

Formal Methods in Software Engineering

Specification and Verification — Spring 2025

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§1 Program Verification

Motivation

Is this program *correct*?

```
x = 0;  
y = a;  
while (y > 0) {  
    x = x + b;  
    y = y - 1;  
}
```

Program Correctness

Note: A program can be *correct* only with respect to a *specification*.

Is this program correct with respect to the following specification? **X**

“Given integers a and b , the program computes and stores in x the product of a and b .”

Program Correctness [2]

Note: A program can be *correct* only with respect to a *specification*.

Is this program correct with respect to the following specification? ✓

*“Given **positive** integers a and b , the program computes and stores in x the product of a and b .”*

```
x = 0;  
y = a;  
while (y > 0) {  
    x = x + b;  
    y = y - 1;  
}
```

Design by Contract

Specification of a program can be seen as a *contract*:

- *Pre-conditions* define what is *required* to get a meaningful result.
- *Post-conditions* define what is *guaranteed* to return when the pre-condition is met.

requires a and b to be positive integers

ensures x is the product of a and b

Formal Verification

To formally verify a program you need:

- A formal specification (mathematical description) of the program.
- A formal proof that the specification is correct.
- Automated tools for verification and reasoning.
- Domain-specific expertise.

There are many tools and even specific languages for writing specs and verifying them.

One of them is *Dafny*, both a specification language and a program verifier.

Next, we are going to learn how to:

- *specify* precisely what a program is supposed to do
- *prove* that the specification is correct
- *verify* that the program behaves as specified
- *derive* a program from a specification
- use the *Dafny* programming language and verifier

§2 Dafny

Introduction to Dafny

```
method Triple(x: int) returns (r: int)
  ensures r == 3 * x
{
  var y := 2 * x;
  r := x + y;
}
```

Note: The *caller* does not need to know anything about the *implementation* of the method, only its *specification*, which abstracts the method's behavior. The method is *opaque* to the caller.

Introduction to Dafny [2]

Completing the example:

```
method Triple(x: int) returns (r: int)
  requires x >= 0
  ensures r == 3 * x
{
  var y := Double(x);
  r := x + y;
}
```

```
method Double(x: int) returns (r: int)
  requires x >= 0
  ensures r == 2 * x
```

Exercise: Fix the above code/spec to avoid `requires x >= 0` in the `Triple` method.

Logic in Dafny

Dafny expression	Description
true, false	constants
!A	“not A ”
A && B	“ A and B ”
A B	“ A or B ”
A ==> B	“ A implies B ” or “ A only if B ”
A <==> B	“ A iff B ”
forall x :: A	“for all x , A is true”
exists x :: A	“there exists x such that A is true”

Precedence order: !, &&, ||, ==>, <==>

Verifying the Imperative Procedure

Below is the Dafny program for computing the maximum segment sum of an array. Source: [1]

```
// find the index range [k..m) that gives the
// largest sum of any index range
method MaxSegSum(a: array<int>)
  returns (k: int, m: int)
  ensures  $0 \leq k \leq m \leq a.Length$ 
  ensures forall p, q ::
     $0 \leq p \leq q \leq a.Length \implies$ 
    Sum(a, p, q)  $\leq$  Sum(a, k, m)
{
  k, m := 0, 0;
  var s, n, c, t := 0, 0, 0, 0;
  while n < a.Length
    invariant  $0 \leq k \leq m \leq n \leq a.Length \ \&\&$ 
      s == Sum(a, k, m)
    invariant forall p, q ::
       $0 \leq p \leq q \leq n \implies$  Sum(a, p, q)  $\leq$  s
    invariant  $0 \leq c \leq n \ \&\&$  t == Sum(a, c, n)
    invariant forall b ::
       $0 \leq b \leq n \implies$  Sum(a, b, n)  $\leq$  t
```

```
{
  t, n := t + a[n], n + 1;
  if t < 0 {
    c, t := n, 0;
  } else if s < t {
    k, m, s := c, n, t;
  }
}
}

// sum of the elements in the index range [m..n)
function Sum(a: array<int>, m: int, n: int): int
  requires  $0 \leq m \leq n \leq a.Length$ 
  reads a
{
  if m == n then 0
  else Sum(a, m, n-1) + a[n-1]
}
```

Program State

```
method MyMethod(x: int) returns (y: int)
  requires x >= 10
  ensures y >= 25
{
  var a := x + 3;
  var b := 12;
  y := a + b;
}
```

The program variables x , y , a , and b , together the method's *state*.

