Qualcomm® Hexagon™ DSP

User Guide

80-VB419-108 Rev. F

June 26, 2019

Contents

Figures

Tables

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document is intended for software developers whose main task is to run code efficiently on Qualcomm® Hexagon™ DSPs used for embedded advanced computing applications. Each chapter provides a brief overview of some of the most important concepts and tools with which a developer should be familiar when optimizing code for the Hexagon DSP.

1.2 Conventions

Function declarations, function names, type declarations, attributes, and code samples appear in a different font, for example, `#include`.

Code variables appear in angle brackets, for example, `<number>`.

1.3 Technical assistance

For assistance or clarification on information in this document, submit a case to Qualcomm Technologies, Inc. (QTI) at https://createpoint.qti.qualcomm.com/.

If you do not have access to the CDMATech Support website, register for access or send email to support.cdmatech@qti.qualcomm.com.

2 Architecture overview

This chapter provides a brief overview of the different Snapdragon chipset families and the differences in the DSP processing power of these devices.

2.1 Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ processors

Qualcomm Technologies, Inc. (QTI) offers a large and increasing number of variants of the Snapdragon chipset solution.

The Snapdragon processors are organized in different performance tiers. The Snapdragon mobile product family is organized into five product tiers. The highest tier includes the SM8xxx and SDM8xx series. Lower tiers include the SDM7xx, SDM6xx, SDM4xx, and SDM2xx series.

These product tiers are differentiated by scalable computing resources for the CPU, GPU, and DSP processor. When moving from low to premium tiers, these processor resource changes are characterized by an increasing number of processors, increasing processor complexity, and increasing clock speeds (for details, visit https://www.qualcomm.com/products/mobile-processors).

For DSP processors, the lowest tiers might contain only a single Hexagon DSP, whereas the premium tier contains up to four Hexagon DSP processors (often partitioned around the chip to be dedicated for specific functions or use cases). For example, the following sections discuss the configuration of the Hexagon DSP supporting our highest tier, the SM8xxx/SDM8xx Snapdragon products.

Figure 2-1 provides an overview of the SM8150 chipset. The processing units include a Kryo CPU, an Adreno 640, and four separate DSPs, each devoted to a specific application space: sensor (sDSP), modem (mDSP), audio (aDSP), and compute (cDSP).
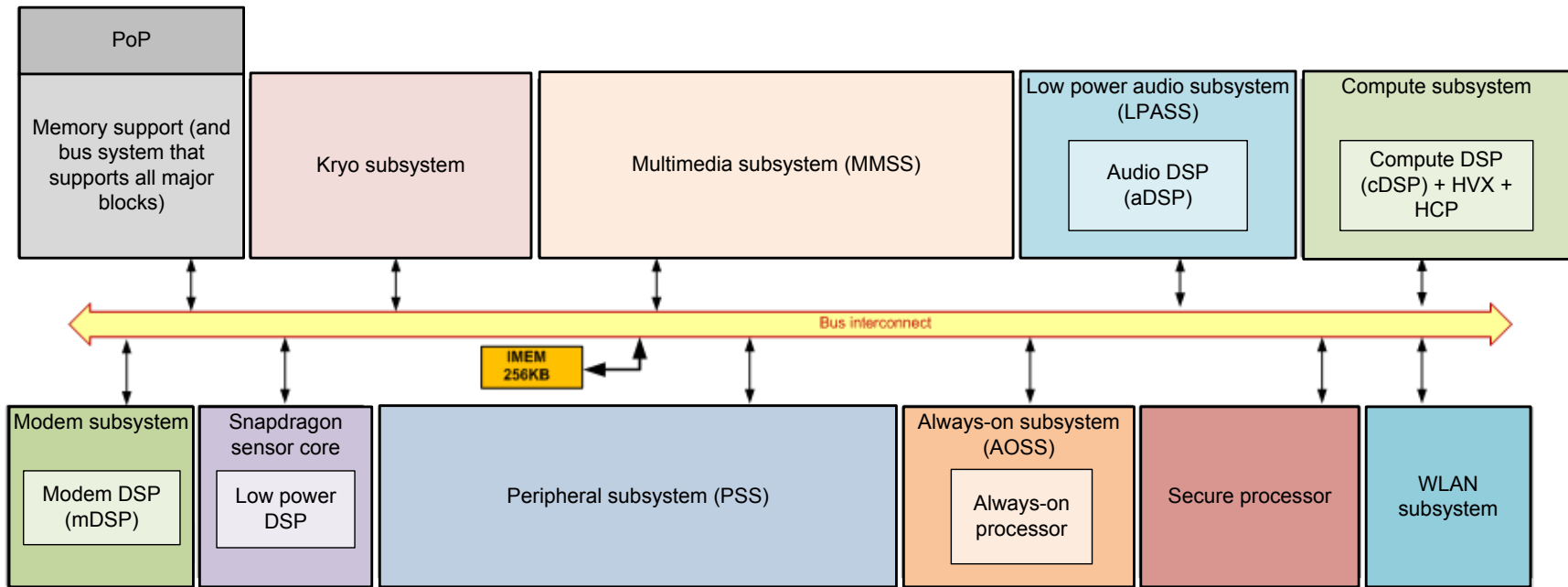
Figure 2-1 SM8150 block diagram

2.2 DSP architecture

Compared to the host CPU, the DSPs typically run at lower clock speeds but provide more parallelism opportunities at the instruction level. This makes the DSPs better alternatives to the CPU for power consumption. As a result, it is preferable to offload as many large compute-intensive tasks as possible onto the DSPs to reduce the overall power consumption of the devices. Section 3.1 discusses this process in more detail.

Hexagon DSPs have evolved over the years, both in terms of their speeds and instruction sets. Table 2-1 provides a quick summary, comparing key implementation details associated to some of the chips using each of these variants. Included are the instruction set versions that the aDSP, cDSP, and SLPI (Sensor Low Power Island) support when present on the chip.

Table 2-1 Key chip features and usage for DSP variants

Chip examples	SM8250	SM8150	SDM845	SDM710	SDM835 MSM8998	SDM660	SDM820 MSM8996
Turbo L1^a DSP speed (MHz)	1497	1459	1190	1190	900	787	825
Turbo^a DSP speed (MHz)	1402	1306	1190	1190	900	787	825
Nominal$^+$ DSP speed (MHz)	1171	1095	940	940	765	650	650
aDSP version	V66		V65		V62 (HVX)	V62	V60 (HVX)
cDSP version	V66 (HVX)		V65 (HVX)		-	V60 (HVX)	-
SLPI version	V66		V65		V62	-	-
16-bit MMAC/MHz/DSP ▪ With scalar threads ▪ With HVX threads	8 128		8 64				
8-bit MMAC/MHz/DSP ▪ With scalar threads ▪ With HVX threads	32 1024^b		16 512^b		16 256		
16-bit HVX MMOPS/MHz	512		256				
MFLOP/MHz	8		4				
Scatter-gather	Yes				NA		

^{a} To view all voltage corners available, see the DSP DCVS v2 HAP interface in the Hexagon SDK online documentation.

^{b} Performance is achievable only by using the Hexagon NN library, which makes use of undocumented instructions.

2.2.1 cDSP variant

All DSPs include a scalar unit, and some DSPs also include a Qualcomm Hexagon™ Vector eXtensions (HVX) unit for extended vectorized support.

