

Be a Sequence Pro to Avoid Bad Con Sequences

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Introduction

UVM sequences are vital for verification success

Need Control

- Reach scenarios
- Find and isolate bugs
- Close coverage

Manage Complexity

- Debug constraint failures
- Reduce mistakes
- Transfer knowledge

Need Reuse

- Within a sequence library
- With derivative projects
- For generic VIP

UVM sequences are often not applied appropriately



Insufficient API

- Can't control from tests
- Can't isolate features



Too Complex

- Intractable constraint failures
- Invalid stimulus



Not Reusable

- Copy/pasted routines
- Tied to a specific DUT



Poor visibility of project status



No risk-management of features





Outline

- Introduction to sequences
- Sequence guidelines improve control, complexity, & reuse
- Sequence execution masters, reactive slaves, streaming data
- **Verification productivity** *strategies to manage features*
- Portable Stimulus Considerations how PSS impacts sequences
- Conclusion & references





What are UVM sequences and why do we care?

INTRODUCTION TO SEQUENCES





What is a Sequence?

A sequence encapsulates a scenario

```
class access seq extends base seq;
 rand master enum
                     source;
 rand cmd enum cmd;
 rand bit[31:0] addr;
                                                     Random control knobs for users
 rand bit[31:0] data[];
                                                     Constraints on random options
  constraint legal_c{ ...}
                                                           Procedural body()
 task body(); *
    if (p sequencer.cfg.chmode == ENABLED) _
                                                     Access resources via sequencer
```





Why Bother Using Sequences?

```
class access seq extends base seq;
 rand master enum
                  source
 rand cmd enum cmd;
 rand bit[31:0] addr;
 rand bit[31:0] data[];
                             Both provide
 constraint legal c{ ...}
                               options
 task body();
task access dut (master enum
                             source.
                cmd enum cmd,
                bit[31:0] addr,
                ref bit[31:0] data[]);
  //Task body
```

Both **sequences** and **tasks** encapsulate a scenario

Both have procedural body





Why Bother Using Sequences?

```
class read_test extends uvm_test;
task run_phase(uvm_phase phase);

`uvm_do_with(access_seq,
{source == PORT_A;
cmd == WRITE;
addr == 'hA0;
data == 'h55;})
...
```

```
start
sequence
```



```
task access_dut (master_enum source, cmd_enum cmd, bit[31:0] addr, ref bit[31:0] data[]);

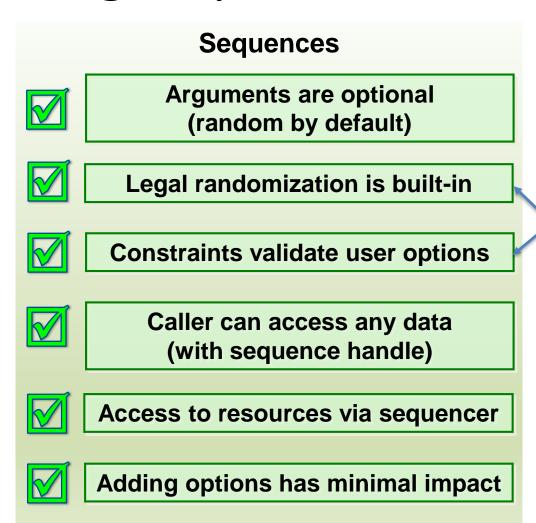
//Task body
```





Why Bother Using Sequences?

Tasks Arguments are mandatory % (or fixed by default) **Users must randomize args** No built-in arg validity checks Awkward to return data **X** (use ref arguments) No built-in access to resources Adding args breaks existing code