Note: Not all program variables are in scope the whole time.

Floyd Logic

Let's propagate the pre-condition *forward*:

```
method MyMethod(x: int) returns (y: int)
  requires x >= 10
  ensures y >= 25
{
  // here, we know x >= 10
  var a := x + 3;
  // here, x >= 10 && a == x+3
  var b := 12;
  // here, x >= 10 && a == x+3 && b == 12
  y := a + b;
  // here, x >= 10 && a == x+3 && b == 12 && y == a + b
}
```

The last constructed condition *implies* the required post-condition:

$$(x \geq 10) \wedge (a = x + 3) \wedge (b = 12) \wedge (y = a + b) \rightarrow (y \geq 25)$$

Floyd Logic [2]

Now, let's go *backward* starting with a post-condition at the last statement:

```
method MyMethod(x: int) returns (y: int)
  requires x >= 10
  ensures y >= 25
{
  // here, we want x + 3 + 12 >= 25
  var a := x + 3;
  // here, we want a + 12 >= 25
  var b := 12;
  // here, we want a + b >= 25
  y := a + b;
  // here, we want y >= 25
}
```

The last calculated condition is *implied* by the given pre-condition:

$$(x + 3 + 12 \geq 25) \leftarrow (x \geq 10)$$

Exercise #1

Consider a method with the type signature below which returns in s the sum of x and y , and in m the maximum of x and y :

```
method MaxSum(x: int, y: int)  
  returns (s: int, m: int)  
  ensures ...
```

Write the post-condition specification for this method.

Exercise #2

Consider a method that attempts to reconstruct the arguments x and y from the return values of `MaxSum`. In other words, in other words, consider a method with the following type signature and *the same post-condition* as in Exercise 1:

```
method ReconstructFromMaxSum(s: int, m: int)
  returns (x: int, y: int)
  requires ...
  ensures ...
```

This method cannot be implemented as is.

Write an appropriate pre-condition for the method that allows you to implement it.

§3 Floyd-Hoare Logic

From Contracts to Floyd-Hoare Logic

In the design-by-contract methodology, contracts are usually assigned to procedures or modules. In general, it is possible to assign contracts to each statement of a program.

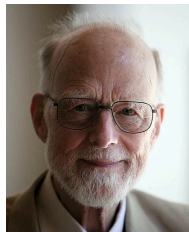
A formal framework for doing this was developed by Tony Hoare [2], formalizing a reasoning technique introduced by Robert Floyd [3].

It is based on the notion of a *Hoare triple*.

Dafny is based on Floyd-Hoare Logic.



Robert Floyd



Tony Hoare

Hoare Triples

Definition 1: For predicates P and Q , and a problem S , the Hoare triple $\{P\} S \{Q\}$ describes how the execution of a piece of code changes the state of the computation.

It can be read as “if S is started in any state that satisfies P , then S will terminate (and does not crash) in a state that satisfies Q ”.

Examples:

$$\{x = 1\} \quad x := 20 \quad \{x = 20\}$$

$$\{x < 18\} \quad y := 18 - x \quad \{y \geq 0\}$$

$$\{x < 18\} \quad y := 5 \quad \{y \geq 0\}$$

Non-examples:

$$\{x < 18\} \quad x := y \quad \{y \geq 0\}$$

Forward Reasoning

Definition 2: *Forward reasoning* is a construction of a *post-condition* from a given pre-condition.

Note: In general, there are *many* possible post-conditions.

Examples:

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y < 100\}$$

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{x = 0\}$$

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{0 \leq x, y = 3\}$$

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{3 \leq y\}$$

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{\text{true}\}$$

Strongest Post-condition

Forward reasoning constructs the *strongest* (i.e., *the most specific*) post-condition.

$$\{x = 0\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{0 \leq x \wedge y = 3\}$$

Definition 3: A is *stronger* than B if $A \rightarrow B$ is a valid formula.

Definition 4: A formula is *valid* if it is true for any valuation of its free variables.

Backward Reasoning

Definition 5: *Backward reasoning* is a construction of a *pre-condition* for a given post-condition.

Note: Again, there are *many* possible pre-conditions.

