

On the ultraviolet behaviour of $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity amplitudes*

Pierre Vanhove

*IHES, Le Bois-Marie, 35 route de Chartres, F-91440 Bures-sur-Yvette, France
Institut de Physique Théorique, CEA/Saclay, F-91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France*

We discuss the constraints imposed by the extended supersymmetry on the ultraviolet behaviour of $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity.

1. Introduction

There have been recent tremendous progresses in the evaluation of multiloop amplitudes in maximally supersymmetric string theory [1–5], in $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity in various dimensions [6–8], and the analysis of the constraints from the extended supersymmetry on possible counter-terms to ultraviolet divergences [9,10]. It has been shown that up to and including four-loop order that the four-graviton amplitudes in $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity in four dimensions are free of ultraviolet divergences [7,8]. One important question is to determine when the first ultraviolet divergence appears in four dimensions. In this text we indicate the various constraints derived from the implementation of maximal supersymmetry.

The mass dimension of the L -loop gravity amplitude in D dimensions is given by

$$[\mathfrak{M}_{n,L}^{(D)}] = \text{mass}^{(D-2)L+2} \quad (1)$$

In $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity half of the supersymmetry are explicitly realized at each loop order and the four-point amplitudes factorize the dimension eight operator

$$\widehat{\mathbf{R}}^4 = \kappa_{(D)}^4 K_{A_1 \dots A_4} \tilde{K}_{B_1 \dots B_4} \prod_{i=1}^4 \zeta_i^{A_i B_i} \quad (2)$$

given by the fourth power of the linearized supercurvature — defined in eq. (7.4.57) of [11] (see as well [12]) where A_i, B_i are the labels of the $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergraviton multiplet. We have used $\kappa_{(D)}$ for the D -dimensional Newton's constant. In particular the amplitudes between any four states ϕ_1, \dots, ϕ_4 in the massless supergravity multiplet take the form

$$\mathfrak{M}_{4,L}^{(D)}(\phi_1, \dots, \phi_4) = \widehat{\mathbf{R}}^4 \widehat{\mathcal{I}}_{4,3}^{(D)}(k_1, \dots, k_4) \quad (3)$$

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where $\widehat{\mathcal{T}}_{4,L}^{(D)}(k_1, \dots, k_4)$ does not depend on the helicities, and is of superficial mass dimension $(D-2)L-6$.

▷ This formula indicates that the R^4 operator would appear at $L = 6/(D-2)$ loops, which is $(L, D) = (1, 8), (2, 5), (3, 4), (6, 3)$. Non-renormalisation theorems in string theory [3,4] and explicit field theory computations [13] confirm the logarithmic divergence of the one-loop amplitude in $D = 8$, but rule out the other divergences in $D < 8$.

▷ Because on-shell the operator $\partial^2 R^4$ vanishes the next operator is the dimension 12 coupling $\partial^4 R^4$ could appear at $(L, D) = (2, 7), (5, 4)$. Explicit computations confirm the divergence in $D = 7$ [7]. The evaluation of higher-loop amplitudes in field theory [8] and non-renormalisation theorems in string theory [2,3,14] rule out the appearance of this divergences in $D < 7$.

▷ The dimension 14 operator $\partial^6 R^4$ could appear at $(L, D) = (2, 8), (3, 6), (4, 5), (6, 4)$. Explicit computations confirm the divergences in $(L, D) = (2, 8), (3, 6)$ and rule out the divergences in $(L, D) = (4, 5), (6, 4)$.

▷ The dimension 16 operator $\partial^8 R^4$ could appear at $(L, D) = (2, 9), (7, 4)$. Explicit computations confirm the divergences in $(L, D) = (2, 9)$. There is currently no explicit evaluation of the contribution $(L, D) = (7, 4)$. We discuss below the constraints from supersymmetry.

▷ The dimension 18 operator $\partial^{10} R^4$ could appear at $(L, D) = (2, 10), (4, 6), (8, 4)$. Explicit computations confirm the divergence in $(L, D) = (2, 10), (4, 6)$. There is currently no explicit evaluation of the contribution $(L, D) = (8, 4)$. We discuss below the constraints from supersymmetry.

▷ The dimension 20 operator $\partial^{12} R^4$ could appear at $(L, D) = (2, 11), (3, 8), (6, 5), (9, 4)$. Explicit computations confirm the divergences in $(L, D) = (2, 11), (3, 8)$. There is currently no direct evaluation of the $(L, D) = (6, 5), (9, 4)$ contributions. In fact whatever is the form of the five-loop four-graviton amplitude (i.e. factorizing the operator $\partial^8 R^4$ or $\partial^{10} R^4$) there will be a logarithmic divergence at $L = 6$ associated with $\partial^{12} R^4$ in $D = 5$. If $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity has an ultraviolet divergence in $D = 4$ there will always be a nine-loop divergence. Actually, supersymmetry cannot rule out this divergence in $D = 4$ [3,4]. *The nine-loop four-graviton amplitude in four dimensions is ultraviolet finite if and only if $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity is ultraviolet finite in four dimensions.*

If one parametrizes the superficial power counting of the ultraviolet behaviour of the amplitude as

$$[\mathfrak{M}_{4,L}^{(D)}] = \Lambda^{(D-2)L-6-2\beta_L} \partial^{2\beta_L} \widehat{R}^4 \quad (4)$$

the critical dimension for ultraviolet divergences in the four-graviton amplitude is given by

$$D \geq 2 + \frac{6 + 2\beta_L}{L} \quad (5)$$

Up to an including four-loop the supersymmetry constraints [2,8,13] implies that

$\beta_L = L$.