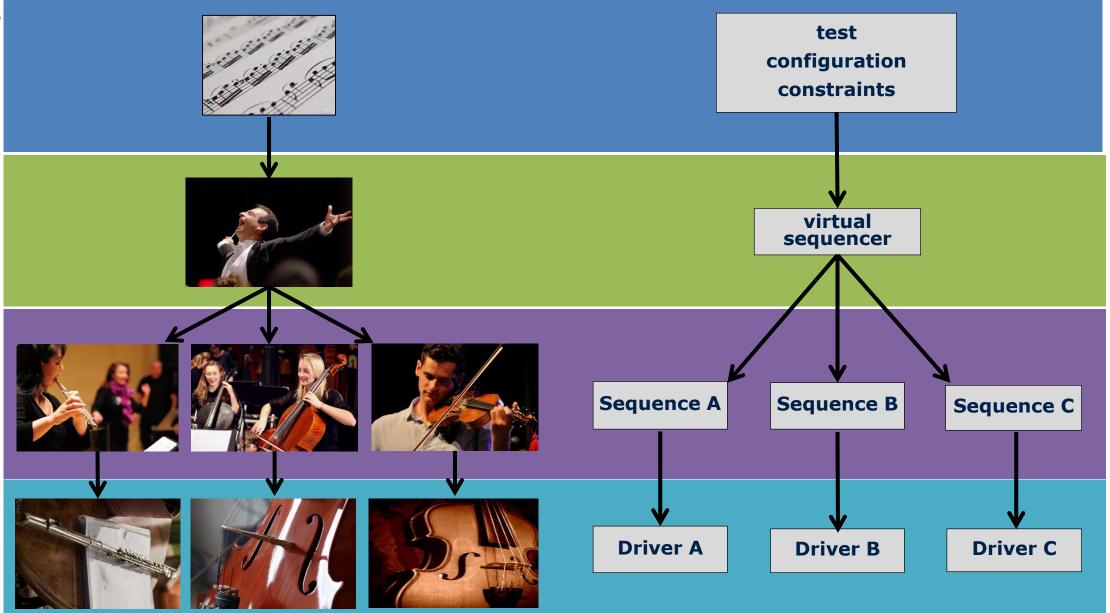




With

quidelines



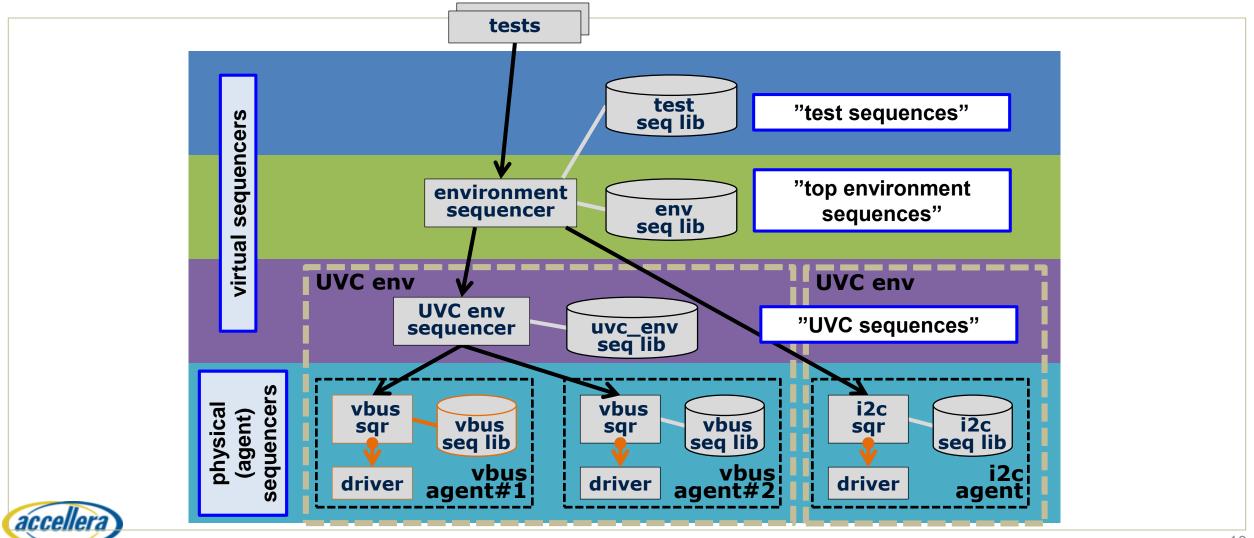






SYSTEMS INITIATIVE

Sequence API Strategy





Sequence Layer Roles

LAYER		CONSTRAINTS	PRIMARY PURPOSE
TEST		Test scenario	Highest-level sequence
ТОР	User	DUT use cases/scenarios	API for test writer
	Lower	System requirements	Scenario building blocks
UVC	User	Protocol use cases	Encapsulates sequencer(s)
	Middle	Protocol operations	Encapsulates basic operations
	Low	Low-level requirements	Data formatting
	Item	Enforce legality	Support all possible scenarios



Reduce complexity at each layer



Control with intuitive APIs



Sequences decoupled and reusable



Each layer resolves a subset of random options



Benefits both directed and random tests

Existence of some layers is application dependent





How to maximize the benefits of using sequences

SEQUENCE GUIDELINES





Produce legal stimulus by default

```
class top_seq extends base_seq;
...
task body();
   `uvm_do(ahb_burst_seq_inst)
```

No knobs provided

start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends base_seq;

constraint legal_c{
    dir inside {WRITE, READ};
    addr + length < p_sequencer.cfg.get_max_addr();
    ...
}</pre>
```

Enforce legal stimulus



Users can provide 0 or more inline constraints





Address set by user

start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends base_seq;

constraint legal_c{
    dir inside {WRITE, READ};
    addr + length < p_sequencer.cfg.get_max_addr();
    ...
}</pre>
```

Length still random and legal



Inline constraints are optional, but legality is always guaranteed





Without this guideline, we risk wasting significant time!