The cDSP is intended for compute-intensive tasks such as image processing, computer vision, and camera streaming, and it always includes HVX. For example, the following diagram provides an overview of the processing units within the cDSP and how they connect to the cache.
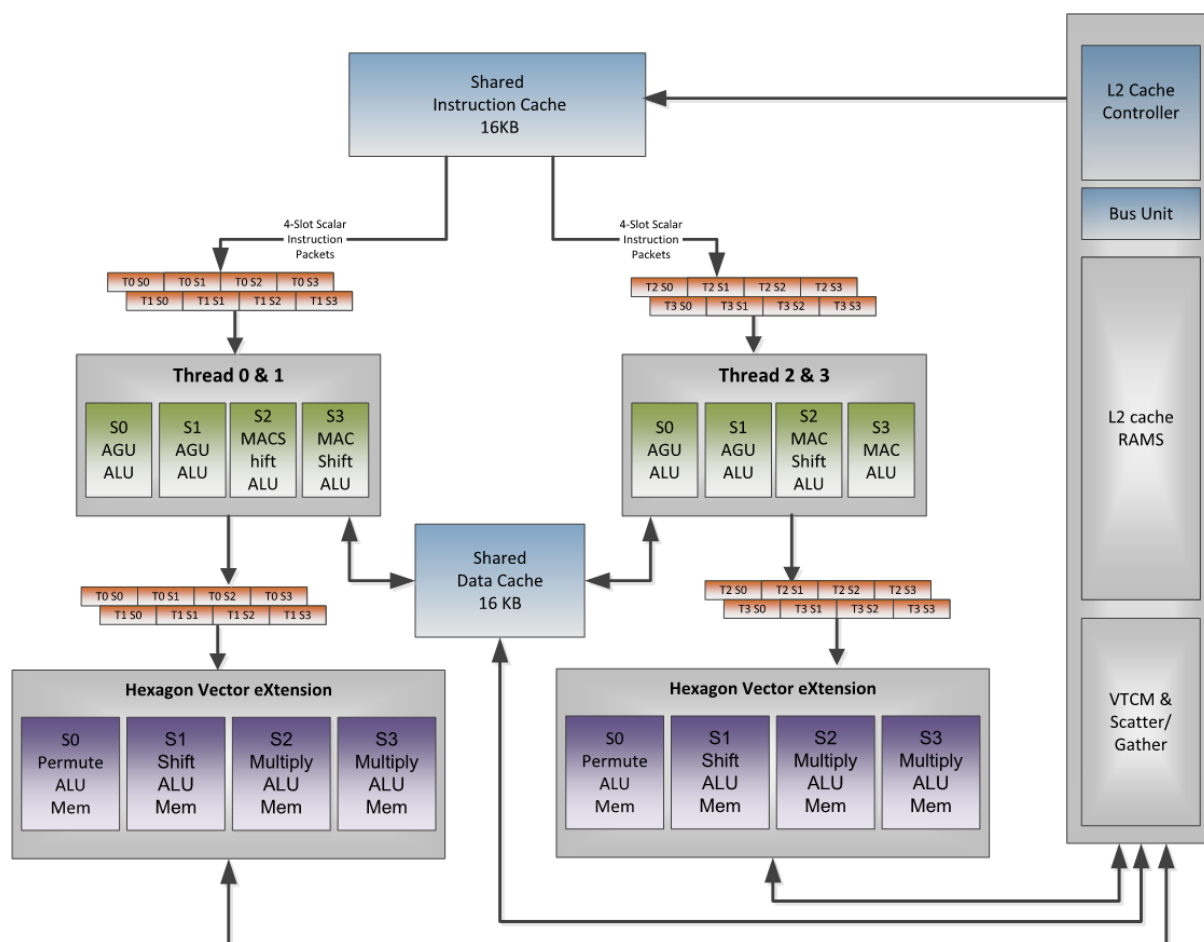
Figure 2-2 cDSP V66 block diagram

2.2.2 Hexagon scalar unit

The Hexagon scalar unit comprises a number of DSP hardware threads—four on most current cDSPs. Each DSP hardware thread has access to the Hexagon scalar units, which performs fixed-point and floating operations on single or pairs of 32-bit registers.

Each Data Unit is capable of performing a load or store up to 64-bit wide, or 32-bit scalar ALU operation.

Each Execution Unit is capable of 16/32/64-bit vectorized multiply, ALU, bit manipulation, shift or floating-point operations.

Prior to V66, the scalar floating-point and multiplier resources were shared by all execution units. This meant that all combined hardware threads performed a maximum of one of each operation every processor cycle. Starting with V66, each cluster has its own floating-point and multiplier resources.

A *cluster* refers to a pair of threads (Thread 0&1 and Thread 2&3). Within a cluster, the two threads typically commit instruction packets on alternating clock cycles because most instructions require at least two clock cycles to complete. In this case, each cluster completes one instruction packet on every DSP clock cycle, yielding a total throughput of (2 * DSP clock) instruction packets per second as long as stalls are avoided. (See Section 4.2.2 for guidelines on avoiding latencies.) On V65 and earlier versions, this throughput might be lower when there are contentions to the shared resources, as explained in Section 4.2.2.2.

2.2.3 HVX unit

HVX is an optional coprocessor that adds 128-byte vector processing capabilities to the scalar DSP unit. Scalar hardware threads use the HVX coprocessor by accessing an HVX register file, also referred as HVX context.

Two 128-byte HVX contexts are available on all HVX-enabled aDSPs and cDSPs up through the SM8250 device. From a programmer's stand point, Section 4.3.2 discusses which and how HVX contexts should be used.

NOTE: A legacy 64-byte mode allows HVX registers to be 64 bytes wide. Starting with V66 ISAs, this mode is no longer supported. Therefore, we recommend not using the 64-byte mode on any device.

2.2.4 Memory subsystem

The memory subsystem on various DSPs will vary according to each target.
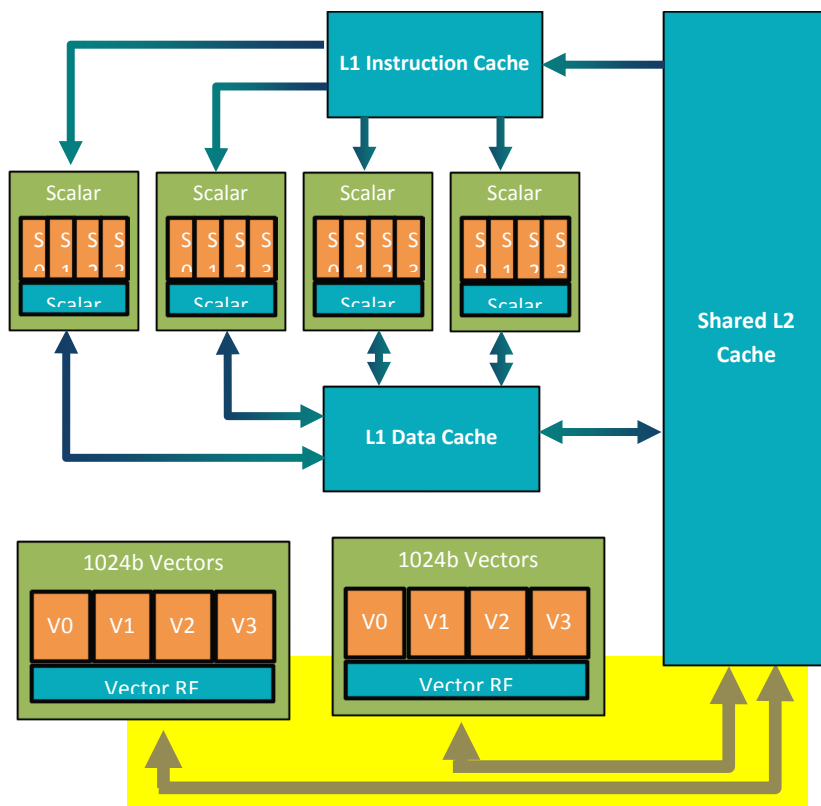
Figure 2-3 cDSP memory subsystem

For example, the cDSP has a two-level cache memory subsystem. L1 is only accessible to the scalar unit, making L2 the second level memory for the scalar unit and the first level memory for the HVX coprocessor.

