

Getting Started with XShaderCompiler

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1 Introduction

[XShaderCompiler](#) (“Cross Shader Compiler”) is a cross-compiler (also called trans-compiler), which translates HLSL code (DirectX High Level Shading Language, see msdn.microsoft.com) of Shader Model 4 and 5 into GLSL code (OpenGL Shading Language, see www.opengl.org).

2 Progress

This project is still in its early steps. This document is written for [XShaderCompiler Version 0.04 Alpha](#).

2.1 ToDo List

- Geometry Shader Semantic
- Tessellation Shader Semantic

3 Offline Compiler

The offline compiler (named `xsc`) can be used to cross-compile your shaders without building any custom application. It has similar commands like other common compilers (such as GCC), e.g. `-O` to enable optimization. To show the description of all commands, type simply `xsc` or `xsc -help` into a terminal or command line.

3.1 Commands

Here is an overview of the most important commands:

-T, --target *TARGET*

Sets the shader target specified by *TARGET*. Valid values for *TARGET* are:

- vert** (for Vertex Shader)
- tesc** (for Tessellation Control Shader, also called Hull Shader)
- tese** (for Tessellation Evaluation Shader, also called Domain Shader)
- geom** (for Geometry Shader)
- frag** (for Fragment Shader, also called Pixel Shader)
- comp** (for Compute Shader)

-E, --entry *ENTRY*

Sets the shader entry point (i.e. main function) specified by *ENTRY*.

-I, --include-path *PATH*

Adds the file path, specified by *PATH*, to the include search paths.

-o, --output *FILE*

Sets the filename of the output file specified by *FILE*. The default value is "*FILE.ENTRY.TARGET*", where *FILE* is the filename of the input shader file, *ENTRY* is the shader entry point, and *TARGET* is the shader output target. The asterisk character "*" can be included to re-use the default value, e.g. "OutputFolder/*" will result into "OutputFolder/*FILE.ENTRY.TARGET*"

-Vin, --version-in *VERSION*

Sets the input shader version specified by *VERSION*. Valid values for *VERSION* are:

- HLSL3** (for HLSL Shader Model 3)
- HLSL4** (for HLSL Shader Model 4)
- HLSL5** (for HLSL Shader Model 5) *default value*

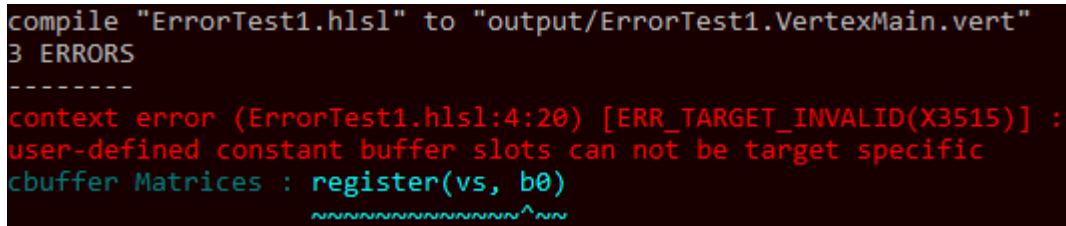
-Vout, --version-out *VERSION*

Sets the output shader version specified by *VERSION*. Valid values for *VERSION* are:

- GLSL** (for automatic deduction of the minimal required GLSL version) *default value*
- GLSL110** (for GLSL 1.10) *not supported yet*
- GLSL120** (for GLSL 1.20) *not supported yet*
- GLSL130** (for GLSL 1.30)
- GLSL140** (for GLSL 1.40)
- GLSL150** (for GLSL 1.50)
- GLSL330** (for GLSL 3.30)
- GLSL400** (for GLSL 4.00)
- GLSL410** (for GLSL 4.10)
- GLSL420** (for GLSL 4.20)
- GLSL430** (for GLSL 4.30)
- GLSL440** (for GLSL 4.40)
- GLSL450** (for GLSL 4.50)

3.2 Error Output

[XShaderCompiler](#) has an extensive report handler for meaningful output messages. It even has a line marker, to show the source line where the error (or warning) occurred. This can be very handy because the line marker acts like a picture, and a picture is worth a thousand words ;-). Take a look at the following example, where the slot register 'b0' uses a target specific profile (here 'vs' for the Vertex Shader):



```
compile "ErrorTest1.hlsl" to "output/ErrorTest1.VertexMain.vert"
3 ERRORS
-----
context error (ErrorTest1.hlsl:4:20) [ERR_TARGET_INVALID(X3515)] :
user-defined constant buffer slots can not be target specific
cbuffer Matrices : register(vs, b0)
                        ~~~~~^~~~~
```

Figure 1: Error output example of [XShaderCompiler](#).