Users must manage legal rules in higher sequences

What if length is **invalid**? (User error or bug)



start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends base_seq;
constraint legal_c{
   dir inside {WRITE, READ};
   addr < p_sequencer.cfg.get_max_addr();
   ...
}</pre>
No constraint
```



May produce illegal burst length



Wasted time debugging invalid simulations



on **length**



Illegal address and length



start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends base_seq;
  constraint legal_c{
    dir inside {WRITE, READ};
    addr + length < p_sequencer.cfg.get_max_addr();
    ...
}</pre>
```









Control Knob Debug Guideline

Constrain control knobs with class constraints, then pass results with inline constraints

```
class ahb_write_burst_seq extends ahb_base_seq;
...

...

`uvm_do_with(ahb_seq,
{ahb_seq.hwrite == HWRITE_WRITE;
ahb_seq.hburst inside {HBURST_SINGLE, HBURST_INCR};}
```



start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends ahb_base_seq;
  rand write_enum hwrite;
  rand burst_enum hburst;
  ...
}
```



All constraints solved concurrently, making solver failures hard to debug





Control Knob Debug Guideline



start sequence

```
class ahb_burst_seq extends ahb_base_seq;
  rand hwrite_t hwrite;
  rand hburst_t hburst;
```





Debug randomization in isolated steps

Two-Step Randomization:

- 1. Randomize class variables
- 2. Run **body()** to randomize lower sequences



API Guideline

Minimize the number of control knobs

```
class ahb master write seq extends ahb base seq;
   rand int slave num;
                                                     Exposed control knob
   protected rand int slave id; _
                                                     Hidden control knob
   constraint id c {
     slave id == p sequencer.cfg.get_slave_id(slave_num);
                                                                 Keep fixed and derived
   virtual task body();
                                                                  variables in body()
      ahb seq item req;
     `uvm do with (req, {req.hwrite == HWRITE WRITE;
                        req.hprot3 == p_sequencer.cfg.get_hprot3();
                        req.haddr[31:24] == local::slave num;
                        req.id == local::slave id})
Users can't control these
```









Users can't misuse sequence and cause unexpected errors



Reuse Guideline

Make tests **independent** of testbench architecture

```
class ahb_fabric_write_seq extends base_seq;
  task body();
  ahb_fabric_master_write_seq master_write_seq;
    `uvm_do(master_write_seq)
  endtask: body

Test-level sequence decoupled
  from testbench architecture
```

start mid-level sequence







Adaptability Guideline

Use configuration objects and accessor methods to adapt to project-specific configurations

```
class ahb_cfg extends uvm_object;
rand int slv_fifo_depth;
...
constraint {
    slv_fifo_depth inside {[1:`MAX_FIFO_DEPTH]};
};
function int get_fifo_depth();
    return(this.slv_fifo_depth);
endfunction
Keep project-specific configuration
constraints outside of sequences
```



Sequence is generic and reusable



Changes in spec are transparent

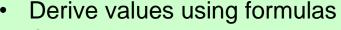
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Self-tuning Guideline

Use utility methods to support self-tuning sequences

```
function automatic int calc data offset from address (ADDR t addr);
    return(addr / DATA WORD SIZE) % DATA WORDS PER ADDR);
endfunction
                                                         Package-scope methods perform
                                                              common calculations
class write word seq extends base seq;
 rand bit[31:0] addr;
                                                          package ahb pkg;
 task body();
                                                            `include "ahb common.sv"
    bit[31:0] ram addr = addr / DATA WORDS PER ADDR;
                                                            ... //etc
                                                          endpackage
    `uvm do with(write single seq, {
                 addr == local::ram addr;
                 word sel == calc data offset from addr(local::addr) })
```



- Calculate delays for transactions
- Calculate timeouts for waiting



Avoid code duplication between sequences



Sequences adapt to changes in calculations





Constraint Placement Guideline

Constraint Strategy	Ideal Purpose
class constraints	legal requirements
inline constraints	scenarios
configuration objects	configuration register dependencies
descriptor objects ^[1]	bundle sets of control knobs
policy classes [3]	dynamically redefine constraints or impose constraints that bypass many layers

[3] SystemVerilog Constraint Layering via Reusable Randomization Policy Classes – John Dickol, DVCon 2015





Sequence Library Tip

Use typedef header at top of sequence library file