Examples:

$$\{x \leq 70\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

$$\{x = 65, y < 21\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

$$\{x \leq 77\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

$$\{x \cdot x + y \cdot y \leq 2500\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

$$\{\text{false}\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

Weakest Pre-condition

Backward reasoning constructs the *weakest* (i.e., *the most general*) pre-condition.

$$\{x \leq 77\} \quad y := x + 3 \quad \{y \leq 80\}$$

Definition 6: A is *weaker* than B if $B \rightarrow A$ is a valid formula.

Weakest Pre-condition for Assignment

Definition 7: The weakest pre-condition for an *assignment* statement $x := E$ with a post-condition Q , is constructed by replacing each x in Q with E , denoted $Q[x := E]$.

$$\{Q[x := E]\} \quad x := E \quad \{Q\}$$

Example: Given a Hoare triple $\{?\} y := a + b \{25 \leq y\}$, we construct a pre-condition $\{25 \leq a + b\}$.

Examples:

$$\{25 \leq x + 3 + 12\} \quad a := x + 3 \quad \{25 \leq a + 12\}$$

$$\{x + 1 \leq y\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{x \leq y\}$$

$$\{6x + 5y < 100\} \quad x := 2 \cdot x \quad \{3x + 5y < 100\}$$

Exercises


1. Explain rigorously why each of these Hoare triples holds:
 1. $\{x = y\} \quad z := x - y \quad \{z = 0\}$
 2. $\{\text{true}\} \quad x := 100 \quad \{x = 100\}$
 3. $\{\text{true}\} \quad x := 2 * y \quad \{x \text{ is even}\}$
 4. $\{x = 89\} \quad y := x - 34 \quad \{x = 89\}$
 5. $\{x = 3\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{x = 4\}$
 6. $\{0 \leq x < 100\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{0 < x \leq 100\}$
2. For each of the following Hoare triples, find the *strongest post-condition*:
 1. $\{0 \leq x < 100\} \quad x := 2x \quad \{?\}$
 2. $\{0 \leq x \leq y < 100\} \quad z := y - x \quad \{?\}$
 3. $\{0 \leq x < N\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{?\}$
3. For each of the following Hoare triples, find the *weakest pre-condition*:
 1. $\{?\} \quad b := (y < 10) \quad \{b \rightarrow (x < y)\}$
 2. $\{?\} \quad x, y := 2x, x + y \quad \{0 \leq x \leq 100y \leq x\}$
 3. $\{?\} \quad x := 2y \quad \{10 \leq x \leq y\}$

Swap Example

Consider the following program that swaps the values of x and y using a temporary variable.

```
var tmp := x;  
x := y;  
y := tmp;
```

Let's prove that it indeed swaps the values, by performing the backward reasoning on it. First, we need a way to refer to the initial values of x and y in the post-condition. For this, we use *logical variables* that stand for some values (initially, $x = X$ and $y = Y$) in our proof, yet cannot be used in the program itself.



```
// { x == X, y == Y }  
// { ? }  
var tmp := x;  
// { ? }  
x := y;  
// { ? }  
y := tmp  
// { y == Y, x == X }
```

Simultaneous Assignment

Dafny allows simultaneous assignment of multiple variables in a single statement.

Examples:

$x, y := 3, 10$ sets x to 3 and y to 10

$x, y = x + y, x - y$ sets x to the sum of x , and y and y to their difference

All right-hand sides are evaluated *before* any variables are assigned.


Note: The last example is *different* from the two statements $x = x + y; y = x - y;$

Weakest Pre-condition for Simultaneous Assignment

Definition 8: The weakest pre-condition for a *simultaneous assignment* $x_1, x_2 := E_1, E_2$ is constructed by replacing each x_1 with E_1 and each x_2 with E_2 in post-condition Q .

$$Q[x_1 := E_1, x_2 := E_2] \quad x_1, x_2 := E_1, E_2 \quad \{Q\}$$

Example: Going *backward* in the following “swap” program:



```
// { x == X, y == Y } -- initial state
// { y == Y, x == X } -- weakest pre-condition
x, y = y, x
// { x == Y, y == X } -- final "swapped" state
```

Weakest Pre-condition for Variable Introduction

Note: The statement `var x := tmp;` is actually *two* statements: `var x;` `x := tmp.`

What is true about x in the post-condition, must have been true for all x before the variable introduction.

$$\{\forall x. Q\} \quad \text{var } x \quad \{Q\}$$

Examples:

- $\{\forall x. 0 \leq x\} \quad \text{var } x \quad \{0 \leq x\}$
- $\{\forall x. 0 \leq x \cdot x\} \quad \text{var } x \quad \{0 \leq x \cdot x\}$

Strongest Post-condition for Assignment

Consider the Hoare triple

$$\{w < x, x < y\} \quad x := 100 \quad \{?\}$$

Obviously, $x = 100$ is a post-condition, however it is *not the strongest*.