L1 is write-through only. This allows the caches to be hardware coherent. To maintain coherency, if an HVX store hits in L1, the L1 line is invalidated.

The vector units support a variety of load/store instructions, including support for unaligned vectors and per-byte conditional stores.

A pipelined vector FIFO is in place for the HVX hardware to read L2 contents and hide L2 read latencies from the programmer. Section 4.2.2.3 discusses this mechanism in more details and its implications to a developer with respect to memory latencies.

On SM8150 and SM8250 devices, the L2 memory size is extended to 1 MB.

The SDM845 and newer devices also include a 256 KB Vector Tightly Coupled Memory (VTCM) that sustains a higher throughput than L2. This memory can be used as a scratch buffer to achieve higher performance. VTCM is also required as the source and destination of a few select operations such as scatter-gather described in Section 4.3.4. To learn how to allocate VTCM memory, see the *DSP Clock & Resource Management* section in the Hexagon SDK online documentation.

2.3 Development boards

This section provides a high-level overview of board options that are available to developers working with the Hexagon DSP. For more details, see the websites of each provider.

Table 2-2 Development boards available for recent Snapdragon devices

Name	Provider	Description
Open-Q For example: SDM660	Intrinsyc	HDK made of two components: ▪ SOM powered by Snapdragon processor and including a 64-bit multicore CPU, Qualcomm Adreno GPU, Hexagon DSP along with Android OS. ▪ Carrier board to provide additional connectivity and display capabilities **NOTE:** Intrinsyc continually adds new boards. See https://www.intrinsyc.com/development-kits/.
DragonBoard™ development kit For example: SDM410c	Arrow Electronics	Single small development board.
MTP For example: MSM8998, SDM710	Qualcomm	Earliest reference platforms to become available after new processors come out. Limited supply. Only provided through direct engagements.
IP Camera For example: SDM650	Thundercomm	IP Camera Reference Design

NOTE: DragonBoard products used to be manufactured by Intrinsyc. They have been renamed as Open-Q boards.

NOTE: Earlier Open-Q boards are manufactured by Intrinsyc. Starting with 835, the boards are designed and manufactured by Qualcomm.

3 Run tasks on the DSP threads

3.1 When to offload tasks onto the DSP

Using the DSP offers several benefits:

- For fixed-point computation, the Hexagon DSP is generally much lower in power consumption, and free from thermal concerns, compared to the CPU.

- In many cases that vectorize well on HVX, the DSP performs the same computations in less time (while at a lower clock) than multiple CPU cores.

- Moving large blocks of computational software to the DSP keeps the CPU unburdened for other tasks that might work well only on the CPU.

Communication between the CPU and DSP is done through shared memory with interrupts. Because the CPU and DSP do not share a cache, maintenance operations are required upon all buffers transacted between them. These can take a minimum of a few hundred microseconds. Depending on system clock settings and CPU sleep modes enabled, the overhead for each invocation to the DSP could extend to several milliseconds (this is explained in greater details in Section 3.6). Hence it is preferable to offload large tasks onto the DSP instead of invoking it for small trivial tasks.

Separately, as discussed in Chapter 4 , the DSP does well with signal processing tasks in general, and excels in particular at fixed-point operations that are parallelized. Running such tasks on the DSP uses the DSP to the best of its ability and result in significant gains with respect to power consumption.

In summary, the software designer should prioritize moving large signal-processing tasks onto the DSP and leave to the CPU the role of running control-oriented code and short individual processing functions.

3.2 Offload tasks from the CPU onto a DSP thread

3.2.1 FastRPC fundamentals

The primary mechanism in place to offload tasks onto the DSP is called FastRPC. FastRPC facilitates remote procedure calls between the CPU and the DSP by transparently marshalling and unmarshalling parameters exchanged between the two processors.

The Hexagon SDK online documentation discusses the details of the FastRPC mechanism (`docs/Technologies_FastRPC.html`).

In summary, you are responsible for declaring the procedure API in an IDL file. The IDL syntax allows to define the name of the function call and the type of each parameter being exchanged between the application and DSP processors.

For example, the following example shows how you define in an IDL file a function sum as part of the calculator library:

```
interface calculator {
  long sum(in sequence<long> vec, rout long long res);
  ...
}
```

In this example, `calculator` is the name of the library being created and `sum` identifies one of the functions allowing the CPU to interface the DSP. The name of the FastRPC function that the CPU invokes and the DSP that is responsible for providing an implementation is created by concatenating the library and function identifier: `calculator_sum`.

In its C/C++ implementation, `calculator_sum` is expected to contain two parameters. `in` designates an input parameter, i.e. a parameter passed in from the CPU and consumed by the DSP during the FastRPC implementation, and `rout` designates the opposite, a parameter generated by the DSP during the FastRPC implementation for consumption by the CPU thereafter.

In the corresponding C/C++ definition of the FastRPC function, input parameters are defined as constant; output parameters map are expressed as pointers.

Finally, `sequence<x>` designates a parameter that is exchanged in the form of an array. 2D MxN arrays such as images are also expressed as sequences of MxN elements.

In the corresponding C/C++ definition of the function, arrays are expanded into two parameters, the first one being an array pointer, and the second one being an integer defining the number of elements in the array.

As a result, the IDL definition above results in declaring in C/C++ the following function for cross-communication between the CPU and DSP:

```
int calculator_sum(const int* vec, int vecLength, int64* res)
```

NOTE: When a FastRPC call is made, data buffers declared in ION memory are not copied between the CPU and DSP. The APIs are simply declaring which buffers are to be made available to the CPU or DSP for reading or writing purpose. We discuss this data sharing mechanism in more details in Section 3.6.

3.2.2 Multi-domain support

Recent Snapdragon products include multiple Hexagon DSPs (for example: cDSP, aDSP, mDSP, or SLPI). On many targets, more than one of these is available to FastRPC applications. A new multi-domain framework has been added to FastRPC starting in the MSM8998 and SDM660 devices, to enable FastRPC applications defining a single interface (via IDL) to perform a run-time choice of destination DSP. This framework is not present in the MSM8996 device.

This multi-domain framework provides the following benefits over the previous framework:

- An application can query the target, and attempt to open a session for an interface derived from the multi-domain base interface on the DSP features (for example, the one with HVX).

- An application can open multiple concurrent sessions on different DSPs.

- The multi-domain session is handle-based, allowing for user application to restart a crashed DSP session by closing the handle and re-opening a new handle. Upon closing the handle, the framework calls the user-written deinitialization function, which allows you to clean up any resource being used. (This process is referred to as *session restart*.)

- The handle for a session is passed to each interface API and can easily be associated to user-defined context stored in the DSP memory. This allows an application to access data persistent across FastRPC calls.