```
typedef class power on seq; // powers on DUT
typedef class reset seq; // hard reset of DUT
typedef class por seq; // powers on and hard resets DUT
class power on seq extends base seq;
                                            typically multiple classes per file
endclass
                                           (normal UVM has one class per file)
class reset seq extends base seq;
endclass
                                              documents content
class por seq extends base seq;
  power on seq power seq;
                                              allows sequences
  reset seq rst seq;
                                              used in any order
endclass
```





More Guidelines

Guidelines			
Use Dedicated Constraint Blocks	Inheritance vs. Composition		
Use Soft Constraints Carefully	Manage Control Knobs Hierarchically		
Use Enumerated Types	Provide Random and Directed Flavors		
Use Descriptor Objects	Messaging at Sequence Start and End		

[1] Use the Sequence, Luke – Verilab, SNUG 2018



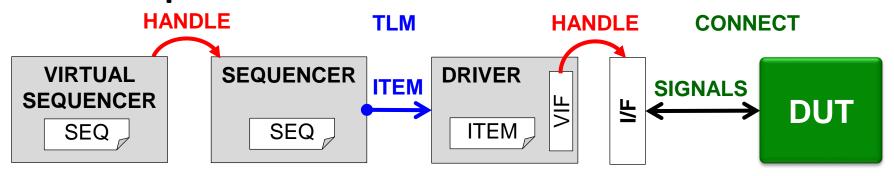


SEQUENCE EXECUTION





Sequence Execution Overview



Sequences execute on sequencers to control stimulus

- virtual sequences coordinate and execute one or more sequences
- physical sequences generate items which are passed to drivers
- drivers interact with DUT via signal interface

Sequence execution affected by:

- verification component role proactive or reactive
- sequencer type virtual (no item) or physical (item)
- item content single transaction or streams of data



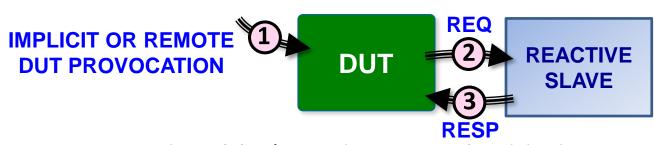


Proactive Masters & Reactive Slaves

Proactive Masters:



- Test controls when sequences are executed on the UVC and timing of requests to DUT
- Stimulus blocks test flow waiting for DUT response
- Reactive Slaves:



- Timing of DUT requests is unpredictable (e.g. due to embedded FW execution)
- UVC must react to request and respond autonomously without blocking test flow

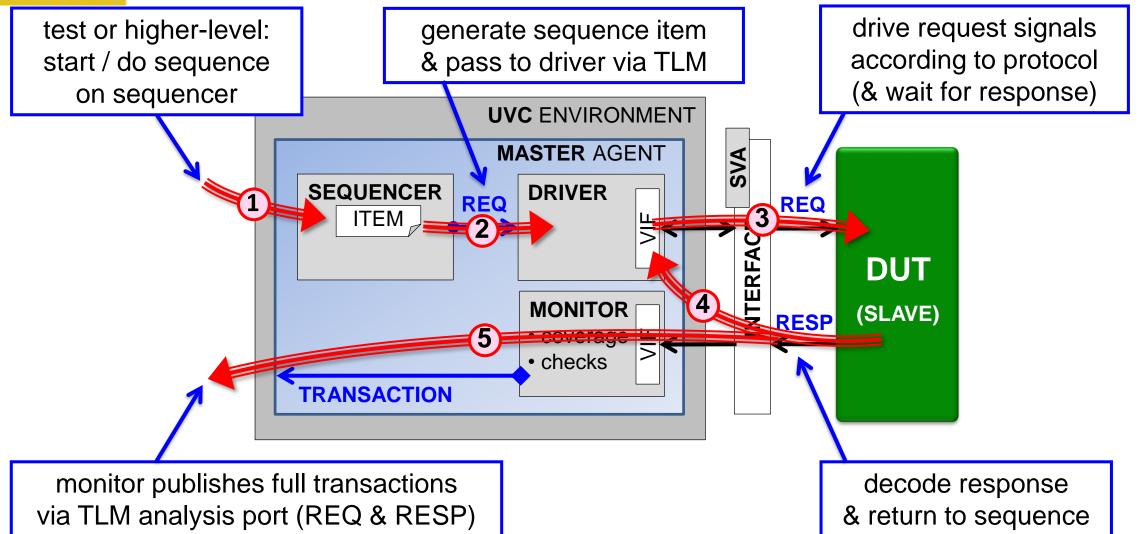




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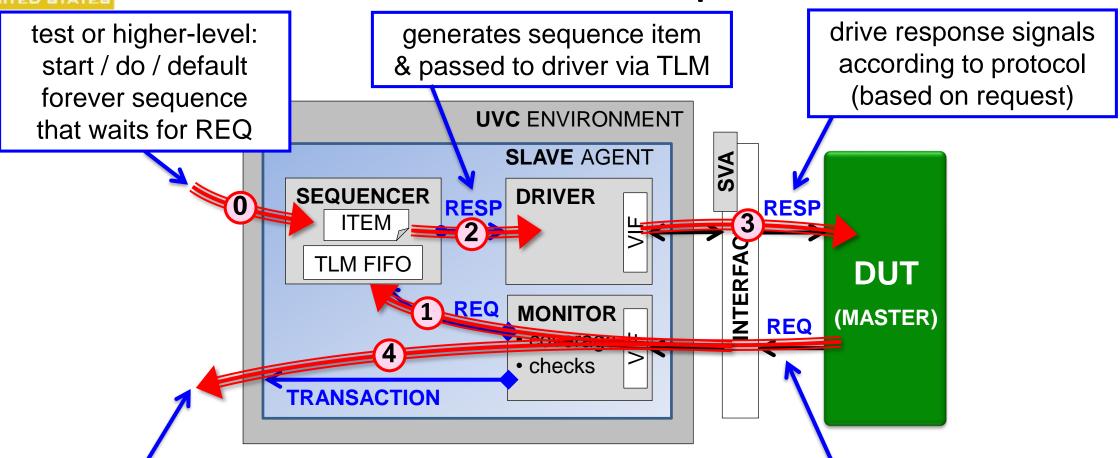
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Proactive Master Operation





Reactive Slave Operation



monitor publishes full transactions via TLM analysis port (REQ & RESP)

decode request whenever DUT initiates it & publish to sequencer





Sequence Types

Normal Sequences: Generate a single transaction

• Virtual Sequences: Start *other* sequences

Streaming Sequences: Generate autonomous stimulus





Normal Sequences

Normal sequences use a sequence item to:

- Generate stimulus via a driver
- Describe required transaction-level stimulus
- Define a single finite transaction

- bus transactions
- data packet
- power on/reset

Key characteristics:

- Driver is not autonomous
- Fully controllable from virtual sequences
- Sequence handshake is blocking
- Sequence items handled consecutively

Return after **complete** transaction (& response)





Proactive Master Sequence

