

SE465  
Software Testing and Quality Assurance  
Assignment 1, version 1

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**Due: 11:59 PM, Friday, January 30, 2026**  
**Submit: via [git.uwaterloo.ca](https://git.uwaterloo.ca)**

## Getting set up

We will create a copy of the starter repo for you in your `git.uwaterloo.ca` account. You need to log in to `git.uwaterloo.ca` for that to work.

I expect each of you to do the assignment independently. As stated in the course outline, you can ask questions of generative AI, but you cannot submit text or code that comes from GenAI. I will follow UW's Policy 71 for all cases of plagiarism.

## Submission instructions:

Commit **and push** your modifications back to your fork on `git.uwaterloo.ca`. It's git, so you can submit multiple times. After submission, **please make a fresh clone of your submission to make sure you have uploaded all necessary files**.

## Submission summary

Here's what you need to submit in your fork of the repo. Be sure to commit and **push** your changes back to `git.uwaterloo.ca`.

## Question 1: Statement and Branch Coverage

In this question you will write Python test suites that ensure statement and branch coverage. Write test suites that ensure 100% statement and branch coverage on the `estimate_size` function in the `estimate_size/` directory (easy) and `count_tests` in the `count_tests` directory/ (slightly harder).

The suites must run with 0 failures and 0 errors.

We will rerun your test suites and count coverage ourselves, but you'll find instructions in the test suite py files about how to generate coverage reports so that you can know if you've achieved the goal yet or not.

## Question 2: Test engineering (15 points)

This is meant to be a practical question that has you engaging with various libraries used to support writing tests.

### Part 1(a): flaky tests (2.5 points)

One of the reasons for flaky tests is the use of `sleep()` instead of waiting for something to be done. I've created a somewhat contrived example of that, and your task is to add a `wait()` in place of the `sleep()`.

In the skeleton code, you will find `al/alq1a/network.retrieve.py` which has an asynchronous `retriever()` function. (You'll see `async/await` in CS 343, though I think under different names). This function retrieves a resource from the Internet and makes things super flaky by waiting for a random number of seconds, up to 10.

In the same file, you will also find function `network.retrieve()`. I'll skip over some details, but this function calls `retriever()`, which runs in the background (i.e. asynchronously). But, `network.retrieve()` then does the flaky-test thing of waiting 5 seconds. Sometimes that is long enough. Sometimes it isn't. It then retrieves the result from a global variable and returns it to its caller.

There is a test suite, which you can invoke using

```
python -m alq1a.test
```

inside the `al` subdirectory. (You may have to install pip packages `aiohttp` and `requests`; see the source code of `network.retrieve.py` for instructions).

Your task is to add code to `network.retrieve.py` to make `network.retrieve()` wait for the result from the `retriever`—I've put three TODOs where I recommend doing so. You should use `threading.Event`. You may edit `settings.py` to set the constant `GRADING` to `True` to eliminate the simulation of flakiness and make things deterministic; we will grade by running the code with `GRADING` set to `True` and by manually diffing your code from the skeleton.

### Part 1(b): fake objects (2.5 points)

For this part, I've created a badly implemented `count_characters.py` module. Class `CharacterCounterClass` is bad in a lot of ways, but the way that we're addressing here is that it is reading input from a hardcoded file from the filesystem.

The idea here is to practice inserting a fake object in place of `CharacterCounterClass`. In a more realistic case, the real code might be accessing a database, and your fake object implements an in-memory database. This question aims to give you the flavour of doing that.

The mechanics of inserting a fake object differ. Dependency injection is not part of this course's material, but it would be a fairly common mechanic you can leverage.

You can run the test suite, such that it is, with the command

```
python -m alq1b.test
```

Your task is to modify `test_suite.py` (and only that file) so that it still tests `count_characters()` from `CharacterCounterClass` but does not perform any disk IO. (`alq1b/test.py` invokes `test_suite.py`). One could use Python's `unittest.mock` library but the intent of this question is for you to do it manually. Please don't use `unittest.mock`.

We will grade this question by pulling your `test_suite.py` file into a fresh copy of the `alq1b` directory minus the `lorem-ipsum.txt` file, running it, making sure it passes, and checking that your solution still contains the assertion from the skeleton.

*Hints:* Python 3 provides `io.StringIO` which creates a file-like object from a string, and you can cut-and-paste the contents of the file into a multiline string with a triple quote (`"""`). You are allowed to subclass

CharacterCounterClass and use your implementation in the test.

