

# Topology Optimization of a Step Thrust Bearing

This model is inspired by the Step Thrust Bearing model in the Rotordynamics Module Application Library. In this example, topology optimization will be applied to identify the optimal number grooves and pads as well as their optimal shape.

## Model Definition

The geometry and mesh is fixed as is the norm for topology optimization. The out-ofplane geometry is defined in terms of a spatially varying bearing clearance. Topology optimization is performed by letting the variables from the **Density Model** feature control this clearance. The load capacity of the bearing is a built-in variable, and this is used as objective function. The model is unconstrained and there is no need for projection or special material interpolation, because the problem is self-penalizing for the chosen objective. Regularization is not needed either, but a Helmholtz filter does give smoother results in postprocessing, so this is enabled. See Topology Optimization of an MBB Beam for more details.

## Results and Discussion

The topology optimized design is shown in Figure 1 below.

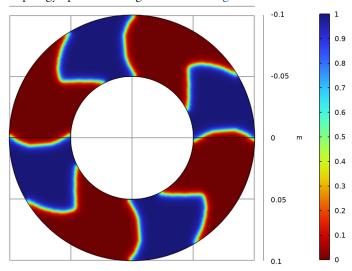


Figure 1: The topology optimized step thrust bearing with grooves (blue) and pads (red).

The optimization finds a design with four grooves when it is initialized with a uniform design. To investigate whether this is indeed the global optimum, the optimization is started with different nonuniform designs to provoke local optima corresponding to three and five grooves. Comparing the performance shows that the design with four grooves has the highest objective function, see Figure 2.

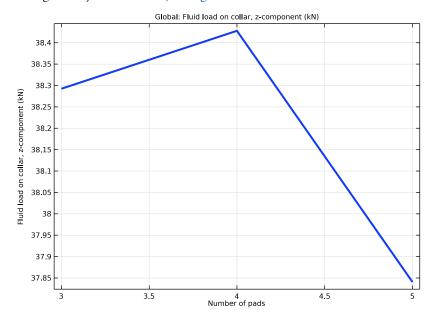


Figure 2: The optimized bearing capacity is plotted versus the number of grooves.

Note that the optimization results in a design specific to the chosen rotation direction. Some practical applications will require that both directions are taken into account, so that symmetry with respect to the rotation can be achieved.

## Notes About the COMSOL Implementation

The model demonstrates verification on a body fitted mesh in a new component, as this is good practice for topology optimization. The performance is slightly better with the body fitted mesh.

The model indicates that four grooves is the optimal topology, but running the optimization with a finer mesh and a higher projection slope can give different topologies with significantly better performance (N=1, beta=8, meshsz=1[mm] is one example). This design is qualitatively identical to the design with four grooves, but the ratio between the

length and width of the grooves is significantly higher than what is seen in common bearing designs.

**Application Library path:** Optimization\_Module/Topology\_Optimization/step\_thrust\_bearing\_topology\_optimization

## Modeling Instructions

From the File menu, choose New.

#### NEW

In the New window, click Model Wizard.

## MODEL WIZARD

- I In the Model Wizard window, click **1** 3D.
- 2 In the Select Physics tree, select Structural Mechanics>Rotordynamics> Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb).
- 3 Click Add.
- 4 Click 🔵 Study.
- 5 In the Select Study tree, select General Studies>Stationary.
- 6 Click M Done.

#### GEOMETRY I

Start by importing the parameters for the thrust bearing.

#### GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

## Parameters 1

- I In the Model Builder window, under Global Definitions click Parameters I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- 3 Click Load from File.
- **4** Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file step\_thrust\_bearing\_topology\_optimization.txt.

Next, create the geometry for the bearing. While doing so, define selections for later use.

#### **GEOMETRY I**

Work Plane I (wpl)

In the Geometry toolbar, click Work Plane.

Work Plane I (wp I)>Plane Geometry

In the Model Builder window, click Plane Geometry.

Work Plane I (wpl)>Circle I (cl)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click Circle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type Ro.
- 4 Click | Build Selected.
- 5 Right-click Circle I (cl) and choose Duplicate.

Work Plane I (wb I)>Circle 2 (c2)

- I In the Model Builder window, click Circle 2 (c2).
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type Ri.

Work Plane I (wp I)>Difference I (dif I)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click Booleans and Partitions and choose Difference.
- 2 Select the object cl only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Difference, locate the Difference section.
- 4 Click to select the Activate Selection toggle button for Objects to subtract.
- **5** Select the object **c2** only.
- 6 Click **Parity** Build Selected.

