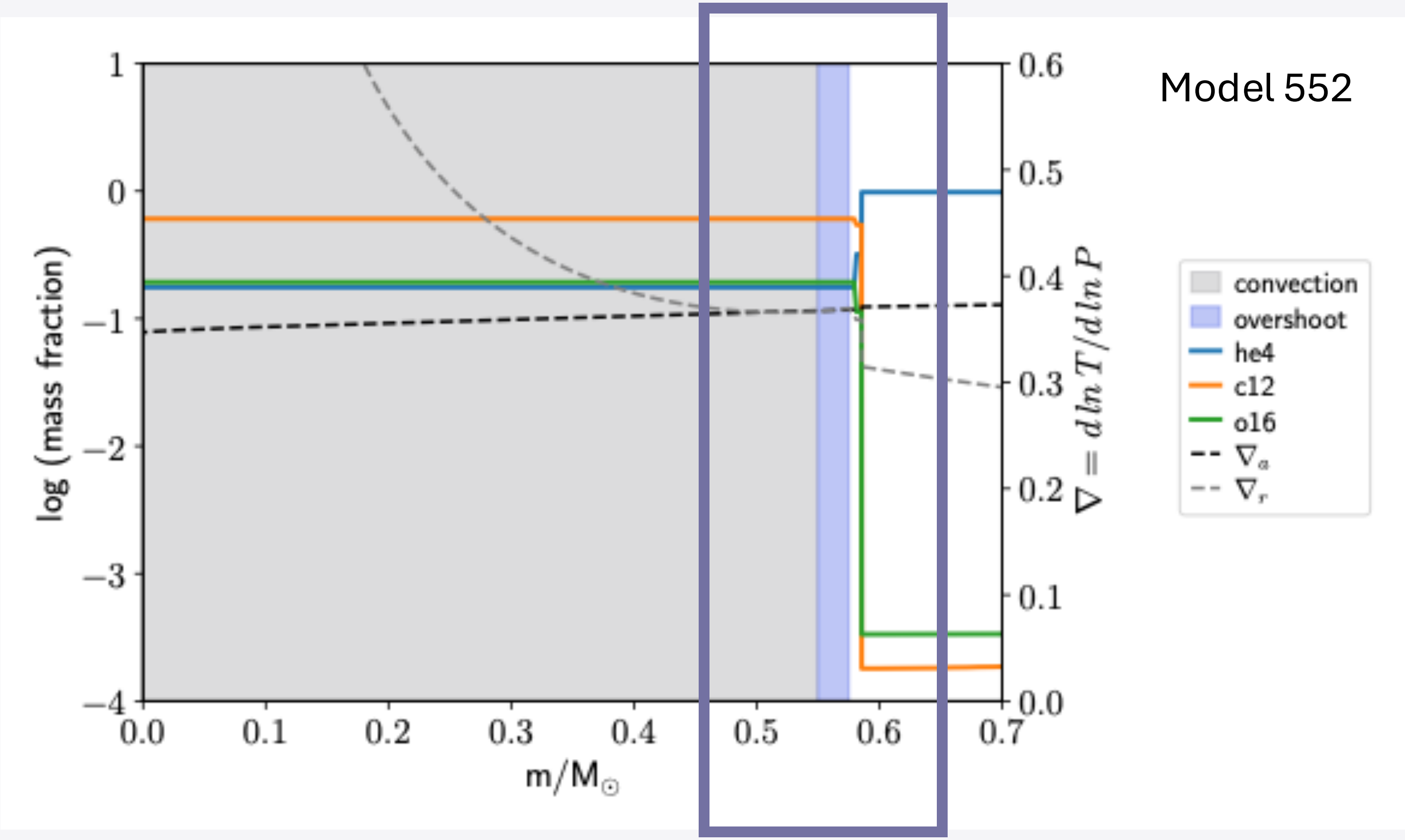

Breathing Pulses

Result of

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