### Part 1(c): implementing behavioural testing (10 points)

In directory `alq1c` you will find a `Model` and a `Controller`. Your task is to create a number of mocks for the `Model` using Python's `unittest.mock`. I've provided skeleton tests for you to fill in as well as directions about what you put in each of these tests. Each test that you write is worth 2.5 points.

The `settings.py` file contains a setting `WHICH_STORY` which determines which story runs in the `Controller`.

Run tests 1-2 with invocation:

```
python3 -m unittest alq1c.test_suite -k calls
```

and tests 3-4 with invocation:

```
python3 -m unittest alq1c.test_suite -k three
```

The skeleton gives more specific instructions about tests 3 and 4 and when they should succeed and fail.

**wait\_once** (1) Write a test that creates a mock `Model` that ensures that the `Controller`'s selected `model_story` calls `wait()` exactly once. This test is supposed to succeed for story "zero" but not "one".

**wait\_four\_times** (2) Write a test that creates a mock `Model` that ensures that the `Controller`'s selected `model_story` calls `append_to_resource()` exactly four times. This test is supposed to succeed for story "zero" but not "two".

**stubbing and faking** (3) Write a test that tests the `Controller`'s calls to the `Model`, but hardcodes the `Model`'s response to `get_resource`. (4) Write another test that creates a mock but maintains a real list for `model.resource`. These two tests aren't supposed to succeed for story "zero".

## Question 3: Mutation Analysis (15 points)

Consider the following program from [http://www.rosettacode.org/wiki/Tokenize\\_a\\_string\\_with\\_escaping](http://www.rosettacode.org/wiki/Tokenize_a_string_with_escaping):

```
1 def token_with_escape(inpt, escape="^", separator="|"):
2     """
3     Issue python -m doctest thisfile.py to run the doctests.
4
5     >>> print(token_with_escape('one^|uno||three^^^^|four^^^^|cuatro|'))
6     ['one|uno', '', 'three^^', 'four^|cuatro', '']
7     """
8     result = []
9     token = ""
10    if inpt and inpt[0] == separator:
11        result.append(token)
12        inpt = inpt[1:]
13    state = 0
14    for c in inpt:
15        if state == 0:
16            if c == escape:
17                state = 1
18            elif c == separator:
19                result.append(token)
20                token = ""
21            else:
22                token += c
23        elif state == 1:
24            token += c
25            state = 0
26    result.append(token)
27    return result
```

- (a) (5 points) Add to `alq3/coverage_tests.py` unit tests that achieve 100% statement coverage. You can add tests to `test_statement_coverage` and any other test methods you want. You measure coverage on `coverage_tests.py` with the command:

```
coverage run -m alq3.test alq3.coverage_tests.CoverageTests
```

(or maybe `python3-coverage` if your system is like that.)

note: this question turns out to be a giveaway as I inadvertently added a test that achieves this coverage to the skeleton. Enjoy the freebie.

- (b) (5 points) Manually inject faults into this program. Specifically, propose two non-stillborn and non-equivalent mutants of this program. Put the mutated versions of the code in functions `token_with_escape_mutant1` and `token_with_escape_mutant2`. Clearly indicate (with comments in the code) where you've mutated the program and which mutation operator you are applying.
- (c) (5 points) Additionally, write unit tests that kill each of the mutants and put them in `alq3/coverage_tests.py`. You'll find skeleton tests `test_kill_mutant_1` and `test_kill_mutant_2`. We are going to run your tests to verify that they succeed on the original program and fail on the mutant with an assertion failure; the grading script will modify `alq3/settings.py` to run the different variants.

In `al_sub.pdf`, discuss whether these are useful test cases—do they say something useful about expected program behaviour beyond what you got from the tests in part (b).

You can execute all of the tests from the `al` directory of your repo with the following command:

```
python -m alq3.test
```

You can get coverage reports with the following commands<sup>1</sup>:

```
coverage run -m alq3.test
coverage report
```

(On my computer I have `python3` so I run `python3` and `python3-coverage`).

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<sup>1</sup>See <https://coverage.readthedocs.io/en/6.3.2/> for more information.

## Question 4: ChatGPT's take on Implicit Oracles

I asked ChatGPT this question:

What are some implicit oracles useful for software testing?