Work Plane I (wbl)>Line Segment I (lsl)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click \* More Primitives and choose Line Segment.
- 2 On the object difl, select Point 1 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Line Segment, locate the Endpoint section.
- 4 Click to select the Activate Selection toggle button for End vertex.
- **5** On the object **dif1**, select Point 8 only.
- 6 Click | Build Selected.

Work Plane I (wp I)>Partition Objects I (par I)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click Booleans and Partitions and choose Partition Objects.
- 2 Select the object difl only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Partition Objects, locate the Partition Objects section.
- **4** Click to select the **Activate Selection** toggle button for **Tool objects**.
- **5** Select the object **Is I** only.
- 6 Click | Build Selected.

Work Plane I (wpl)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Geometry I click Work Plane I (wpl).
- 2 In the Settings window for Work Plane, locate the Selections of Resulting Entities section.
- 3 Select the Resulting objects selection check box.

## Interior Edges

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click \( \frac{1}{2} \) Selections and choose Adjacent Selection.
- 2 In the Settings window for Adjacent Selection, locate the Input Entities section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Boundary.
- 4 Click + Add.
- 5 In the Add dialog box, select Work Plane I in the Input selections list.
- 6 Click OK.
- 7 In the Settings window for Adjacent Selection, locate the Output Entities section.
- 8 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Adjacent edges.
- **9** Select the **Interior edges** check box.
- **10** Clear the **Exterior edges** check box.
- II In the Label text field, type Interior Edges.

#### Circumferential Edges

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click \( \frac{1}{2} \) Selections and choose Complement Selection.
- 2 In the Settings window for Complement Selection, type Circumferential Edges in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Geometric Entity Level section. From the Level list, choose Edge.
- **4** Locate the **Input Entities** section. Click + Add.
- 5 In the Add dialog box, select Interior Edges in the Selections to invert list.

#### 6 Click OK.

#### MATERIALS

Material I (mat I)

In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Materials and choose Blank Material.

## HYDRODYNAMIC BEARING (HDB)

- I Click the Show More Options button in the Model Builder toolbar.
- 2 In the **Show More Options** dialog box, in the tree, select the check box for the node **Physics>Advanced Physics Options**.
- 3 Click OK.
- 4 In the Settings window for Hydrodynamic Bearing, locate the Physical Model section.
- 5 From the Fluid type list, choose Liquid with cavitation.

#### MATERIALS

Material I (mat I)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Materials click Material I (matl).
- 2 In the Settings window for Material, locate the Material Contents section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Property	Variable	Value	Unit	Property group
Dynamic viscosity	mu	mu_f	Pa·s	Basic

Add a **Topology Optimization** node to optimize the shape of the pads.

## COMPONENT I (COMPI)

Density Model I (dtopol)

- I In the Physics toolbar, click of Optimization and choose Topology Optimization.
- 2 In the Settings window for Density Model, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Boundary.
- 4 From the Selection list, choose All boundaries.
- 5 Locate the **Projection** section. From the **Projection type** list, choose **Hyperbolic tangent projection**.

- **6** In the  $\beta$  text field, type beta.
- 7 Locate the Interpolation section. From the Interpolation type list, choose Linear.
- 8 Locate the Control Variable Discretization section. From the Element order list, choose Constant

Define a nonuniform initial value, so that the optimization can be started close to different local optima.

9 Locate the Control Variable Initial Value section. In the  $\theta_0$  text field, type if(initUniform, volfrac, 0.5+0.5\*sin(N\*atan2(Yg, Xg))).

#### HYDRODYNAMIC BEARING (HDB)

Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb) and choose Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing.
- 2 In the Settings window for Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- 3 From the Selection list, choose All boundaries.
- 4 Locate the Reference Surface Properties section. From the Reference normal orientation list, choose Opposite direction to geometry normal.
- 5 Locate the Bearing Properties section. From the Bearing type list, choose User defined.
- **6** In the  $h_{\rm b1}$  text field, type hg+hf\*dtopo1.theta\_p.
- 7 From the  $\mathbf{X}_c$  list, choose From geometry.
- **8** Locate the **Collar Properties** section. In the  $\Omega$  text field, type speed.
- **9** Locate the **Fluid Properties** section. In the  $\rho_c$  text field, type rho\_c.

Bearing Orientation I

- I In the Model Builder window, click Bearing Orientation I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Bearing Orientation, locate the Bearing Orientation section.
- 3 From the Axis list, choose z-axis.
- **4** Specify the *V* vector as

1	x
0	у
0	z

#### MESH I

## Mapped I

- I In the Mesh toolbar, click A Boundary and choose Mapped.
- 2 In the Settings window for Mapped, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- 3 From the Selection list, choose All boundaries.