There are a couple of things displayed in this error message, which we will go through step by step:

1. **context error**

This indicates that the error occurred during the context analysis. The compilation phases are: *pre-processing*, *syntax parsing*, *context analysis*, *post-processing* (optimization and conversion for the target language), and *code generation*.

2. **(ErrorTest1.hlsl:4:20)**

The part in the brackets shows the source position in the input code. Here the filename is "ErrorTest1.hlsl", the row is 4, and the column is 20.

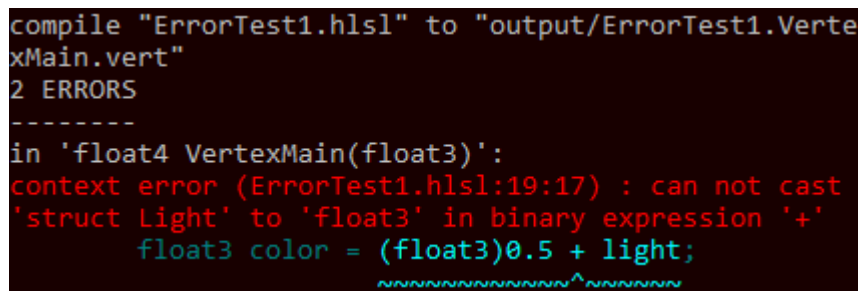
3. **[ERR_TARGET_INVALID(X3515)]**

This part does only appear in a couple of types of errors. It shows the error code, which is commonly only displayed as the number within the brackets, but the [XShaderCompiler](#) also shows the identifier.

4. **user-defined constant buffer slots can not be target specific**

This is the actual error message, which describes the compilation conflict.

Here is another example how the line marker can show very intuitively what the problem is:



```
compile "ErrorTest1.hlsl" to "output/ErrorTest1.VertexMain.vert"
2 ERRORS
-----
in 'float4 VertexMain(float3)':
context error (ErrorTest1.hlsl:19:17) : can not cast
'struct Light' to 'float3' in binary expression '+'
    float3 color = (float3)0.5 + light;
                        ~~~~~^~~~~
```

Figure 2: Error output example of [XShaderCompiler](#).

Here the variable `light`, which is from type `struct Light`, can not be casted to a `float3` type within a concatenation like the '+' operator.

4 Limitations

There are several limitations for your HLSL shaders you want to translate to GLSL with the [XShaderCompiler](#) which are described in this section.

4.1 Tessellation Shaders

(The translation of tessellation shaders is currently in progress but here is a brief overview of the currently known limitations)

The most tessellation attributes in HLSL are specified for the tessellation-control shader (alias “Hull Shader”), but a few of them are required for the tessellation-evaluation shader (alias “Domain Shader”). These are: `partitioning`, and `outputtopology`. Here is an example of an HLSL Tessellation Shader:

Example.hls1

```
[domain("quad")] // Required for Tessellation-Control (in GLSL)
[outputcontrolpoints(4)] // Required for Tessellation-Control (in GLSL)
[patchconstantfunc("PatchConstantFunc")] // Required for Tessellation-Control (in GLSL)
[partitioning("fractional_odd")] // Required for Tessellation-Evaluation (in GLSL)
[outputtopology("triangle_ccw")] // Required for Tessellation-Evaluation (in GLSL)
OutputHS HullShader(/* ... */)
{
    /* ... */
}

[domain("quad")] // Required for Tessellation-Evaluation (in GLSL)
OutputDS DomainShader(/* ... */)
{
    /* ... */
}
```

These attribute must be distributed into two GLSL shaders:

Example.HullShader.tesc

```
layout(vertices = 4) in;
/* ... */
```

Example.DomainShader.tese

```
layout(quads, fractional_odd_spacing, ccw) in;
/* ... */
```

The information for `fractional_odd_spacing` and `ccw` in the `Example.DomainShader.tese` shader file are taken from the tessellation-control shader, although a tessellation-evaluation shader is written. That means, both the tessellation-control- *and* the tessellation-evaluation shaders must be contained in the same shader source file (or at least in one of the included files) to guarantee a full translation of all information. Otherwise default values will be used.

To specify the secondary entry point (in the above example “HullShader”) use the `secondaryEntryPoint` member in the `Xsc::ShaderInput` structure or the “-E2, --entry2 ENTRY” shell command.