Here's what it told me:

Implicit oracles are test oracles that don't explicitly define expected behavior in a formal, documented way, but instead rely on inherent properties of the software, system behavior, or domain knowledge. These types of oracles are often used in situations where formal documentation or specifications are unavailable, incomplete, or difficult to construct. They typically rely on a tester's intuition, experience, or observable system characteristics to determine whether the system is behaving as expected.

Here are some examples of **implicit oracles** that can be useful for software testing:

### 1. Human Expert Knowledge (Domain Expertise)

**Description:** Testers or domain experts can leverage their deep understanding of the system or business domain to evaluate whether the software behaves as expected.

**Example:** A tester with expertise in banking systems can manually review whether a newly implemented feature (e.g., fund transfer) follows the expected logic based on real-world banking rules and principles.

**Use Case:** This is especially useful when documentation is lacking or ambiguous, but the tester understands the typical behavior of similar systems in the domain.

### 2. Behavior Consistency

**Description:** If the software behaves consistently under similar conditions, you can use its behavior as an implicit oracle. This relies on the principle that software should act predictably and consistently across different runs.

**Example:** If a web application consistently loads pages in a certain amount of time under normal conditions, a significant deviation in response time can be flagged as a potential issue.

**Use Case:** This is useful for performance testing or verifying that the system maintains stable behavior over time, especially for non-functional requirements like load time or uptime.

### 3. Equivalence Class Partitioning

**Description:** Rather than comparing results against a documented specification, you can test different equivalence classes or categories of input to see if they produce valid outputs. Implicitly, this is based on the assumption that similar inputs should yield similar outputs.

**Example:** For an age field that accepts numeric values, you can test different equivalence classes like valid ages (e.g., 18-60), boundary conditions (e.g., 0, 100), and invalid ages (e.g., -5, 150) to check if the software handles these correctly.

**Use Case:** This works well when you don't have a detailed specification but have a general understanding of what ranges or categories of input are expected to be valid.

### 4. Consistency with Previous Versions

**Description:** You can compare the current version of the software to a previous stable version to verify that the system still behaves correctly. If the previous version behaved well, significant deviations in the new version may be considered failures.

**Example:** A regression test where the software's output or behavior from an old release is compared with the new one to ensure that existing features haven't been broken.

**Use Case:** Especially useful in continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD) pipelines to ensure backward compatibility and prevent regressions.

[...]

## 10. Expected System State Transitions

**Description:** Implicit oracles can be based on the expected transitions between different states of the system. If the system moves between states in an unexpected way or fails to reach the desired end state, this is considered a failure.

**Example:** In a login system, if the user successfully logs in and is taken to the dashboard, this is an expected state transition. If the system takes the user to an error page instead, this is a failure.

**Use Case:** Useful for systems with clear state transitions, such as workflows, state machines, or applications with clear progression (e.g., multi-step forms, user onboarding, or approval processes).

## 11. Third-Party Integrations and External Systems

**Description:** When software interacts with external systems or APIs, their behavior can act as an implicit oracle. If an external system is expected to return certain data (e.g., via an API call) and doesn't, this can signal an issue.

**Example:** A payment gateway that successfully processes transactions should return a success message, while an unexpected error code or delay in response could indicate an issue.

**Use Case:** Especially useful for testing integrations, such as with third-party APIs, payment gateways, or external databases.

## 12. End-to-End User Scenarios

**Description:** Implicit oracles can also be derived from expected user journeys or end-to-end workflows. If the system allows users to complete tasks or workflows in a smooth, uninterrupted fashion, it's likely functioning correctly.

**Example:** In an e-commerce application, a typical flow of browsing products, adding them to the cart, and completing a checkout without errors is considered a sign of correct system behavior.

**Use Case:** Useful in functional testing, especially when testing critical business flows like purchases, user registrations, or data submissions.

## Conclusion

Implicit oracles are often more flexible and adaptable than formal, documented test oracles. They rely on human intuition, domain expertise, system behavior, and other indirect cues to identify problems. While they can be highly effective, especially when formal documentation is lacking or incomplete, they require skilled testers who have a good understanding of the system and its intended behavior.

What ChatGPT says is an implicit oracle does not match with what the literature and Wikipedia (which follows the literature) say: none of its examples fit the definition of implicit oracle from the literature.

Your task: for each of the categories of oracle { specified, derived, human }, identify one of the examples from the ChatGPT output that better fits this category. Briefly explain (1–2 sentences) why this example fits into your chosen category, and say whether or not the example is either overall correct as a description of an oracle, or incorrect in at least one aspect, explaining why that is.