

COMS31700 Design Verification:

Are we there yet?

(The back-end of the verification cycle)

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(Acknowledgement: Avi Ziv from the IBM Research Labs in Haifa has kindly permitted the re-use of some of his slides.)



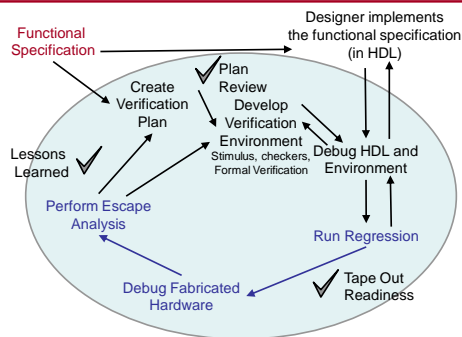
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Outline

- The verification cycle - revision
- Analysis and adaptation
 - (Coverage analysis)
 - Failure analysis
- Regression
- Tape-out readiness
- Escape analysis

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The Verification Cycle



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My Environment Is Ready. Now What?

- More functionality is added to the design
 - And therefore, to the verification environment
- Mature enough design is progressed to the next level in the design hierarchy
 - Unit to core to chip to system
- Bugs are being discovered and fixed
 - And bug fixes need to be verified
- The implementation of the verification plan continues
 - Closing holes in coverage
 - Updating the verification plan itself as needed
- Regression is being executed to ensure everything still works

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Coverage Closure

Coverage Closure

Coverage closure is the process of:

- Finding areas of coverage not exercised by a set of tests.
 - Coverage Holes!
- Creating additional tests to increase coverage by targeting these holes.
 - Beware: Aim to “balance” coverage!

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Controllability Problems

If the cases to be hit contain internal states/signals of the DUV, directed tests that exercise all combinations are hard to find.

- Processor pipeline verification: Control logic, Internal FSMs
- Generate biased random tests automatically. [RTPG]
 - [ISG](#)
 - Typically tests are filtered to retain only those that add to coverage.
 - Coverage analysis indicates **hard-to-reach** cases.
 - Don't waste engineers time on what **automation** can achieve.
 - Combine automatically generated stimulus with coverage.
- Gives rise to [Coverage DRIVEN Verification Methodology](#)
- BUT:**
 - **Hard-to-reach cases (may) need manual attention.**
 - Bias tests towards certain conditions or corner cases.
 - Supplying bias requires significant engineering skill.
 - Often only trial-and-error approach.

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80/20 Split

In practice: 80/20 (20/80) split wrt coverage progress.

Good news:)

- 80% of coverage is achieved (relatively quickly/easily) driving randomly generated tests.
- This takes about 20% of total time/effort/sim runs spent on verification.

Bad news:(

- Gaining the remaining 20% coverage,
 - i.e. filling the remaining coverage holes (which often needs to be done manually and requires a lot of skill plus design understanding),
- can take as much as 80% of the total time/effort/sim runs spent on verification.

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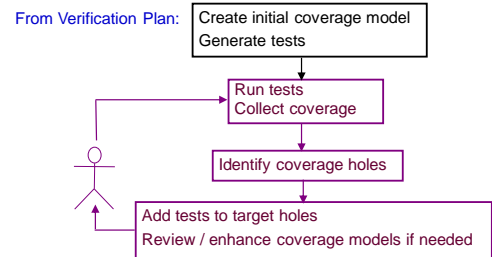
Benefits of Coverage DRIVEN Verification Methodology

Benefits:

- Shortens implementation time
 - (Initial setup time)
 - Random generation covers many “easy” cases
- Improves quality
 - Focus on goals in verification plan
 - Encourages exploration/refinement of coverage models
- Accelerates verification closure
 - Refine/tighten constraints to target coverage holes

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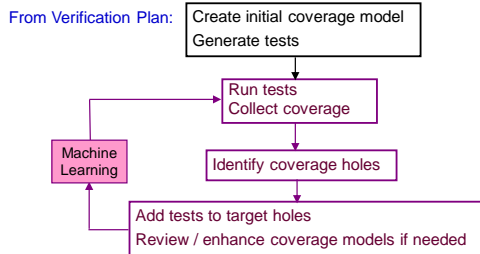
Coverage DRIVEN Verification Methodology



Current research: How can we automate this further?

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Coverage DIRECTED Test Generation



Current research: How can we automate this further?

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CDG: Coverage DIRECTED Test Generation

How can we make better use of coverage data to automate stimulus generation?

Latest Research:

Coverage DIRECTED (stimulus/test) generation [IBM]

- BY CONSTRUCTION
 - Require description of design as FSM.
 - Use formal methods to derive transition coverage.
 - Automatically translate paths through FSM to test vectors.
 - Fall over in practice: FSMs are prohibitively large!
- BY FEEDBACK
 - (Exploit Machine Learning techniques)
 - GAs/GP - Need to find suitable encoding (e.g. of instructions).
 - Bayesian Networks - Need to design and train BN.
 - Data Mining in coverage spaces

No significant breakthrough in CDG yet!