```
UVC ENV
class my_master_request_seq extends
                                                                 MASTER AGENT
                         uvm sequence # (my master seq item);
 rand cmd enum
                  cmd;
                                                                                DUT
 rand bit[31:0] addr;
 rand bit[31:0] data[];
 my master seq item m item;
                                               generate request item
  task body();
                                               based on sequence knobs
    `uvm do with(m item, {
     m item.m cmd == local::cmd;
     m item.m addr == local::addr;
      foreach (local::data[i]) m item.m data[i] == local::data[i];
    })
```





Proactive Master Driver

```
MASTER AGENT
class my master driver extends uvm driver# (my master seq item);
  my master seq item m item;
                                                                                    DUT
  task run phase(...);
    forever begin
      seq item port.get next item(m item);
      drive item(m item);
      seq item port.item done();
                                        standard driver-sequencer interaction
    end
  endtask
  task drive_item(my master seq item item);
                    drive request signals to DUT
  endtask
                    (based on sequence item fields)
endclass
```



UVC ENV



Reactive Slave Sequence

```
class my_slave_response_seq extends
                                                                       SLAVE AGENT
                           uvm sequence # (my slave seq item);
  my slave seq item m item;
                                                                                      DUT
                               call forever loop inside sequence
  my transaction m request;
                                (sequence runs throughout phase:
  task body();
                                ...do not raise and drop objections!)
    forever begin
      p sequencer.request fifo.get(m request);
                                                          wait for a transaction request
      case (m request.m direction)
                                                           (fifo.get is blocking)
        READ:
           `uvm do with(m item,{
            m item.m resp kind == READ RESPONSE;
            m item.m delay <= get max delay();</pre>
            m item.m data == get data(m request.m addr);
                                                           generate response item
                                                           based on observed request
```



UVC ENV



Reactive Slave Driver

```
SLAVE AGENT
class my slave driver extends uvm driver # (my slave seq item);
 my slave seq item m item;
                                                                                     DUT
  task run phase(...);
    forever begin
      seq item port.get next item(m item);
      drive item(m item);
      seq item port.item done();
                                        standard driver-sequencer interaction
    end
  endtask
  task drive item (my slave seq item item);
                                                                 identical code structure
                                                                   to proactive master
                    drive response signals to DUT
  endtask
                    (based on sequence item fields)
endclass
```



UVC ENV



Virtual Sequences

• Virtual sequences:

- do not directly generate an item
- coordinate & execute other sequences
- define scenarios, interaction & encapsulation

- high-level scenarios
- parallel transactions
- multiple agents/UVCs

Key characteristics

- full control over all child sequences
- may be blocked by time-consuming sequences
- multiple virtual sequences may run at same time (nested or parallel) on same virtual sequencer



Must target different resources (not possible for physical sequencers)



Virtual Sequence