More information about the FastRPC domains is in the Hexagon SDK online documentation under *Technologies/FastRPC/FastRPC Domains*.

A basic example is given at Examples->Compute offload->Calculator domain. This example does not support the domain using the remote_handle64 interface.

If a FastRPC application is intended to support multiple Snapdragon products and offload to whichever DSP contains HVX on a given device, some logic is required in the application to find and engage with that DSP. The SDK example benchmark application, `examples\common\benchmark_v65`, illustrates the logic for supporting both the MSM8998 device (where HVX is in the aDSP) and the SDM660/SM8150 and newer devices (where HVX is in the cDSP).

The following table summarizes the best practices available for applications required to support various combinations of Snapdragon products.

Table 3-1 Recommended approach for multi-domain support

MSM8996	MSM8998	SDM660 and newer	Approach	Comments
		✓	Use a multi-domain interface. Link the application to `libadsprpc.so`. At run-time, attempt to open a handle with the cDSP specified in the URI string.	Recommended approach. Provides handle and session restart support on all targets except MSM8996.
	✓	✓	Same as above but if opening a handle with the cDSP fails, try again with the aDSP.	

MSM8996	MSM8998	SDM660 and newer	Approach	Comments
✓	✓	✓	Same as above but also define a second legacy interface without domain support. If attempts at opening a handle with both aDSP and cDSP fail, use the second interface.	
✓	✓		Same as above but without the need to attempt opening a handle with the cDSP.	
✓	✓		Use legacy non-domain interface definition. Link to `libadsprpc.so`.	Not recommended moving forward. Allows legacy code to run unchanged on any target.
✓	✓	✓	Same as above but link to `libcdsprpc.so` instead of `libadsprpc.so` for SDM660/SM8150 and newer devices.	

3.2.3 Run the main function on Hexagon DSP

Starting with V65 and the Hexagon SDK 3.4, you can request that the tools execute the program `main` function on the DSP directly.

With this approach, the tools automatically create the FastRPC interface required for the CPU to invoke the DSP and run the specified code. This approach guarantees that all the code written by the user will be compiled into a dynamic library that will be loaded and run on the DSP.

This approach is supported to run both on the simulator and on target devices. For more information, see `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/tools/HEXAGON_Tools/<version number>/examples/compute/benchmark_v65.`

3.2.4 Manage the DSP performance and power

The Hexagon SDK includes a set of HAP power APIs that allow you to control the DSP core and bus clock speeds based on power and performance needs. Specifically, the `HAP_power_set` API allows multiple clients to vote separately for performance by requesting a specific DSP and bus clock speeds, enabling or disabling dynamic clock voltage scaling (DCVS), or setting a minimum and maximum voltage corner.

For more information on the HAP power APIs, see the *DSP Power and Performance Management* section of the SDK online documentation.

3.3 Offload tasks from one DSP thread to another

To take full advantage of the DSP resources, compute-intensive applications should use as evenly as possible all DSP threads available. The application spreads its work over multiple concurrent software threads, and the DSP RTOS schedules those threads across the hardware threads. Applications can perform this split either by making multiple FastRPC calls from parallel concurrent CPU threads (each of which is processed by a mirrored thread on the DSP), or by splitting work across software threads within the DSP implementation.

To run multiple DSP threads, different CPU threads can make multiple FastRPC calls in parallel. Alternatively, the dspCV dynamic library included in the Hexagon SDK provides a set of APIs that allow a DSP thread to use its thread worker pool to invoke multiple callbacks in parallel. This approach enables one FastRPC call to turn into a multi-threaded DSP implementation without spawning new threads.

Specifically, dspCV provides APIs with the following functionality:

- Define a job—referred as a `dspCV_worker_job_t`—to be executed by a DSP thread.

- Submit that job to a queue with the `dspCV_worker_pool_submit` API.

- Synchronize the parent thread with the completion of submitted jobs, for example:

  - `dspCV_worker_pool_synctoken_wait`, to wait until a given number of threads have completed their tasks

  - `dspCV_worker_pool_synctoken_jobdone`, for a thread to indicate the completion of a task

  - `dspCV_atomic_inc_return` and `dspCV_atomic_dec_return`, to increment or decrement atomically a variable

To understand how the dependency on a dynamic library like dspCV should be expressed in a project and how to make it available to the application when running on target, see Section 3.5.

3.4 Optimize multi-threaded DSP code

Optimizing an application expected to run as fast as possible on the DSP requires that you balance the workload between available DSP threads. Various techniques are available to meet this goal.

3.4.1 Compile-time multithreading

One approach for balancing at compile time the workload between threads consists of using data parallelism: in the code, you explicitly assign different threads to different data regions. For example, this can mean that one thread is assigned to processing the upper half on an image while another thread is assigned the lower half.

This approach is often the simplest conceptually, and it might be appropriate if processing time is not data dependent and the number of threads available is known in advance.

Alternatively, you can decide when writing an implementation to allocate different tasks to different threads. For example, in a pyramid decomposition, you might decide to explicitly assign one thread to running a filter and downsampling at the highest resolution, a second thread to running additional filters at all smaller subsequent resolutions, and a third thread to searching through the pyramid for some specific patterns. The synchronization tokens discussed in Section 3.3 can be used to indicate when one thread has produced enough lines for the next thread to begin its work.

The drawback of that approach is that as the implementation changes—for example, a processing block is modified, or added, or better optimized—or the target device changes and presents different characteristics, the workload of each thread might no longer be balanced. Re-optimizing such an implementation might require significant rework of the code. Another concern is that you might not have any long-term guarantees on what other applications are running on the device and be competing for resources.

3.4.2 Run-time multithreading

Parallelism is usually best applied dynamically. In this scenario, a number of threads begin processing a new job as soon as they completed their previous one. Because of the limitations listed above, that approach is usually the most efficient and robust way of multithreading an implementation.

In its simplest and most common form, run-time multithreading is used for data-parallelism: multiple threads are allocated to processing one image linearly, small chunks such as lines at a time. In this scenario, all threads can share the same data set and one variable pointing to the next line to be processed. All threads modify that variable atomically when beginning a new task as explained in Section 3.3 to ensure that no two threads ever process the same line. This approach is illustrated in the project gaussian7x7 provided as part of the Hexagon SDK examples.

More refined multi-threaded implementations can extend that approach to declaring jobs that do not include necessarily the same functionality. For example, the parent thread might create a pool of tasks that progressively apply different transforms to an image one line at a time and one transform at a time. Such an approach needs some care in order to ensure that tasks are blocked when their input buffers are not available yet, that threads are running the majority of the time instead of being stalled while starved for data, and that the implementation does not run into a deadlock.

Finally, the number of software threads to use depends on the type of threads being used. Typically, we recommend splitting the scalar workload according to the number of hardware threads, and splitting the HVX workload according to the number of HVX contexts. The dspCV library has global variables for each of these numbers so that the code can remain optimal on various architectures.

3.5 Verify an application running on the DSP

When working with the simulator, it is possible to directly compile code for the DSP and simulate that code. This allows to test a function without the use of a FastRPC call.

However, to run on a hardware device, you must typically implement a CPU application that makes a FastRPC call to the DSP to invoke a workload. It is therefore typical to implement a simple test driver that is built as an Android command line application for device testing, or a Hexagon executable for simulator testing. When built as a Hexagon executable, the FastRPC calls in the test driver is directly linked to the skeleton implementations in the DSP application.