Something *more* is implied by the pre-condition: there exists an n such that $(w < n) \wedge (n < y)$, which is equivalent to $w + 1 < y$.

In general:

$$\{P\} \quad x := E \quad \{\exists n. P[x := n] \wedge x = E[x := n]\}$$

Exercises

Replace the “?” in the following Hoare triples by computing *strongest post-conditions*.

1. $\{y = 10\} \quad x := 12 \quad \{?\}$
2. $\{98 \leq y\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{?\}$
3. $\{98 \leq x\} \quad x := x + 1 \quad \{?\}$
4. $\{98 \leq y < x\} \quad x := 3y + x \quad \{?\}$

\mathcal{WP} and \mathcal{SP}

Let P be a predicate on the *pre-state* of a program S , and let Q be a predicate on the *post-state* of S .

$\mathcal{WP}[S, Q]$ denotes the *weakest pre-condition* of S w.r.t. Q .

- $\mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x, Q] = \forall x. Q$
- $\mathcal{WP}[x := E, Q] = Q[x := E]$
- $\mathcal{WP}[(x_1, x_2 := E_1, E_2), Q] = Q[x_1 := E_1, x_2 := E_2]$

$\mathcal{SP}[S, P]$ denotes the *strongest post-condition* of S w.r.t. P .

- $\mathcal{SP}[\text{var } x, P] = \exists x. P$
- $\mathcal{SP}[x := E, P] = \exists n. P[x := n] \wedge x = E[x := n]$

Exercise: Compute the following pre- and post-conditions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • $\mathcal{WP}[x := y, x + y \leq 100]$ | • $\mathcal{SP}[x := 5, x + y \leq 100]$ |
| • $\mathcal{WP}[x := -x, x + y \leq 100]$ | • $\mathcal{SP}[x := x + 1, x + y \leq 100]$ |
| • $\mathcal{WP}[x := x + y, x + y \leq 100]$ | • $\mathcal{SP}[x := 2y, x + y \leq 100]$ |
| • $\mathcal{WP}[z := x + y, x + y \leq 100]$ | • $\mathcal{SP}[z := x + y, x + y \leq 100]$ |
| • $\mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x, x \leq 100]$ | • $\mathcal{SP}[\text{var } x, x \leq 100]$ |

Control Flow

Statement	Program
Assignment	$x := E$
Local variable	$\text{var } x$
Composition	$S; T$
Condition	$\text{if } B \text{ then } \{S\} \text{ else } \{T\}$
Assumption	$\text{assume } P$
Assertion	$\text{assert } P$
Method call	$r := M(E)$
Loop	$\text{while } B \text{ do } \{S\}$

Sequential Composition

$$\begin{array}{c} S;T \\ \{P\} S \{Q\} T \{R\} \\ \{P\} S \{Q\} \quad \text{and} \quad \{Q\} T \{R\} \end{array}$$

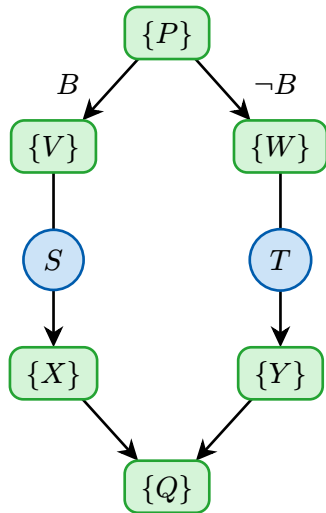
Strongest post-condition:

- Let $Q = \mathcal{SP} \llbracket S, P \rrbracket$
- $\mathcal{SP} \llbracket (S;T), P \rrbracket = \mathcal{SP} \llbracket T, Q \rrbracket = \mathcal{SP} \llbracket T, \mathcal{SP} \llbracket S, P \rrbracket \rrbracket$