```
class my_virtual_seq extends uvm_sequence;
                                                                           AGENT
  // rand fields ...;
  // constraints ...;
                                                                                     DUT
                         fork multiple sequences in parallel
  task body();
    my poll fifo seq poll fifo seq;
    i2c send data seq send data seq;
    fork
      `uvm do with (poll fifo seq, { 🗻
                                                  execute on this virtual sequencer
        timeout == 1ms;
                                                  (targets different physical sequencer)
       `uvm do on with(send data seq, p sequencer.i2c sequencer,{
        slave == 1;
        data == local::data;
                                                              execute on referenced
                                                              physical sequencer
    join
```



ENV



Streaming Sequences

- Streaming is a stimulus pattern where:
 - Item defines repetitive autonomous stimulus
 - Driver generates derived patterns on its own

- clock generators
- background traffic
- analog waveforms (real number models)
- Key characteristics for successful streaming include:
 - Sequences (& config) control the autonomous behavior
 - Sequence handshake must be non-blocking

Sequences can run forever

Operation can be interrupted by a new operation

Safely stopped and started again





Streaming Sequence

```
UVC ENV
class my_ramp_seq extends uvm_sequence # (my_analog_seq_item);
                                                                     STREAM AGENT
  rand real start;
 rand real step;
                                                                                    DUT
                            random real and time control knobs[*]
 rand time rate;
 my analog seq item m item;
  // constraint start inside {[0.0:0.75]};
  // constraint rate inside {[lps:100ns]}; *
                                                      real and time constraints
  task body();
                                                                 totally normal physical
    `uvm do with(m_item, {
                                                                  sequence structure
      m item.m start == local::start;
      m item.m step == local::step;
                                           generate normal sequence item
      m item.m rate == local::rate;
                                           constrained by control knobs
```





Streaming Driver