After installing the Hexagon SDK and setting up a new device, familiarize yourself with the process of building and testing sample applications with the simulator or with a device.

The rest of this section highlights the main steps that are involved during that process. For more details, see some of the project examples included and documented in the online SDK, such as calculator, downscaleBy2, or benchmark.

Verifying an implementation using FastRPC calls on the simulator is simple: this is accomplished with the following example command line:

```
make tree V=hexagon_ReleaseG_toolv81_v62
```

This results in compiling and then running both the test driver and DSP code with the Hexagon DSP compiler and simulator.

In the example above, v81 means that the code is compiled with version 8.1 of the Hexagon tools, and V62 means that the code is compiled to target the DSP variant V62.

Verifying that same implementation on target involves multiple steps:

- Compile for the CPU the main executable, which is responsible for making FastRPC calls. For example, this is accomplished with:

  ```
  make tree V=android_ReleaseG
  ```

- Compile for the DSP the code implementing the FastRPC functions. For example:

  ```
  make tree V=hexagon_ReleaseG_dynamic_toolv81_v60
  ```

  NOTE: The dynamic keyword indicates we are building a dynamic library with a .so extension.

■ Push the DSP dynamic library (and any other dynamic libraries the project depends on) to one of the locations the executable is looking for dynamic libraries. The locations being searched successively are:

```
/vendor/dsp  (or /dsp prior to Android-P)
/system/lib/rfsa/adsp
/vendor/lib/rfsa/adsp (aka /system/vendor/lib/rfsa/adsp)
```

For example:

```
adb push hexagon_ReleaseG_dynamic\ship\libName.so
/system/lib/rfsa/adsp
```

NOTE: `libName.so` refers to the name of the DSP dynamic library that was built accordingly to rules defined in the file `hexagon.min`.

■ Push the CPU executable in the target directory from which the code is executed, change the file permission to make the file executable, and execute it. For example:

```
adb push android_ReleaseG\ship\exeName /vendor/bin
adb shell chmod 755 /vendor/bin/exeName; /vendor/bin/exeName
```

NOTE: `exeName` refers to the name of the CPU executable that was built accordingly to rules defined in the file `android.min`.

The first time a device is used since it has been flashed, the device must be signed. The Hexagon SDK tools provide python scripts that fully automate the signing process, which is fully documented in the Hexagon SDK online documentation (`docs/Tools_Signing.html`).

Sometimes, a project also depends on a library, such as dspCV, which is provided as a static library for simulation purpose and as a dynamic library for the purpose of running on the device. This means that in `hexagon.min`, the dependency of the project on that library is specified as follows to build the dynamic library to be pushed on the device:

```
lib<libname>_skel_DLLS+=libdspCV_skel
```

You are responsible for pushing the `libdspCV_skel.so` onto the device as explained in Section 3.5.

A separate line is required in `hexagon.min` to specify a dependency on the static version of the same library to build the Hexagon executable to be fed to the Hexagon simulator:

```
lib<libname>_q_LIBS+=libdspCV_skel
```

3.6 Overhead for a FastRPC call

The latency of a given FastRPC invocation depends on a several factors:

- CPU build configuration

  To get the best results, an Android build must be a Performance build.

- CPU and memory clock rates

  During normal operation, both are subject to DCVS.

- CPU scheduling latencies

  These latencies have an impact on interrupt servicing latency when the DSP responds to the invocation. They can vary depending on what might be running on various CPU threads.

- Time to complete DSP invocation

  The more time consumed by the DSP invocation, the more likely the CPU goes to a lower clock or to a low-power state that requires extra wake-up steps when the DSP responds.

- Proper use of ION memory for shared buffers

  Required for zero-copy FastRPC.

- Cacheability of buffers shared between the CPU and DSP.

  If buffers are configured as uncached from the CPU side (for example, they originate from the camera hardware without being changed by CPU), CPU-side cache maintenance is avoided, and overhead is reduced.

- IO Coherence

  IO Coherence is enabled by default for CPU-cached buffers shared with the DSP, but it is disabled on a per-buffer basis.

  IO-coherent buffers require no CPU-side cache maintenance, which facilitates reduced FastRPC overhead with little dependence on the total size of buffers being shared. However, IO-coherent buffers might suffer some performance loss when being accessed by the DSP due to the CPU cache snooping operations that are performed in the hardware to ensure coherent behavior.

  Non-IO-coherent buffers have a larger FastRPC round-trip overhead, proportional to the total size of non-IO-coherent buffers being shared.

Under idealized conditions, the FastRPC round-trip overhead is on the order of 200 to 300 microseconds. This performance is achievable when the CPU and memory clocks are set to their maxima, and low-power states disabled. Unfortunately these settings are usually not tolerable from a power consumption perspective in a production environment.

In more realistic conditions, the CPU and memory clocks are driven by DCVS, and when necessary, limited by thermal conditions. During DSP-based workloads, the CPU tends to decrease its clock speed or go into a low-power (sleep) state to save energy while awaiting DSP responses to FastRPC calls. Under these conditions, the unmitigated round-trip FastRPC overhead varies based on instantaneous conditions, but it might be up to several milliseconds.

FastRPC offers APIs to help manage performance in typical conditions by disabling certain sleep states when there is sufficient FastRPC traffic or by voting for floor clock rates. These APIs might significantly reduce the FastRPC latencies at the expense of a small increase in power consumption.

We recommend that you experiment with various configurations to determine which settings are best suited for your needs. For more information, see *FastRPC* and *FastRPC QoS* in the Hexagon SDK online documentation.

3.7 Overhead for launching DSP threads from the DSP

As described in Section 3.3, the use of `dspCV_worker_pool_submit` allows a job to be submitted to a pool and picked up by a hardware thread when a thread becomes available. The overhead for submitting a job is approximately 5,000 processor cycles. In other words, the parent thread is slightly faster than the other threads it launches to complete a task. As a result, it is a good practice after kicking N-1 worker threads to let the parent thread execute the same call job to get best performance.

Specifically, performance can be improved by switching from this code:

```
for (i = 0; i < numJobs; i++)  {
(void) dspCV_worker_pool_submit(job);
}
```

To this code:

```
for (i = 0; i < numJobs-1; i++)  {
(void) dspCV_worker_pool_submit(job);
}
job.fptr(job.dptr);  // executed on parent thread, likely to start first
```

4 Optimize tasks for the DSP

This chapter provides an overview of how to port and run compute tasks efficiently on the DSP. It discusses various aspects of the programming environment, DSP instructions, and architecture details that are key to consider when writing optimized DSP code.

4.1 Programming languages and extensions

4.1.1 C/C++ support

Reference code to be ported to the DSP is usually written in C or C++. Such code does not require any change to run on the DSP: Qualcomm's compiler relies on LLVM and currently supports the following version of the C and C++ standards:

- C language: K&R C, ANSI C89, ISO C90, ISO C94 (C89+AMD1), ISO C99 (+TC1, TC2, TC3)
- C++ language: C++98, C++11, C++14

  NOTE: C++11 and 14 are supported only on SDM835, SDM660, and newer devices.

The Hexagon LLVM compilers support all versions of the Hexagon processors currently released: V4, V5, V55, V56, V60, V61, V62, V65, and V66.

NOTE: In the remainder of this document, when covering DSP scalar variants, only V66 is discussed. Unless noted otherwise, comments regarding V65 are also applicable to older variants.

For additional information on the LLVM compiler, see the *Hexagon LLVM C/C++ Compiler User Guide* included as part of the Hexagon document bundle.