#### Size

- I In the Model Builder window, click Size.
- 2 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Element Size section.
- 3 From the Predefined list, choose Extremely fine.
- 4 Click Build All.
- **5** Click the **Custom** button.
- 6 Locate the Element Size Parameters section. In the Maximum element size text field, type meshsz.
- 7 In the Minimum element size text field, type meshsz/2.
- 8 Click **Build All**.

#### STUDY I

## Topology Optimization

- I In the Study toolbar, click of Optimization and choose Topology Optimization.
- 2 In the Model Builder window, click Study 1.
- 3 In the Settings window for Study, type Study: Sweep Initial Condition in the Label text field.

Add a **Parametric Sweep** for the number of pads, initial density distribution of the pad profile, mesh size, and projection slope.

### Parametric Sweep

- I In the Study toolbar, click Parametric Sweep.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parametric Sweep, locate the Study Settings section.
- 3 Click + Add twice.

**4** In the table, enter the following settings:

Parameter name	Parameter value list	Parameter unit
N (Number of pads)	3 3 4 5	
initUniform (Uniform initialization)	1 0 0 0	

## Topology Optimization

- I In the Model Builder window, click Topology Optimization.
- 2 In the Settings window for Topology Optimization, click Replace Expression in the upperright corner of the Objective Function section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)>Hydrodynamic Bearing>Fluid loads>Fluid load on collar - N> compl.hdb.htbl.Fcz - Fluid load on collar, z-component.

Scale the objective for better behavior of the optimization solver.

- 3 Locate the Objective Function section. From the Objective scaling list, choose Initial solution based.
- 4 From the Type list, choose Maximization. Initialize the study to generate plots to show while solving.
- 5 In the Study toolbar, click  $\underset{=}{\overset{\cup}{\cup}}$  Get Initial Value.

#### RESULTS

Output material volume factor

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Topology Optimization node, then click Output material volume factor.
- 2 In the Settings window for 3D Plot Group, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study: Sweep Initial Condition/Solution I (soll).
- 4 Click the Txy Go to XY View button in the Graphics toolbar, so that the plot updates while optimizing.

#### STUDY: SWEEP INITIAL CONDITION

Topology Optimization

- I In the Model Builder window, under Study: Sweep Initial Condition click **Topology Optimization.**
- 2 In the Settings window for Topology Optimization, locate the Output While Solving section.
- 3 Select the **Plot** check box.

4 From the Plot group list, choose Output material volume factor.

Solution I (soll)

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Solver Configurations node.
- 2 In the Model Builder window, expand the Solution I (soll) node.
- 3 In the Model Builder window, expand the Study: Sweep Initial Condition> Solver Configurations>Solution I (soll)>Optimization Solver I>Stationary I>Segregated I node.
- 4 Right-click Hydrodynamic Bearing and choose Move Up to decrease the computational time.
- 5 In the Study toolbar, click **Compute**.

The default plots show the pressure in the bearing, volume fraction, and optimization threshold.

#### RESULTS

Fluid Pressure (hdb)

- I Click the  $\uparrow^{xy}$  Go to XY View button in the Graphics toolbar.
- 2 In the Settings window for 3D Plot Group, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Parameter value (N,initUniform) list, choose 1: N=3, initUniform=1.
- 4 In the Fluid Pressure (hdb) toolbar, click Plot.

ID Plot Group 4

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Results>Topology Optimization node.
- 2 Right-click Results and choose ID Plot Group.

Surface 1

- In the Model Builder window, expand the Output material volume factor node, then click Surface I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Surface, locate the Coloring and Style section.
- **3** From the **Color table transformation** list, choose **Reverse**, so that the thicker oil layer becomes blue.

Output material volume factor

- I In the Model Builder window, click Output material volume factor.
- 2 In the Settings window for 3D Plot Group, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study: Sweep Initial Condition/Parametric Solutions I (sol2).

- 4 From the Parameter value (N,initUniform) list, choose 3: N=4, initUniform=0 to show the best design.
- 5 In the Output material volume factor toolbar, click Plot.
- 6 From the Dataset list, choose Study: Sweep Initial Condition/Solution I (soll), so that the plot still updates while optimizing.

## Threshold

You can plot the bearing load capacity versus number of pads for the optimized shape of the bearings. Use the instructions below to generate this plot.