```
ANALOG
class my_analog_driver extends uvm_driver # (my_analog_seq_item)
  my analog seq item m item;
                                                                                    DUT
                                call item done before drive item
  task run phase(...);
                                to pass control back to sequencer
    forever begin
                                                 blocking peek waits for new item
      seq_item_port.get_next_item(m item);
      seq item port.item_done();
      fork
                                          task drive item (my analog seq item item);
        seq item port.peek(m item);
                                            real value = item.start;
        drive item(m item);
                                            forever begin // ramp generation
      join any
                                              vif.data = value;
      disable fork;
                                              #(item.rate);
    end
                                              value += item.step;
  endtask
                                              ... // saturation & looping
                                            end
    till drive_item task when new item
                                                          drive request pattern forever
                                                           (unless new item received)
                                         endtask
```



UVC ENV



Strategies to apply sequence API to reach project goals

VERIFICATION PRODUCTIVITY





How do we use our Sequence API?

Project Goals

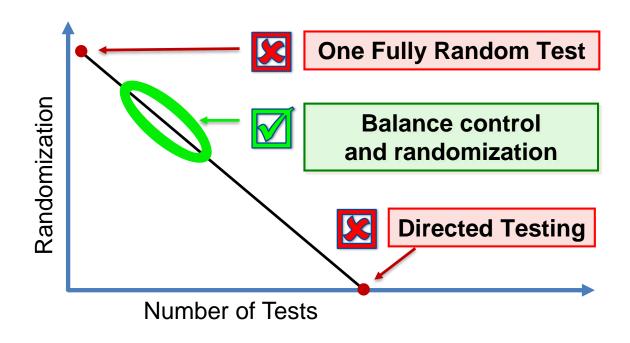
- Meet milestone deadlines
- Maximize chance of finding bugs
- Report status to stakeholders

Project Risks

- Features ready at later milestones
- Bugs block progress
- Changes in requirements
- Changes in priorities

Project Challenges

- Massive state space to verify
- Need to track progress
- Need a strategy to meet goals





Our sequence API is a powerful tool for solving this



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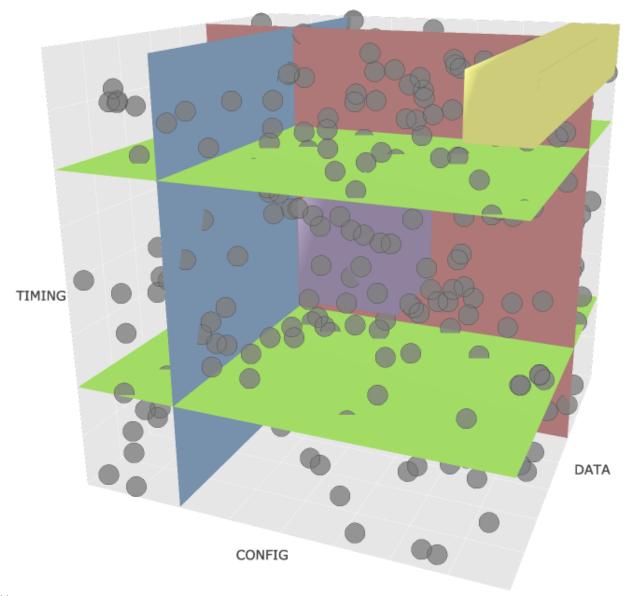
Feature Group Isolation

Test Type	Configuration	Data	Timing	
Smoke	FIXED	FIXED	FIXED	
Bug-Hunt	RAND	RAND	RAND	
Feature	RAND	RAND	FIXED (Low)	
Feature	RAND	RAND	FIXED (High)	
Feature	FIXED	RAND	RAND	
Feature	RAND	FIXED	RAND	
Corner	MAX	RAND	MAX	
Use-Case	TYPICAL	RAND	TYPICAL	

Virtual Sequence Control Knob Options



Coarse-grained Isolation





Feature Group Isolation

Identify design features that partition major DUT functionality

Configurations

- number of channels
- mode of operation
- memory size

Data Patterns

- directed/random
- corner cases
- use-case

Timing

- directed / random
- corner / use-cases
- flow patterns







- CH_ALL, CH_1, CH_2
- FAST_MODE, ...
- M256, M512, M1024

- FIXED, RAND
- ADC_MAX, ADC_MIN
- DEFAULT, CASE1, ...

- FIXED, RAND
- DELAY_MAX, DELAY_MIN
- SEQUENTIAL, PARALLEL



Can stress any feature in isolation per test





Can control mix of features per test

We can't isolate *every* feature. Choose strategically!

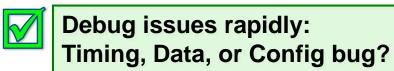


Test Suite Example

Test Name	Configuration		Data	Timing	
	DUT_MODE	CH_CFG	Input	TR_DELAY	DUT_FLOW
seq_flow_test	RAND	RAND	RAND	FIXED	SEQUENTIAL