Once you validate that the reference C/C++ code runs properly on the DSP, additional languages and extensions are available to optimize the code further, as described in the following sections.

4.1.2 Halide language

Halide is a programming language for vision processing. Halide is designed as a dialect of C++. It allows programmers who are familiar with C++ to start authoring Halide programs.

The Halide toolset is available as part of the Hexagon SDK and the Hexagon LLVM toolset. The toolset contains a Halide compiler that targets the HVX architecture. The Halide for HVX compiler allows you to exploit the powerful features of the HVX processor without knowledge of the underlying HVX architecture. This, in turn, enables a higher level of abstraction that allows you to focus on the image algorithm and achieve high levels of performance from HVX.

The Halide runtime also makes the task of offloading kernels to HVX easy. Simply add a `.hexagon()` directive in the Halide program, and the Halide runtime ensures that the kernel is transparently dispatched to the HVX processor.

For more information on the Halide programming language, see the *Halide for HVX User Guide* (80-PD002-1) and visit the resources available at http://halide-lang.org/. You can also direct questions on Halide HVX to the halide@quicinc.com email address.

4.1.3 Compiler intrinsics

Compiler intrinsics are treated by the compiler as machine instructions. The vast majority of assembly instructions have a one-to-one map with compiler intrinsics, thus allowing you to express a function as a sequence of assembly instructions, leaving it up to the compiler to perform register assignment, instruction grouping into packets, and instruction scheduling.

Programming with intrinsics gives the flexibility of remaining in C/C++, interleaving compiler intrinsics in places where they are most needed. This approach provides an environment where the code is easy to debug and test since you can still print variable contents to the logs or to a file, or run test routines written in C.

The C/C++ compiler is not HVX-aware. As a result, use intrinsics for sections of code where data parallelism provides a speed improvement. For example, many instructions from the V65 scalar instruction set and all HVX instructions are SIMD instructions and process multiple 32-bit, 16-bit or 8-bit neighboring elements in parallel. Using intrinsic SIMD instructions guarantees that the compiler generates assembly instructions able to process these elements in parallel.

The *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42) and *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44) detail the syntax and functionality of all intrinsic assembly instructions available for the scalar core and HVX, respectively.

All compiler intrinsics are accessible in a C/C++ program by including the library header file `hexagon_protos.h`.

For example, if `x` and `y` are declared as 64-bit numbers (declared as `long long int`), the following code assigns `y` to the saturated absolute value of each of the four halfword of `x`:

```
y = Q6_P_vabsh_P_sat(x)
```

Or if `x`, `y`, `z` are defined as 128-byte numbers (declared as `HVX_Vector`), the following code assigns `z` to the byte-wise addition of `x` and `y` followed by saturation:

```
z = Q6_Vh_vadd_VhVh_sat(x,y)
```

In addition to performing transforms on variables, it is often necessary to access or combine variables together. These operations do not necessarily map into assembly instructions, and as such, they are not covered in the Programmer's Reference Manuals. They are covered in Sections 11.3 and 11.4 of the *Hexagon LLVM C/C++ Compiler User Guide* (80-VB419-89).

For example, the following syntax creates a copy of the vector pair `vp` where the lower half is replaced with vector `x`. The `Q6_W_vcombine_VV` instruction below is an intrinsic in the PRM that translates into the assembly instruction `vcombine`, while `Q6_V_hi_W` is a macro described in the compiler guide.

```
HVX_VectorPair vp;
HVX_Vector x;
HVX_Vector v = Q6_V_hi_W(vp);  // set v to the high vector of vp
HVX_VectorPair new_vp = Q6_W_vcombine_VV(v, x);  // create a new pair
```

NOTE: The compiler automatically optimizes such a syntax: if the rest of the code allows for it, `new_vp` and `vp` can reuse the same registers for their internal representation and the `vcombine` assembly instruction might not be needed.

4.1.4 Assembly language

The tools also provide the ability to write any section of code in assembly language. Writing assembly provides the utmost control to the software developer, who is responsible for choosing, scheduling, and grouping instructions, as well as assigning registers to variables.

The processor pipeline is fully interlocked: if an instruction consumes a register whose contents is expected to be computed by an earlier instruction but not yet available, the hardware automatically stalls and guarantees that the register value is correct by the time it is consumed. This approach allows you to not to be concerned with instruction timing to write functional code: as long as instructions are written in the order in which they are expected to be executed, the output is correct independently of how many times the thread might have to stall.

The most common and recommended usage for writing in assembly is to write an entire function in assembly. For example, if only one section of a large block of C code needs to be optimized, this section is expressed as one function call and then written in assembly.

If you are writing assembly code, you must abide by the compiler calling conventions. In particular, callee-saved registers, scalar registers R16 to R31 (except R28), must be properly saved if they are altered.

NOTE: All HVX registers are caller-saved registers and thus can all be used directly without the need to save them on the stack when writing a leaf assembly function.

For more information, see the *Register usage across calls* chapter in the *Hexagon Application Binary Interface Specification* (80-N2040-23).

NOTE: It is also possible to write assembly code using inline assembly. This approach allows you to tap into assembly directly from a C/C++ source file. However, we strongly discourage this usage because the inline assembly syntax is cumbersome to use and error prone.

An assembly file can contain the implementation of one or more function, which you only need to declare in the C/C++ source files as `extern` in order to call directly from your C/C++ code.

For example, if an assembly file contains an implementation of `foo` that takes a 32-bit element array pointer as input, does not return any value, and has an assembly implementation that begins as follows:

```
    .globl foo           // makes function have global scope
    .type  foo, @function
foo:                     // begin implementation here
```

Then this function is called from C/C++ with the following declaration:

```
extern "C" void foo(int ptr);
```

NOTE: `"C"` should follow the `extern` pragma if the function is called within a C++ file to prevent any mangling of the function name. It can be omitted if the function is called within a C file.

4.2 Guidelines for assembly and intrinsic optimization

There are a few basic concepts to keep in mind in order to write efficient assembly code. These concepts are also quite relevant for developers writing with intrinsics because such a developer should know approximately how the compiler should be able to group and schedule intrinsics in order to achieve maximum performance.

This section briefly describes some of these fundamental concepts.

Tip: When writing code with intrinsics or assembly instructions, it is best to start by writing functional code using the right instructions, and then only optimizing code further by following the optimization guidelines discussed in the following sections. Attempting to do too much at once tend to be more time consuming as low-level optimizations usually obscure the clarity of the code.

4.2.1 Maximize instructions per packet

Each hardware thread is capable of executing a packet of up to four instructions in a given thread cycle. Instructions occurring in a packet executes in parallel, making it possible within one packet to consume a register and update its content at the same time. For example, the following packet consumes the contents of R0 that was produced in the packets that preceded and then update its content with R4.

```
{
  R2 = vaddh(R0,R1)
  R0 = R4
}
The exception to this rule is when the specifier .new is used within an
instruction. For example, the following packet first computes R2 and
then store its content to memory.
{
  R2 = memh(R4+#8)
  memw(R5) = R2.new
}
```

To maximize the number of instructions per packet, it is important to understand how instructions can or cannot be combined in each packet. The restrictions are different for scalar and HVX instructions.

4.2.1.1 Scalar instruction packing rules

Rules on how to form packets are explained in the *Instruction packets* section of the *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42)*.*

Focus on mastering the most important restriction to packing instructions together: resource constraints.