## Bearing Capacity vs Number of Pads

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click ID Plot Group 4.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Bearing Capacity vs Number of Pads in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Data section. From the Dataset list, choose Study: Sweep Initial Condition/ Parametric Solutions I (sol2).
- 4 From the Parameter selection (N, initUniform) list, choose From list.
- 5 In the Parameter values (N,initUniform) list, choose 2: N=3, initUniform=0, 3: N=4, initUniform=0, and 4: N=5, initUniform=0.

#### Global I

- I Right-click Bearing Capacity vs Number of Pads and choose Global.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)> Hydrodynamic Bearing>Fluid loads>Fluid load on collar - N>hdb.htb1.Fcz -Fluid load on collar, z-component.
- 3 Locate the y-Axis Data section. In the table, enter the following settings:

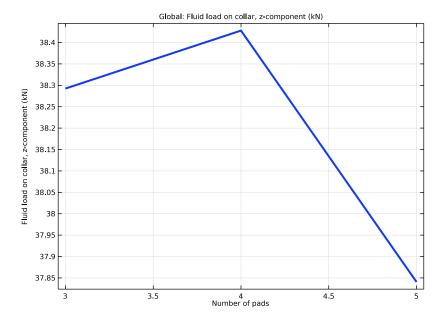
Expression	Unit	Description
hdb.htb1.Fcz	kN	Fluid load on collar, z-component

- 4 Locate the x-Axis Data section. From the Parameter list, choose Expression.
- **5** In the **Expression** text field, type N.
- 6 Click to expand the Coloring and Style section. From the Width list, choose 3.

## Bearing Capacity vs Number of Pads

- I In the Model Builder window, click Bearing Capacity vs Number of Pads.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Legend section.

## 3 Clear the Show legends check box.



The performance seems to peak for four grooves. You can see that this a numerical effect by running the optimization with meshsz= 1[mm], beta=8, N=16. This gives a better objective, but the design is very different from conventional bearings. In the following we perform a verification in a new component, as this good practice in the context of topology optimization.

## Mesh Import Parameters 1

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Results>Datasets node.
- 2 Right-click Filter and choose Mesh Import Parameters.
- 3 In the Settings window for Mesh Import Parameters, locate the Data section.
- 4 From the Parameter value (N,initUniform) list, choose 3: N=4, initUniform=0.

#### Filter

Right-click Filter and choose Create Mesh Part.

#### MESH PART I

## Import I

I In the Settings window for Import, locate the Import section.

- 2 From the Boundary partitioning list, choose Minimal.
- 3 Click Import.

#### ADD COMPONENT

In the Model Builder window, right-click the root node and choose Add Component>3D.

#### **GEOMETRY 2**

Import I (impl)

- I In the **Home** toolbar, click **Import**.
- 2 In the Settings window for Import, locate the Import section.
- 3 From the Source list, choose Geometry sequence.
- 4 From the Geometry list, choose Geometry 1.
- 5 Right-click Import I (impl) and choose Duplicate.

#### Grooves

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component 2 (comp2)>Geometry 2 click Import 2 (imp2).
- 2 In the Settings window for Import, type Grooves in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Import section. From the Source list, choose Mesh or 3D printing file (STL, 3MF, PLY).
- 4 From the Mesh list, choose Mesh Part I.
- **5** Clear the **Simplify mesh** check box.
- **6** Clear the Form solids from surface objects check box.
- 7 Locate the Selections of Resulting Entities section. Select the Resulting objects selection check box.
- 8 From the Show in physics list, choose Boundary selection.

Form Union (fin)

- I In the Model Builder window, click Form Union (fin).
- 2 In the Settings window for Form Union/Assembly, locate the Form Union/Assembly section.
- 3 From the Repair tolerance list, choose Relative.
- 4 In the Relative repair tolerance text field, type 1.0E-4.
- 5 Click | Build Selected.

#### Pads

I In the Geometry toolbar, click \( \frac{1}{2} \) Selections and choose Complement Selection.

- 2 In the Settings window for Complement Selection, type Pads in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Geometric Entity Level section. From the Level list, choose Boundary.
- 4 Locate the Input Entities section. Click + Add.
- 5 In the Add dialog box, select Grooves in the Selections to invert list.
- 6 Click OK.