par_flow_test	RAND	RAND	RAND	FIXED	PARALLEL
fast_mode_test	FAST_MODE	SINGLE	RAND	RAND	RAND
basic_data_test	RAND	RAND	FIXED	RAND	RAND
max_thput_test	FAST_MODE	ALL_CHAN	RAND	MIN_DELAY	PARALLEL
use_case_test	NORM_MODE	TYPICAL	RAND	TYPICAL	PARALLEL

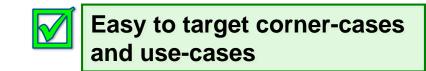






- Regression results are implicitly mapped to features
- Easy to allocate regressions to close feature coverage
 - Easy status reporting with test-naming conventions









Where does portable stimulus fit in?

PORTABLE STIMULUS





What is Portable Stimulus?

Portable Test and Stimulus Standard (PSS) [5]

"[**PSS**] defines a specification for creating a single representation of stimulus and test scenarios ... enabling the generation of different implementations of a scenario that run on a variety of execution platforms..."

Key features:

- higher level of abstraction for describing test intent
- test intent is decoupled from implementation details
- declarative domain-specific system modeling language
- allows test portability between implementations and platforms
- executes implementation-specific methods and sequences

Does PSS replace all our UVM sequences and stimulus?

no, but it can replace the test layer and some virtual sequences

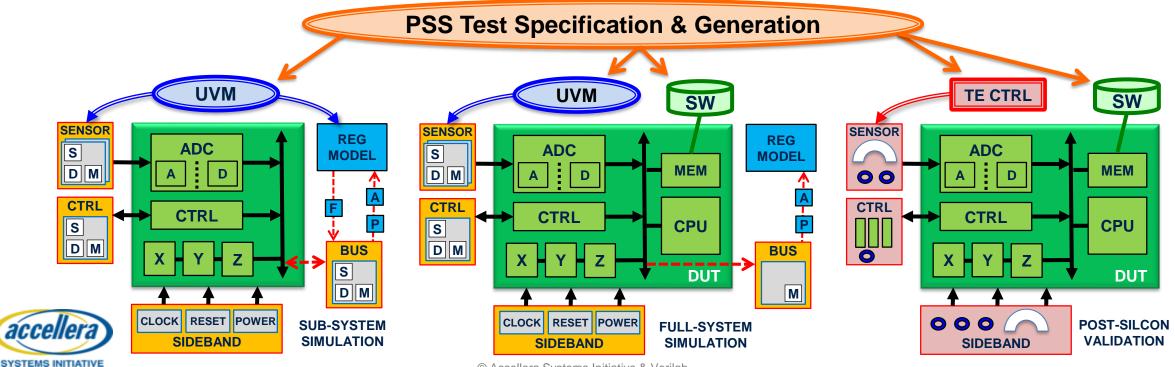




Test Reuse

PSS addresses reuse of test intent

- reuse from (block to) sub-system to full-system (within UVM)
- reuse of tests on different target implementations (e.g. UVM or SW)
- reuse of tests on different target platforms (e.g. simulation or hardware)





What Changes

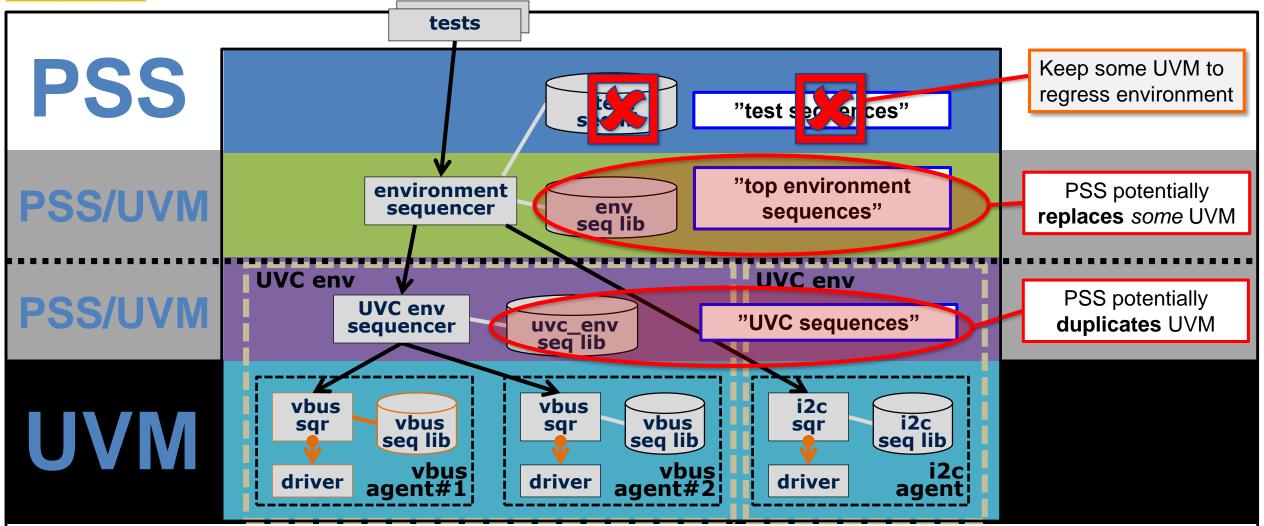
- High-level test scenarios & use-cases delegated to PSS
 - almost^[*] all test sequences & test components replaced by PSS
 - many sub-system and full-system scenario virtual sequences replaced
- We do not implement these tests in UVM
 - we generate UVM tests from the PSS tools
 - we conceive test scenarios using PSS modeling paradigm
- PSS tests are responsible for corresponding high-level checks
- PSS also has built-in (stimulus) functional coverage capability



[*] Retain some pure UVM tests to sign-off & regress UVM environment



PSS Tests & UVM Sequences







CONCLUSION





Conclusion

Common Problems We All Face









Poor visibility of project status



No risk-management of features

Apply Sequence API Guidelines

Achieved Control

Managed Complexity

Enabled Reuse

Control Advanced Scenarios

Control Reactive Slaves

Autonomous Streaming Sequences





Conclusion (cont.)

Project Challenges



Poor visibility of project status



No risk-management of features

Apply Sequence API Strategically

Prioritize features efficiently

Track and report status easily

Anticipate and manage project risks

UVM Sequences Remain Vital

PSS benefits from high quality sequences





References

- 1 Use the Sequence, Luke Verilab, SNUG 2018
- 2 Mastering Reactive Slaves in UVM Verilab, SNUG 2016
- 3 SystemVerilog Constraint Layering via Reusable Randomization Policy Classes, John Dickol, DVCon 2015
- 4 Advanced UVM Tutorial Verilab, DVCon 2014
- 5 Portable Test and Stimulus Standard, Version 1.0, Accellera

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Q & A

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