Weakest pre-condition:

- Let $Q = \mathcal{WP} \llbracket T, R \rrbracket$
- $\mathcal{WP} \llbracket (S;T), R \rrbracket = \mathcal{WP} \llbracket S, Q \rrbracket = \mathcal{WP} \llbracket S, \mathcal{WP} \llbracket T, R \rrbracket \rrbracket$

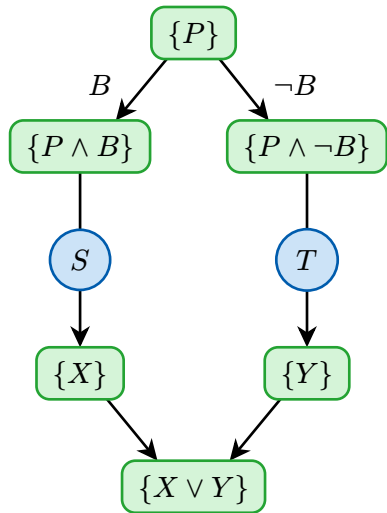
Conditional Control Flow



$\{P\}$ if B then $\{S\}$ else $\{T\}$ $\{Q\}$

1. $(P \wedge B) \rightarrow V$
2. $(P \wedge \neg B) \rightarrow W$
3. $\{V\} S \{X\}$
4. $\{W\} T \{Y\}$
5. $X \rightarrow Q$
6. $Y \rightarrow Q$

Strongest Post-condition for Condition



$\{P\} \quad \text{if } B \text{ then } \{S\} \text{ else } \{T\} \quad \{Q\}$

$V = P \wedge B$

$W = P \wedge \neg B$

$X = \mathcal{SP}[\![S, P \wedge B]\!]$

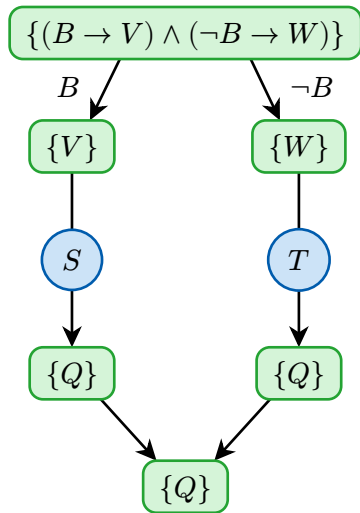
$Y = \mathcal{SP}[\![T, P \wedge \neg B]\!]$

$\mathcal{SP}[\![\text{if } B \text{ then } \{S\} \text{ else } \{T\}, P]\!] =$

$= X \vee Y =$

$= \mathcal{SP}[\![S, P \wedge B]\!] \vee \mathcal{SP}[\![T, P \wedge \neg B]\!]$

Weakest Pre-condition for Condition



$\{P\} \quad \text{if } B \text{ then } \{S\} \text{ else } \{T\} \quad \{Q\}$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathcal{WP}[\text{if } B \text{ then } \{S\} \text{ else } \{T\}, Q] &= \\
 &= (B \rightarrow V) \wedge (\neg B \rightarrow W) = \\
 &= (B \rightarrow \mathcal{WP}[S, Q]) \wedge (\neg B \rightarrow \mathcal{WP}[T, Q])
 \end{aligned}$$

$$V = \mathcal{WP}[S, Q]$$

$$W = \mathcal{WP}[T, Q]$$

$$X = Q$$

$$Y = Q$$

Example

↑

```
// { x == 50 }  
// ... (see right)  
// { (x < 3 ==> x == 89) && (x >= 3 ==> x == 50) }  
if x < 3 {  
    // { x == 89 }  
    // { x + 1 + 10 == 100 }  
    x, y := x + 1, 10;  
    // { x + y == 100 }  
} else {  
    // { x == 50 }  
    // { x + x == 100 }  
    y := x;  
    // { x + y == 100 }  
}  
// { x + y == 100 }
```

$$\begin{aligned} & ((x < 3) \rightarrow (x = 89)) \wedge ((x \geq 3) \rightarrow (x = 50)) \equiv \\ & \equiv ((x \geq 3) \vee (x = 89)) \wedge ((x < 3) \vee (x = 50)) \equiv \\ & \equiv ((x \geq 3) \wedge (x < 3)) \vee ((x \geq 3) \wedge (x = 50)) \vee \\ & \quad \vee ((x = 89) \wedge (x < 3)) \vee ((x = 89) \wedge (x = 50)) \equiv \\ & \equiv (\perp \vee (x = 50) \vee \perp \vee \perp) \equiv \\ & \equiv (x = 50) \end{aligned}$$

Method Correctness

Given

```
method M(x: Tx) returns (y: Ty)
  requires P
  ensures Q
{
  B
}
```

we need to prove $P \rightarrow \mathcal{WP} \llbracket B, Q \rrbracket$.