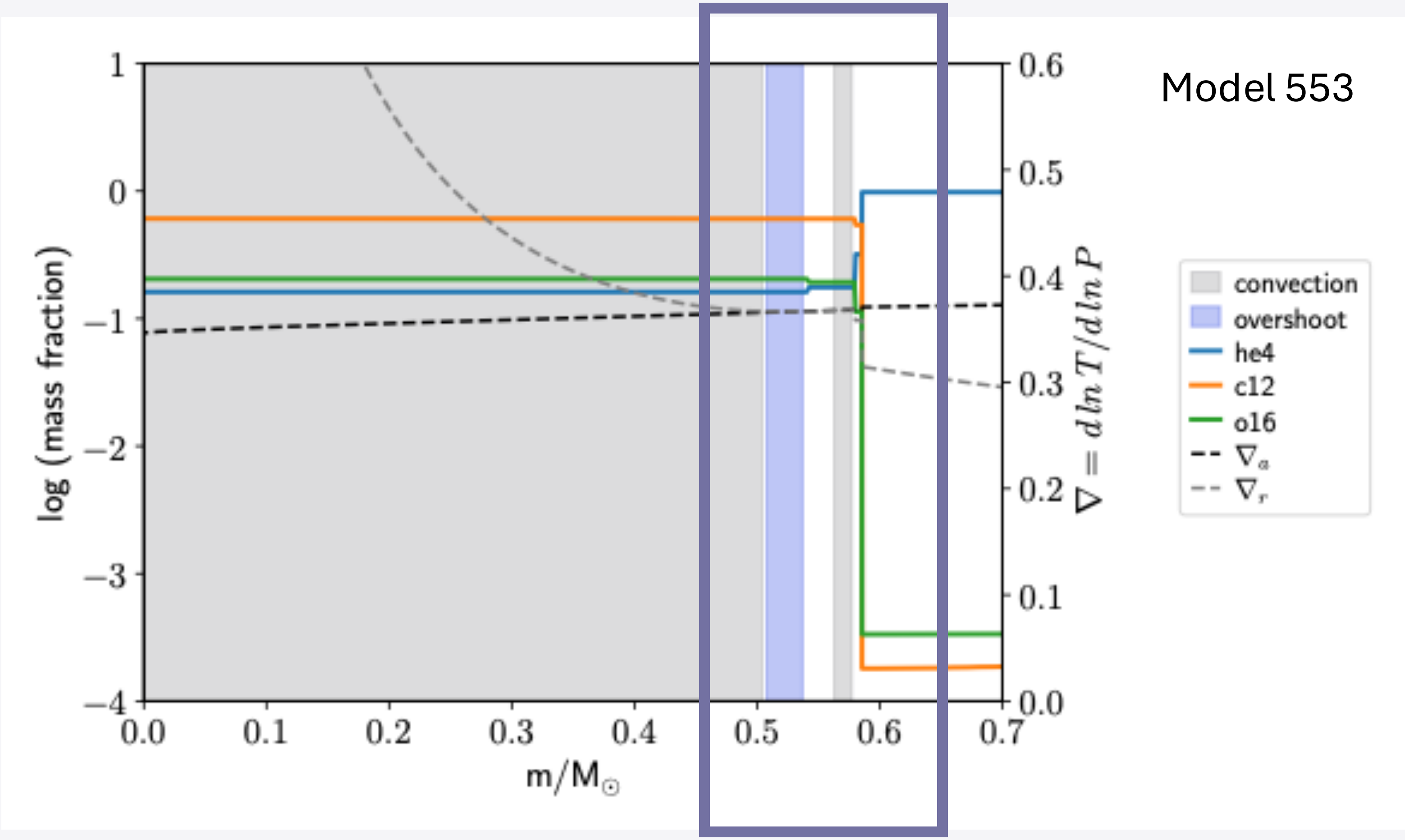
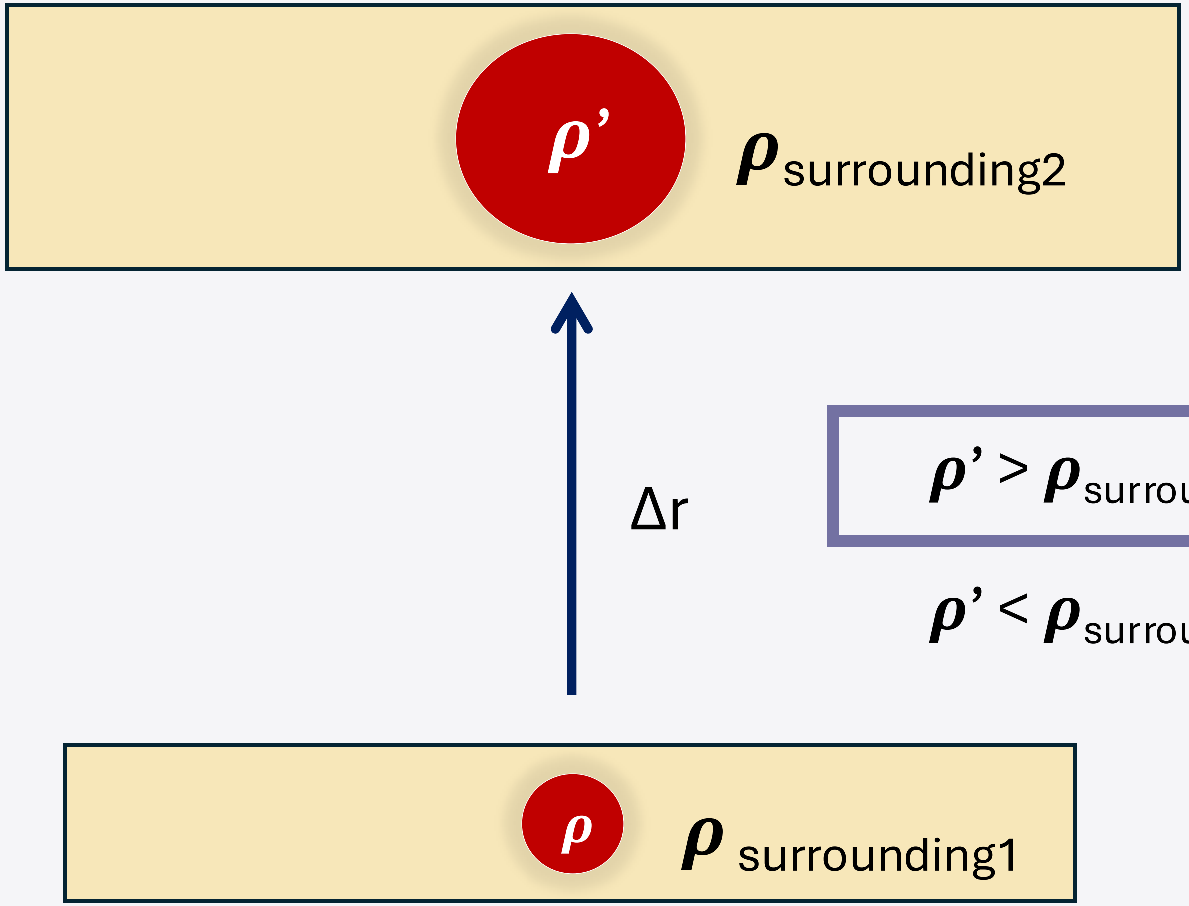
- $^{12}C\ (\alpha, \gamma)^{16}O$ reaction
- Free-free opacity (Dominant in low & intermediate mass stars ($<8\,M_\odot$).