The simplest way to understand the impact of resource constraints on grouping with V66 is to think simply in terms of slots. Because of the resources they use, each type of instruction can only execute on one specific slot, out of four available. For example, logical and multiply operations consume either slot 2 or 3, whereas a load instruction consumes either slot 0 or 1. This means that at most two logical operations, or one logical and one multiply operation, or two multiply operations can execute in a single packet.

The description of which type of instruction is acceptable for each slot is provided in Figure 3-1 of the *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42) as well as in the detailed description of each instruction. For convenience, this figure is reproduced in Figure 4-1.

Slot 0
LD Instructions
ST Instructions
ALU32 Instructions
MEMOP Instructions
NV Instructions
SYSTEM Instructions

Slot 1
LD Instructions
ST Instructions
ALU32 Instructions

Slot 2
XTYPE Instructions
ALU32 Instructions
J Instructions
JR Instructions

Slot 3
XTYPE Instructions
ALU32 Instructions
J Instructions
CR Instructions

XTYPE Instructions (32/64 bit)
Arithmetic, Logical, Bit Manipulation
Multiply (Integer, Fractional, Complex)
Floating-point Operations
Permute / Vector Permute Operations
Predicate Operations
Shift / Shift with Add/Sub/Logical
Vector Byte ALU
Vector Halfword (ALU, Shift, Multiply)
Vector Word (ALU, Shift)

ALU32 Instructions
Arithmetic / Logical (32 bit)
Vector Halfword

CR Instructions
Control-Register Transfers
Hardware Loop Setup
Predicate Logicals & Reductions

NV Instructions
New-value Jumps
New-value Stores

J Instructions
Jump/Call PC-relative

JR Instructions
Jump/Call Register

LD Instructions
Loads (8/16/32/64 bit)
Deallocframe

ST Instructions
Stores (8/16/32/64 bit)
Allocframe

MEMOP Instructions
Operation on memory (8/16/32 bit)

SYSTEM Instructions
Prefetch
Cache Maintenance
Bus Operations

Figure 4-1 Instruction classes and combinations

Other restrictions outlined in the *Instruction packets* section of the same manual occasionally causes a packet following the resource constraints to still generate an error message at compile time. However, these other rules tend to come into play much less frequently and you can choose to simply learn about them over time.

4.2.1.2 HVX packing rules

Rules on how to form packets in HVX are explained in the *VLIW packing rules* section of the *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44).

HVX instructions share the same slots as V6x and there are restrictions on which slot each HVX instruction uses. However, unlike with V6x, resources and slots are not correlated one-to-one. It is best, as a software developer, to focus on understanding which resources each HVX instruction share, and understand how this impact the ability to group instructions in a packet since slot restrictions rarely come into consideration when writing HVX code.

Resource restrictions are summarized in the *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44) and reproduced in Table 4-1 for convenience. The detailed description of each HVX instruction also indicate which HVX resources it consumes.

Table 4-1 HVX slot/resource/latency summary

Insn	variation	core slot usage				HVX resources						Early Sources
		3	2	1	0	ld	mpy	mpy	shift	xlane	st	
ALU	no R; 1*vec	any					any					
	no R; 2*vec	any					either pair					
	Rt; 1*vec	either					either					
	Rtt		▓				▓	▓				
Abs-diff	1*vec	either					either					vu/vv
	2*vec	either					▓	▓				vu/vv
Multiply	by 8b; 1*vec	either					either					vu/vv
	by 8b; 2*vec	either					▓	▓				vu/vv
	by 16b	either					▓	▓				vu/vv
Cross-lane	1*vec	any								▓		vu/vv
	2*vec	any							▓	▓		vu/vv or (vx,vy)
Shift or count	1*vec	any							▓			vu/vv
load	aligned			either		▓	any					
	aligned; .tmp			either		▓						
	aligned; .cur			either		▓	any					
	unaligned		▓	▓		▓				▓		
store	aligned			▓			any				▓	
	aligned; .new			▓							▓	
	unaligned		▓	▓						▓	▓	vs
histogram		any				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
extract		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	~+15

Be aware that some instructions such as `vrmpy` come in different flavors, some of which consume two HVX resources, and some of which only consume one.

For example, halfword multiplies use both `mpy` resources, which means that no other HVX multiply instruction is present in the same packet. When trying to optimize the inner loop of a function multiply-bound, plan early on how to maximize `mpy` resource utilization in as many packets as possible.

NOTE: Unlike scalar stores, you cannot group two HVX stores in a single packet.

4.2.2 Understand and reduce stalls

In addition to executing as many instructions as possible in any given packet to maximize parallelization, it is important to be aware of latencies that might cause the processor to stall. This section discusses the most common causes of stalls that deteriorate performance.

4.2.2.1 Instruction latencies

4.2.2.1.1 Thread vs. processor cycles

Hexagon cores dynamically schedule packets from threads into the core pipeline. The number of cycles to execute a packet varies depending on the behavior of other threads. The optimal schedule for a single-thread running in isolation could be different than the optimal schedule for a thread running with other threads.

For example, in all recent generations, when multiple threads execute in parallel, one thread executes every other processor cycle. This means that if the processor is clocked at 800 MHz and four threads execute in parallel, each thread runs effectively at 400 MHz.

However, when a thread is idle, another thread might be able to "steal" some of its cycles, allowing it to run faster than it runs if all HW threads were busy. In practice, on Hexagon versions up through the SM8250 device, a single-threaded workload might run up to 20% to 30% faster if it is the only running thread, compared to when it is concurrent with other running SW threads consuming all the HW threads.

In the remaining of this section, we provide some general rules on latency scheduling assuming at least two threads are running. This provides a simplified programming model.

Using this model, we introduce the concept of a *packet delay*. This delay is the number of packets that are to be scheduled between two dependent packets to prevent the thread to stall.

4.2.2.1.2 Scalar latencies

Starting with V65, instructions have no packet delays with the following exceptions:

■ Instructions that are paired with the .new predicate, allowing two sequential instructions to execute within the same packet

■ Mispredicted jumps, which typically incur around five packet stalls and waste energy. For more information on speculative branches, see the *Compare jumps* section in the *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42).

> **NOTE:** Whenever possible, try using hardware loops: these does not generate stalls, even when exiting the loop.

■ Long-latency instructions that consume the result of another long-latency instruction. These instructions experience a one packet delay with the exception of back to back multiplies simply sharing the same accumulator, which do not experience any delay.

Long latency instructions are all the load, multiply, and float instructions.

For example, the following instruction sequences stall:

```
{ R2=mpy(R0.L,R0.L) }
// one-cycle stall
{ R3=mpy(R2.L,R2.L) }
…
{ R2 = memw(R1) }
// one-cycle stall
{ R3=mpy(R2.L,R2.L) }
```

But this instruction sequence does not stall:

```
{ R2=mpy(R0.L,R0.L) }
{ R2+=mpy(R1.L,R1.L) } // no stall
```

4.2.2.1.3 HVX latencies

The *Instruction latency* section of the *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44) discusses latencies. In this section, we discuss the most common HVX arithmetic instruction sequences responsible for stalls that you should know about.