## **DEFINITIONS (COMP2)**

#### Groove Variables

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component 2 (comp2) right-click Definitions and choose Variables.
- 2 In the Settings window for Variables, type Groove Variables in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Geometric Entity Selection section. From the Geometric entity level list, choose Boundary.
- 4 From the Selection list, choose Grooves.
- **5** Locate the **Variables** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Unit	Description
hfilm	hg+hf	m	Film thickness

**6** Right-click **Groove Variables** and choose **Duplicate**.

## Pad Variables

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component 2 (comp2)>Definitions click Groove Variables 1.
- 2 In the Settings window for Variables, type Pad Variables in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Geometric Entity Selection section. From the Selection list, choose Pads.
- **4** Locate the **Variables** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Unit	Description
hfilm	hf	m	Film thickness

#### MATERIALS

Material I (mat I)

In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Materials right-click Material I (mat I) and choose Copy.

#### MATERIALS

In the Model Builder window, under Component 2 (comp2) right-click Materials and choose Paste Material.

#### HYDRODYNAMIC BEARING (HDB)

In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb) and choose Copy.

## COMPONENT 2 (COMP2)

In the Model Builder window, right-click Component 2 (comp2) and choose Paste Hydrodynamic Bearing.

## HYDRODYNAMIC BEARING (HDB2)

In the Messages from Paste dialog box, click OK.

Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing 1

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb2) node, then click Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing 1.
- 2 In the Settings window for Hydrodynamic Thrust Bearing, locate the Bearing Properties section.
- **3** In the  $h_{\rm b1}$  text field, type hfilm.

Initial Values 1

- I In the Model Builder window, click Initial Values I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Initial Values, locate the Initial Values section.
- **3** In the *pfilm* text field, type 100000[Pa]\*hdb2.max(hdb2.hB1)/(0.1\* hdb2.max(hdb2.hB1)+hdb2.hB1).

#### MESH 2

Free Triangular 1

- I In the Mesh toolbar, click A Boundary and choose Free Triangular.
- 2 In the Settings window for Free Triangular, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Remaining.

Size

- I In the Model Builder window, click Size.
- 2 In the Settings window for Size, click to expand the Element Size Parameters section.
- 3 In the Maximum element size text field, type meshsz.

- 4 In the Minimum element size text field, type meshsz/2.
- 5 In the Curvature factor text field, type 10.
- 6 Click Build All.

#### ADD STUDY

- I In the Home toolbar, click Add Study to open the Add Study window.
- 2 Go to the Add Study window.
- 3 Find the Studies subsection. In the Select Study tree, select General Studies>Stationary.
- 4 Click Add Study in the window toolbar.
- 5 In the Model Builder window, click the root node.
- 6 In the Home toolbar, click Add Study to close the Add Study window.

## STUDY 2

## Step 1: Stationary

- I In the Settings window for Stationary, locate the Physics and Variables Selection section.
- **2** In the table, enter the following settings:

Physics interface	Solve for	Equation form
Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb)		Automatic (Stationary)
Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb2)	$\checkmark$	Automatic (Stationary)
Topology Optimization (Component I)		Automatic

#### STUDY: SWEEP INITIAL CONDITION

## Step 1: Stationary

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Study: Sweep Initial Condition node, then click Step 1: Stationary.
- 2 In the Settings window for Stationary, locate the Physics and Variables Selection section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Physics interface	Solve for	Equation form
Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb)	$\checkmark$	Automatic (Stationary)
Hydrodynamic Bearing (hdb2)		Automatic (Stationary)
Topology Optimization (Component I)	1	Automatic

#### **VERIFICATION**

- I In the Model Builder window, click Study 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Study, type Verification in the Label text field.
- 3 In the Home toolbar, click **Compute**.

#### RESULTS

Topology Optimization I

In the Model Builder window, under Results right-click Topology Optimization 1 and choose Delete.

Objective Comparison

- I In the Results toolbar, click Evaluation Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for Evaluation Group, type Objective Comparison in the Label text field.

Global Evaluation I

- I Right-click Objective Comparison and choose Global Evaluation.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global Evaluation, click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the Expressions section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)> Hydrodynamic Bearing>Fluid loads>Fluid load on collar - N>hdb.htb1.Fcz -Fluid load on collar, z-component.
- 3 Right-click Global Evaluation I and choose Duplicate.

Global Evaluation 2

- I In the Model Builder window, click Global Evaluation 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global Evaluation, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Verification/Solution 7 (4) (sol7).
- 4 Click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the Expressions section. From the menu, choose Component 2 (comp2)>Hydrodynamic Bearing>Fluid loads> Fluid load on collar - N>hdb2.htb1.Fcz - Fluid load on collar, z-component.
- 5 In the Objective Comparison toolbar, click **= Evaluate**.

The performance is slightly higher for the verification in the new component.