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Summary: Coverage Closure

- Verification Methodology should be **coverage driven**.
- **Automation**: Research into **coverage directed test generation**
- **Delays in coverage closure** are the main reason why verification projects fall behind schedule!

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Analysis and Adaptation

- Building a good verification plan is the first step for successful verification
 - But, it is not enough!
- **Need to constantly**:
 - **Monitor** the verification process
 - **Analyze** the observations
 - **Adapt** to address issues identified by the analysis
- **Three basic levels of adaptation**
 - Change the way the verification environment is activated
 - Change the verification environment
 - Change the verification plan

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Two Types of Analysis

1. Coverage analysis
 - Was included in the lectures on coverage.
2. Failure analysis

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Failure Analysis

Failure Analysis

- During execution of the verification plan (many) failures are observed
- This is not a bad phenomena
 - Remember that the goal of the verification process is to identify faults in the DUV
- The goal of failure analysis is to understand failures, their causes, their relation to one another, and their relation to the verification process

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Failures and Faults

- **Failure** – an observed DUV behavior that violates the specified behavior
- **Fault** – the root cause of a failure
- There can be a **many-to-many relationship** between faults and failures
 - Mishandling of overflow in the input FIFO can cause:
 - Lost commands in the output port
 - Bad data in the output port
 - Bad data in the output port can be caused by:
 - Mishandling of overflow in the input FIFO
 - Bad selection in the output selector

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How Failures Are Detected

- Inspection and code review
- Output of formal verification tools or other static analysis tools, such as lint
- Activation of response checkers during simulation
- Analysis of coverage data
- Visual observation of application misbehavior

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Types of Failure Analysis

- Detailed failure analysis
 - Understand the cause and effects of failures and faults on the design, environment, verification process and more
- Statistical failure analysis
 - Identify trends, provide prediction

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Detailed Failure Analysis

- The outcome of the analysis
 - The failure is understood and recorded
 - The failure is resolved
 - The verification plan and process are adapted
 - Lessons learned for the future
- Note: In most cases failure analysis—and especially the last two items—are simple and the outcome of the analysis is that we found a failure and a fault when and where expected and because we are doing our job the right way.

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Understanding the Failure

- The goal is to **understand the scope and severity** of the failure and how the failure can be recreated
- Provides useful information for debugging and other parts of the failure analysis
 - Simplify and generalize the failure conditions
 - Find simpler settings / stimuli that recreate the failure
 - Find necessary and sufficient conditions for the failure
 - Localize the fault in terms of place and time
 - **Research:** Generate easy-to-debug tests

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What to Look For

- In simulation
 - Determinism
 - Does the failure always occur in the same settings?
 - With the same seed?
 - With different seeds (or random seed)?
 - Parameters that are correlated with the failure
 - Parameters that cause the failure to disappear
 - Parameters that cause the failure to change
 - Specific parts in the stimuli that are correlated to the failure
- In formal verification
 - Constraints that affect the failure
 - Time bounds that affect the failure

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Resolving the Failure

- This does not always mean fix the fault
 - Defer to future tape outs / releases
 - Bypass by software or surrounding modules
 - Record in errata sheets
- Need to ensure that the resolution is complete
 - The fix / bypass is correct
 - All cases are covered
 - No new faults introduced in the process
 - (Similar cases are also handled)
- Mini-verification plan is needed
 - Coverage models
 - Stimuli generation strategy
 - New result checkers

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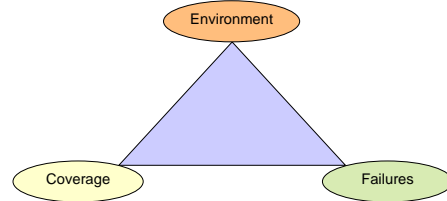
Adapting the Verification Plan and Process

- Need to minimize faults found by chance or found too late
 - These faults can easily be missed if we are less lucky
- Indicators that faults are found by chance
 - Faults are not found at the right time
 - Fault is found at the wrong level of the hierarchy
 - Faults are found not at the area we concentrate on
 - Need to understand why faults are not found at the right time
 - And, change the plan and process accordingly
 - Faults are not found by the right checker
 - Only a side effect of the fault is detected
 - May indicate missing checker or problems in existing checker
 - Simulation with failure is not flagged by coverage
 - Does not activate uncovered or rarely covered coverage point
 - Indicates missing coverage models