Convection - Density formulation



$\boxed{\rho' > \rho_{surrounding2} \rightarrow \text{stable} \rightarrow \text{oscillations}}$

$\rho' < \rho_{surrounding2} \rightarrow \text{unstable} \rightarrow \text{convection}$

Heats up and expands

Brunt-Väisälä frequency

Convective stability and Brunt-Väisälä frequency

Brunt-Väisälä frequency squared $\longrightarrow$ $N^2 = \frac{g^2\rho}{P}\frac{\chi_T}{\chi_\rho}\left(\nabla_{ad} - \nabla + B\right)$

Convective stability and Brunt-Väisälä frequency

Brunt-Väisälä frequency squared $\longrightarrow$ $N^2 = \frac{g^2\rho}{P}\frac{\chi_T}{\chi_\rho}(\nabla_{ad} - \nabla + \mathbf{B})$ $\longleftarrow$ $\mathrm{B} = \frac{\mathrm{d}\ln\mu}{\mathrm{d}\ln\mathrm{P}}$

$N^2 > 0 \rightarrow$ Oscillations

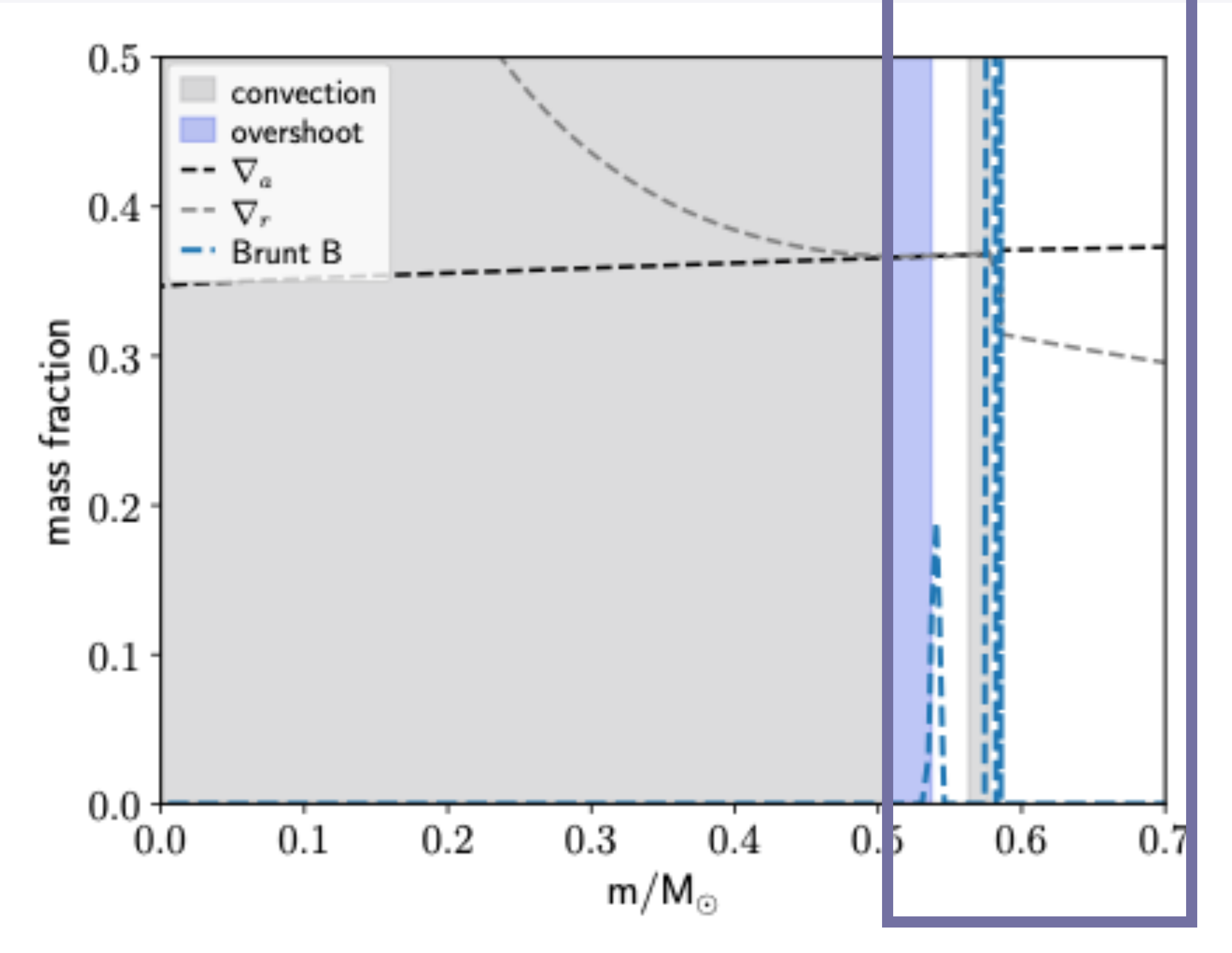
$N^2 < 0 \rightarrow$ Convection

$\downarrow$

$\nabla_{rad} > \nabla_{ad}$ + B (Ledoux Criteria-named after Paul Ledoux)