When only the simple large- λ regulator of the pure spinor string formalism is used one can argue [2,4] that $\beta_L = L$ for $L \leq 6$ and $\beta_L = 6$ for $L \geq 6$ leading to the critical dimension for UV divergence

$$\begin{aligned} D &\geq 4 + \frac{6}{L}; & \text{for } L \leq 6 \\ D &\geq 2 + \frac{18}{L}; & \text{for } L \geq 6 \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

which implies a nine-loop divergence in four dimensions [4]. From genus five possible divergences from the tip of the pure spinor cone that would require the use of the small- λ complicated regulator [1,15] can restrict $\beta_L = 4$ for $L \geq 4$

$$\begin{aligned} D &\geq 4 + \frac{6}{L}; & \text{for } L \leq 4 \\ D &\geq 2 + \frac{14}{L}; & \text{for } L \geq 4 \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

leading to seven-loop divergence in four dimensions.

2. D-term and F-term in extended supergravity

The issue of correctly identifying the ultraviolet behaviour of a supersymmetric theory is equivalent to the understanding of which operators are true F-terms satisfying non-renormalisation theorems, and which operators are D-terms receiving quantum corrections to all orders [16].

By partial integration over the superspace variables it is possible to rewrite D-term as “fake” F-term, and detecting the true D-term nature of an operator can be non-obvious. In four-point open string amplitudes the true D-term nature of the $\partial^2 \text{tr} F^4$ interaction became manifest by the appearance of inverse derivatives after integrating over the string theory moduli [5]. In the four-graviton amplitudes it was confirmed in [5] that no such inverse derivative factors arise up to and including genus four implying that the operators R^4 , $\partial^4 R^4$, and $\partial^6 R^4$ are F-terms satisfying non-renormalisation theorems [2,3].

In the pure spinor formalism for maximally supersymmetric closed string theory, D-terms arise explicitly as soon as the small- λ regulator from the tip of the pure spinor cone enters in the evaluation of the amplitude [1,15]. The following full superspace integral of the dimension one superfield $W_{\alpha\beta} = F_{\alpha\beta} + \dots + \theta^\gamma \theta^\delta R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} + \dots$

$$\int d^{32}\theta W^2 = D^{12} R^4 + \text{susy completion} \quad (8)$$

is a D-term that can arise the four graviton amplitude from genus five. As well from five loops order, after integrating over the string moduli one can get [5] inverse derivative factors $1/\partial^2$ that could reduce this contribution to $\partial^{10} R^4$ or $\partial^8 R^4$ making these operators “fake” F-terms but true D-terms. If this happens then according

to (7) there would be a seven-loop divergence in the four-graviton amplitude of $\mathcal{N} = 8$ supergravity in $D = 4$.

In non-Abelian $\mathcal{N} = 4$ super-Yang-Mills the D-term arising from the four points amplitude are [5] $\partial^2 t_8 \text{tr} F^4$ and $\partial^4 t_8 (\text{tr} F^2)^2$. Since on-shell the Abelian $\partial^2 t_8 F^4$ vanishes the first D-term in the Abelian case is $\partial^4 t_8 F^4$ which leads after applying the “squaring” KLT relations to $\partial^8 R^4$ interaction, supporting the D-term nature of this contribution.

The fact that the first massive string correction to the massless thresholds to the genus one amplitudes in ten dimensions evaluated in [12,17] to be given by $\zeta(3) \alpha'^3 s^4 R^4 \log(s)$ can be seen as an indication of D-term nature of the $\partial^8 R^4$ interactions [18].

A candidate counter-term for a seven-loop divergence is the volume of super-space [10]

$$\delta \mathcal{S}_{ct} \sim \kappa_{(4)}^{12} \int d^4 x \int d^{32} \theta |E| \quad (9)$$

where $|E|$ is the determinant of the superfield vielbein. Integrating over the fermionic variables this would lead to

$$\delta \mathcal{S}_{ct} \sim \kappa_{(4)}^{12} \int d^4 x \sqrt{-g^{(4)}} (D^8 R^4 + \text{susy completion}) . \quad (10)$$

An detailed analysis of the divergences in the four-graviton amplitude at seven- and nine-loop order will be presented elsewhere [19].

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