Method Calls

Methods are *opaque*, i.e., we reason in terms of their *specifications*, not their implementations.

Example: Given the following definition (or rather, declaration):

```
method Triple(x: int) returns (y: int)
  ensures y == 3 * x
```

we expect to be able to prove, for example, the following method call:

$$\{\text{true}\} \quad v := \text{Triple}(u + 4) \quad \{v = 3 \cdot (u + 4)\}$$

Parameters

We need to *relate* the *actual* parameters (arguments of the method call) with the *formal* parameters (of the method).

To avoid any name clashes, we first *rename* the formal parameters to *fresh* variables:

```
method Triple(x1: int) returns (y1: int)
  ensures y1 == 3 * x1
```

Then, for a call $v := \text{Triple}(u + 1)$ we have:

```
x1 := u + 1;
v := y1;
```

Assumptions

The called can assume that the method's post-condition holds.

We introduce a new statement, `assume E`, to capture this:

$$\mathcal{SP}[\text{assume } E, P] = P \wedge E$$

$$\mathcal{WP}[\text{assume } E, Q] = E \rightarrow Q$$

The semantics of `v := Triple(u + 1)` is then given by

```
var x1; var y1;  
x1 := u + 1;  
assume y1 == 3 * x1;  
v := y1;
```

```
method Triple(x1: int)  
returns (y1: int)  
    ensures y1 == 3 * x1
```

Weakest Pre-condition for Method Calls

method $M(x: X)$ returns $(y: Y)$ ensures $R[x, y]$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{WP}[r := M(E), Q] &= \\&= \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x_E; \text{var } y_r; x_E := E; \text{assume } R[x, y := x_E, y_r]; r := y_r, Q] = \\&= \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x_E, \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } y_r, \mathcal{WP}[x_E := E, \mathcal{WP}[\text{assume } R[x, y := x_E, y_r], \mathcal{WP}[r := y_r, Q]]]]] = \\&= \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x_E, \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } y_r, \mathcal{WP}[x_E := E, \mathcal{WP}[\text{assume } R[x, y := x_E, y_r], Q[r := y_r]]]]] = \\&= \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x_E, \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } y_r, \mathcal{WP}[x_E := E, R[x, y := x_E, y_r] \rightarrow Q[r := y_r]]]] = \\&= \mathcal{WP}[\text{var } x_E, \forall x_E. R[x, y := x_E, y_r] \rightarrow Q[r := y_r]] = \\&= \forall y_r. \forall x_E. R[x, y := x_E, y_r] \rightarrow Q[r := y_r]\end{aligned}$$

Overall:

$$\mathcal{WP}[r := M(E), Q] = \forall y_r. R[x, y := E, y_r] \rightarrow Q[r := y_r]$$


where x is M 's input, y is M 's output, and R is M 's post-condition.

Example

Example:

method Triple(x: int) returns (y: int)
ensures y == 3 * x

Consider calling this method with $Q = \{x = 48\}$. Backward reasoning:



```
// { u == 15 }  
// { 3 * (u + 1) == 48 }  
// { forall y1 :: y1 == 3 * (u + 1) ==> y1 == 48 }  
v := Triple(u + 1);  
// { v == 48 }
```

Method Calls with Pre-conditions

Given a method with a pre-condition:

```
method M(x: X) returns (y: Y)
  requires P
  ensures R
```

The semantics of $r := M(E)$ is:

```
var x_E; var y_r;
x_E := E;
assert P[x := x_E];
assume R[x, y := x_E, y_r];
r := y_r;
```

$$\mathcal{WP} \llbracket r := M(E), Q \rrbracket = P[x := E] \wedge \forall y_r. R[x, y := E, y_r] \rightarrow Q[r := y_r]$$

TODO



...

Bibliography

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