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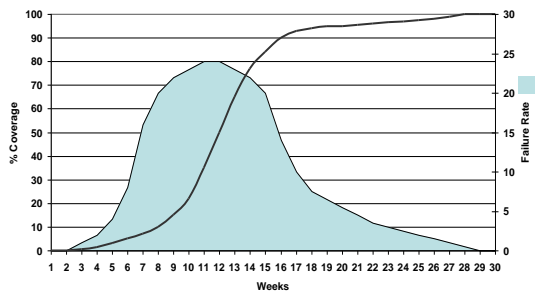
Correlating Coverage and Failures

- There is a direct correlation between
 - Changes in the verification environment and the DUV
 - Progress in coverage
 - Detection of new failures



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Correlating Failure Rate and Coverage Progress



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Individual Coverage and Failure Correlation

- Correlating a failure to specific coverage can be helpful in the failure analysis and debugging processes
- Rare coverage points exercised by a simulation that fails can hint at the location of the fault that caused the failure
 - Rare coverage points are coverage points rarely, if ever, exercised by passing simulations
 - These coverage points record what happened in the DUV prior to the failure
 - They are very useful if the failure is distant (in logic or time) from the fault or the fault is complex
- If no such rare coverage points are recorded, then it is likely that the failure is found by chance
 - The verification plan needs to be refined to catch these failures

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Regression

Regression Suites

- A **regression suite** is a set of tests that are run on the verified design on a regular basis
 - After major changes
 - Periodically: Every night or every weekend
- Regression goals
 - Assuring that things that worked did not stop working
 - This is vital because every bug fix, on average, introduces one fifth of a bug
 - Detecting “unexpected” bugs

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Types of Regression

- **Static regression**
 - The regression suite is comprised of a set of “interesting” test patterns
 - Tests that found bugs in the past
 - Tests that reach corner cases
- **Random regression**
 - A.k.a. dynamic regression, probabilistic regression
 - The regression suite is comprised of a set of test specifications and an execution policy
 - For example, execute 100 tests of specification A, 35 tests of specification B, and 20 tests of specification C

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Static Vs. Random Regression

- **Static regression**
 - ☑ **Known, guaranteed quality**
 - ☒ **Sensitive to changes**
 - ☒ **Hard to maintain**
- **Random regression**
 - ☒ **Unknown quality**
 - ☑ **Less sensitive to changes**
 - ☑ **Easy to maintain**
 - ☑ **Easy to adapt to simulation resources**

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The Preferred Solution

- Combination of static and random suites
- **Small static suite** with hard to recreate cases
 - Hard to reach corner cases
 - Tests that discovered hard to find bugs
- **Random suites** for everything else

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Regression Suites Requirements

- A regression suite must be:
 - **Comprehensive** so that it is likely to catch all the bugs introduced
 - **Small** so that it can economically be executed many times
- **How can we make our regression suite small and comprehensive?**
- **Solution:** use coverage information
 - Select a set of tests that achieve 100% coverage (of the coverage achieved so far)
 - Select the smallest possible such set

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The Set Cover Problem

- Let $S = \{C_1, \dots, C_n\}$ be the **set of coverage tasks**
- Let $T = \{T_1, \dots, T_n\}$ be a **set of tests**
 - Each test T_i covers subset $\{C_{i1}, C_{i2}, \dots\}$ of the coverage tasks
- The **set cover problem**: Find the smallest subset of T that covers S
- The set cover problem is a known NP-Complete problem
 - However, there are a number of good algorithms for it

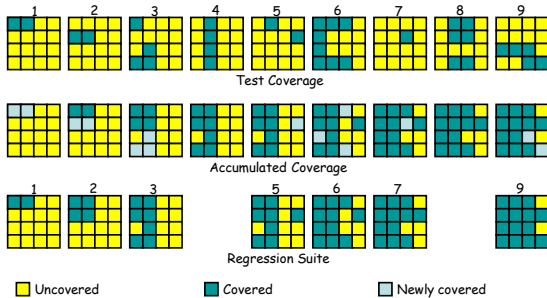
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Online Algorithm

- For each new test T
 - If T covers an uncovered coverage task
 - Add T to the regression suite
- **Advantages**
 - Very simple
 - Low memory requirements

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Online Algorithm Example



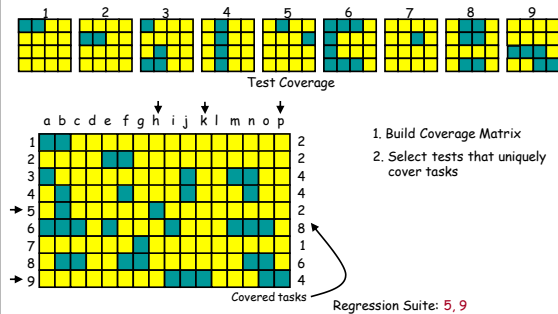
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Greedy Algorithm