Brunt composition gradient term / Ledoux term / Brunt_B

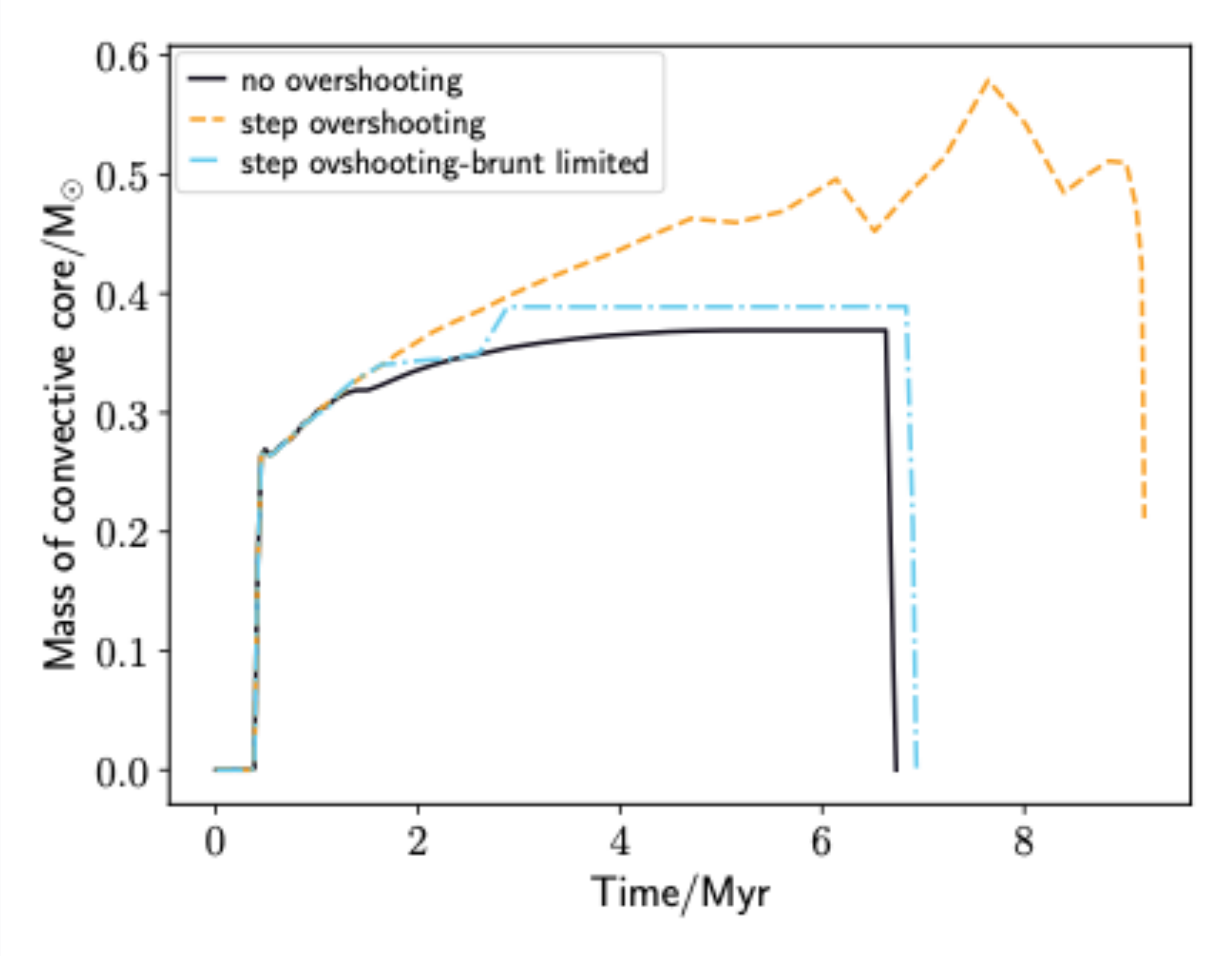
Brunt B



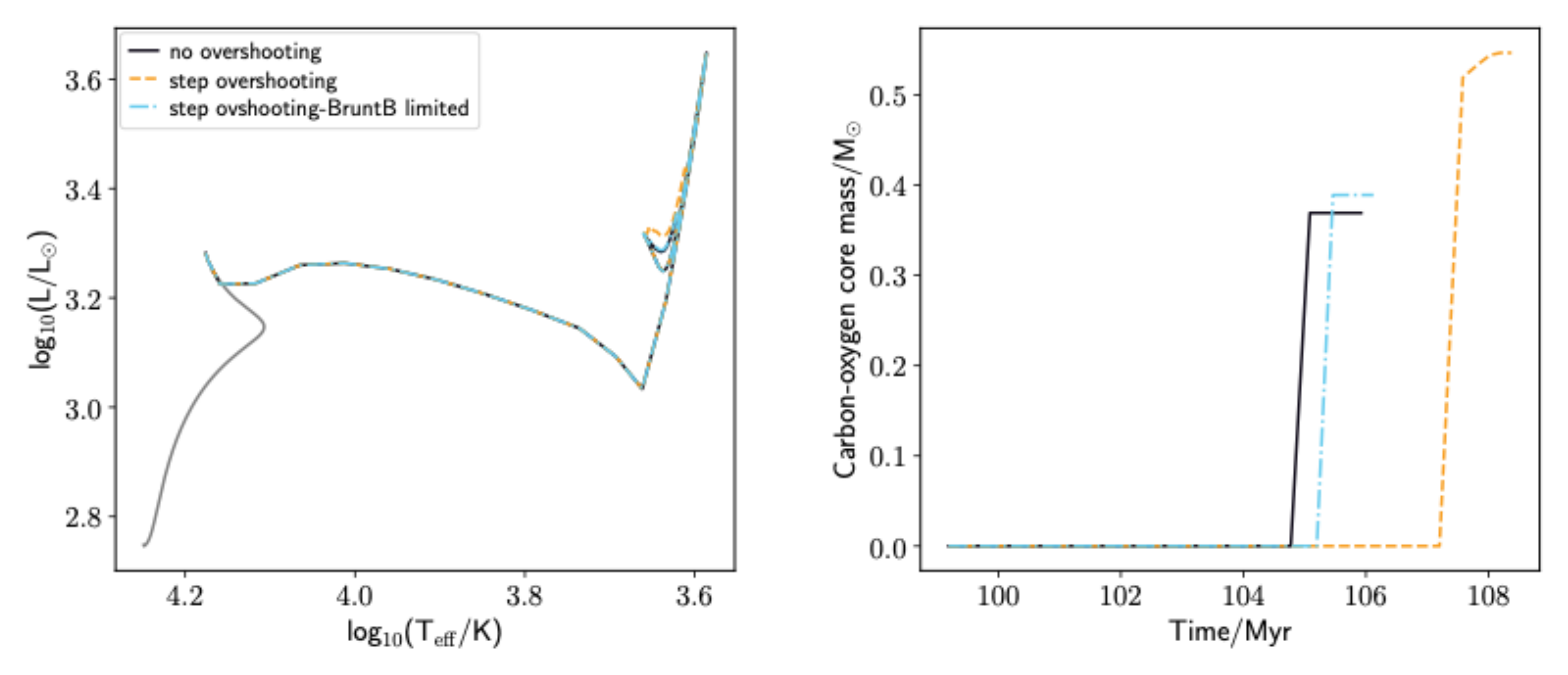
Brunt_B >overshoot_brunt_B_max

Terminate mixing due to overshoot when composition gradient exceeds a certain threshold

Limiting overshooting using Brunt B factor



Limiting overshooting using Brunt B factor



Lab 2: Key Takeaways

Overshooting during core – helium burning:

- Increasing core mass
- Leads to longer nuclear burning phases
- Can trigger *"breathing pulses"* during core helium burning
- Pulsations or oscillations may dominate in regions with a stabilizing composition gradient