- Initialization
 - Build coverage matrix tests vs. tasks
 - Select tests that uniquely cover tasks
- Loop until all covered tasks are removed
 - Remove all the tasks covered by selected tests
 - Choose the test that covers most remaining tasks
- Advantages
 - Complexity is polynomial in the number of tests and coverage tasks
 - Quality solution
- Disadvantage
 - Requires to keep the entire coverage matrix in memory

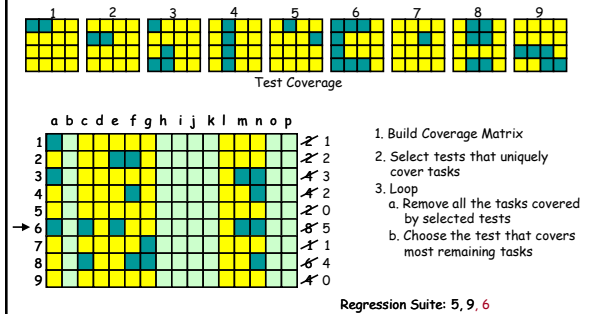
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Greedy Algorithm Example



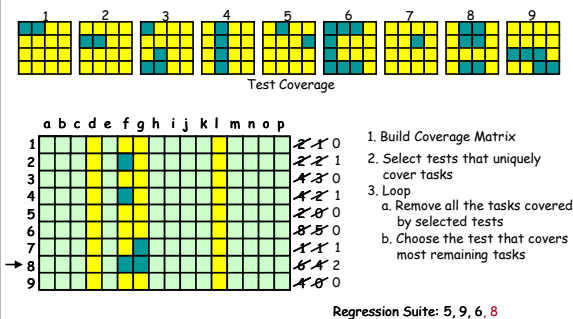
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Greedy Algorithm Example



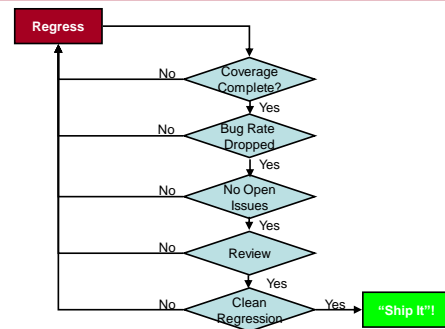
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Greedy Algorithm Example



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When Is Verification Done?



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Tape-Out Readiness

- Before sending a design to manufacturing, it must meet established **tape-out criteria**
- The criteria is a series of checklists that indicate completion of planned work
- Verification is just one element in this series of checklists
- Tape-out readiness is measured by a set of metrics**
- The most relevant metrics for verification are **bug rates and coverage**

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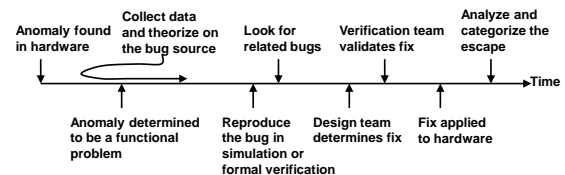
Escape Analysis

Escape Analysis

- An **escape** is a bug found later in the verification process than it should have been
 - In other words, it escaped its target place
 - Usually, escapes refer to bugs found in the hardware itself instead of during simulation
- Escape analysis has **two important aspects**
 - Make sure that the bug is fully understood and fixed correctly
 - We do not want another tape-out because of a bad fix
 - Understand why the bug escaped simulation in the first place and try to improve the verification plan and process to avoid such escapes in the future

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Individual Escape Analysis Timeline



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How big is Exhaustive?

- Consider simulating a typical CPU design
 - 500k gates, 20k DFFs, 500 inputs
 - 70 billion sim cycles, running on 200 linux boxes for a week
 - How big: 2^{36} cycles**
- Consider formally verifying this design
 - Input sequences: cycles $2^{(\text{inputs} + \text{state})} = 2^{20500}$
 - What about X's: 2^{15000} (5,000 X-assignments + 10,000 non-reset DFFs)
 - How big: 2^{20500} cycles** (2^{15000} combinations of X is not significant here!)
- That's a big number!

Cycles to simulate the 500k design:	2^{36}	(70 billion)
Cycles to formally verify a 32-bit adder: (billion)	2^{64}	(18 billion)
Number of stars in universe:	2^{70}	(10^{21})
Number of atoms in the universe:	2^{260}	(10^{78})
Possible X combinations in 500k design:	2^{15000}	($10^{4515} \times 3$)
Cycles to formally verify the 500k design:	2^{20500}	(10^{6171})



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Summary

- Completion of the Verification Cycle includes:
 - Coverage analysis
 - Failure analysis
 - Regression
 - Tape-out readiness
 - Escape analysis

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Are We There Yet?



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