The most common causes of stalls to keep in mind are one-packet delays present when the following instructions consuming a result that was produced in the previous packet:

■ Multiplies (however, back-to-back multiplies only sharing the same accumulator do not stall)

■ Shift and permute operations

The *Instruction latency* section provides some examples of these rules:

```
{ V8 = VADD(V0,V0) }
{ V0 = VADD(V8,V9) }   // NO STALL
{ V1 = VMPY(V0,R0) }   // STALL  due to V0
{ V2 = VSUB(V2,V1) }   // NO STALL  on V1
{ V5:4 = VUNPACK(V2) } // STALL due to V2
{ V2 = VADD(V0,V4) }   // NO STALL on V4
```

4.2.2.2 Resource contention on the shared scalar resources

Another source of stalls on V6x comes from multiple threads using the following resources shared across all hardware threads:

- The floating-point unit (V65 and earlier versions only)

- The multiplier unit (V65 and earlier versions only)

- The L1 cache

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, prior to V66, the floating-point and multiplier units are shared across all threads. This means that on versions earlier than V66, in any processor cycle, only two floating-point operations execute. In other words, if four threads were to execute a sequence of packets, each containing two floating-point operations, each thread stalls every other thread cycle.

In addition, the L1 cache is also a shared resource. Therefore, it is important to load data as unfrequently as possible and take advantage of registers to store values locally before reusing them.

4.2.2.3 Understand and optimize memory accesses

As discussed in Section 2.2.4, scalar data memory accesses go through a two-level cache hierarchy while HVX memory accesses only transit through the L2 memory.

Cache sizes vary depending on the exact chip variant:

- L1 cache sizes are 16 to 32 KB

- L2 cache sizes are 128 to 1024 KB on aDSP variants, and 512 to 2048 KB on cDSP variants

HVX data memory accesses bypass L1.

To avoid cache misses when writing optimized applications, it is critical to reduce the data memory throughput and maximize data locality. Common data optimization techniques exploiting data locality include such techniques as:

- Register data reuse

  The application stores values into registers for later use. For example, applying a filter on multiple lines at the same time allows to hold coefficients into registers, thus reducing the overall data bandwidth.

- Tiling

  A tile defines a small region of an image. The application processes an image one tile at a time or a few tiles at a time. This approach might be appropriate when using scalar instructions rather than HVX instructions because it allows preservation of data within L1 and thus maximize scalar processing throughput. Larger buffers, such as groups of image lines, are typically too large for L1. Using a tiling approach usually comes at the cost of greater programming complexity and more non-linear data addressing.

- Line processing

  The application processes an image a few lines at a time. This is the most common approach for HVX implementations as it allows to load entire HVX vectors and leverage the large L2 memory cache size.

Another type of cache optimization consists of **explicitly managing cache contents** by way of prefetching data into cache and, more rarely, invalidating cache line contents. This optimization should be left for the end once you have already ensured a maximum of data locality in their code.

The *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42) details the L2 cache prefetching mechanism. A good illustration of the various forms of L1 and L2 cache management techniques is provided in the downscaleBy2 project example included in the Hexagon SDK under the `example/common` directory and discussed in the SDK online documentation.

NOTE: It is common to optimize an application on a single-thread first and then multi-thread the code later. When following that approach, extrapolating multi-threaded performance from single-thread performance can occasionally be misleading: memory bandwidth might not be a bottleneck when only one thread is running but become one of the limiting resources as more threads run in parallel. As a result, it is a good practice to write applications as conservatively as possible with respect to memory bandwidth usage regardless of the performance of the single-threaded code.

Though data memory latencies depend on many parameters and architecture variants, it is useful to know to a first order the cost of memory accesses when planning the optimization of an application. The following numbers are rough estimates on what to expect in making memory accesses:

- DDR memory access: ~250 ns

- L2 read latency: 6 thread cycles

  On HVX, a mechanism is implemented to push HVX instructions into a queue called V FIFO. As long as no mispredicted branches occur, this queue remains full and the L2 reads triggered by VMEM instructions occur enough in advance that the result from a VMEM load is available in the next cycle without stalling.

  In other words, on HVX, L2 reads have a 1-cycle latency and the following instruction sequence does not stall as long as no mispredicted branch has occurred recently:

  ```
  { V0 = VMEM(R0++) }

  { V1 = VADD(V0,V1) }   // No stall if no recent mispredicted branch
  ```

- Maximum sustainable read-write L2 bandwidth with no bank conflicts: 128 bytes per processor cycle

4.2.3 Software pipelining

The Hexagon instruction set allows multiple unrelated instructions within one packet. This flexibility provides great opportunities for parallelizing the code, which are often best exploited by doing software pipelining. Software pipelining consists of processing a few consecutive instances of a loop in parallel to reduce data dependencies and provide more opportunities for operations to be executed in parallel.

This approach comes at the expense of having separate code for prologue and epilogue code. For example, if a loop processes loads data for iteration n+2, performs some computations for iteration n and n+1, and store results of iteration n, the prologue and epilogue code can potentially have to handle the first and last 2 or 3 loop iterations separately and handle cases where the number of loop iteration is small.

The Hexagon instruction set allows to decrease the complexity of the prologue and epilogue code by supporting pipelined hardware loops. Pipelined hardware loops set predicate registers after a loop has been iterated a specific number of times thus allowing some operations—typically stores—to only execute after a few loop iterations. For more information on this approach, see the *Pipelined hardware loops* section in the *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42)*.*

NOTE: The Hexagon compiler automatically conducts software pipelining of appropriate loops.

4.3 HVX-specific optimizations

HVX adds a powerful set of instructions allowing to process large vectors very efficiently.

The *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44) is the authoritative source for HVX instruction syntax and behavior for any given revision. Within the following section, we highlight some instructions contained therein.

4.3.1 When to use HVX

HVX vectors are 128-byte wide. As a result, HVX lends itself well to sequences of identical operations on contiguous 32-bit, 16-bit, or 8-bit elements.

In addition, HVX only supports operations on integers natively.

These two characteristics make HVX ideally suited for some application spaces such as image processing where many integer operations are to be applied independently to continuous pixels. However, it does not mean that HVX is restricted to only perform integer operations on contiguous elements in memory as explained below.

Even though HVX memory loads and stores access contiguous elements in memory, HVX provides a number of powerful instructions for shuffling and interleaving elements between and within HVX vectors. These instructions allow HVX to process efficiently non-continuous elements that follow some predictable patterns, such as odd and even elements, or vertical lines. Section 4.3.3 discusses these instructions in more detail.

HVX does not have native support for floating-point. However, using HVX on floating-point code is still worth considering if some portions of the code are either converted to using fixed-point arithmetic, or if strict compliance to the IEEE floating-point format is not required. Sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 discuss techniques for porting floating-point code onto HVX in more detail.

For portions of code that only operate sequentially, one element at a time, and where no parallelism opportunity is found, using V6x instructions instead and leaving other threads use the HVX resources is often the best approach.

4.3.2 64-byte mode deprecation

On most architecture variants, the tools still support an earlier mode that allowed developers to set HVX register lengths to 64 bytes instead of 128 bytes. However, do not use this mode because it is not supported on V66 and newer devices.

Files compiled with `-mhvx` assume the 64-byte mode should be used. Therefore, it is important to compile code with `-mhvx-double` to assume the 128-byte mode. Add the following line to your `hexagon.min` to ensure that the compiler targets the 128-byte mode:

```
CC_FLAGS += $(MHVX_DOUBLE_FLAG)
```

4.3.3 Rearrange elements within HVX vectors

Depending on the nature of the algorithm being ported on HVX, it might be necessary to rearrange elements from an HVX vector or pair of HVX vectors in various ways. A number of HVX instructions allow to address that challenge. Figure 4-2 describes these instructions and provides a visual summary of these instructions.
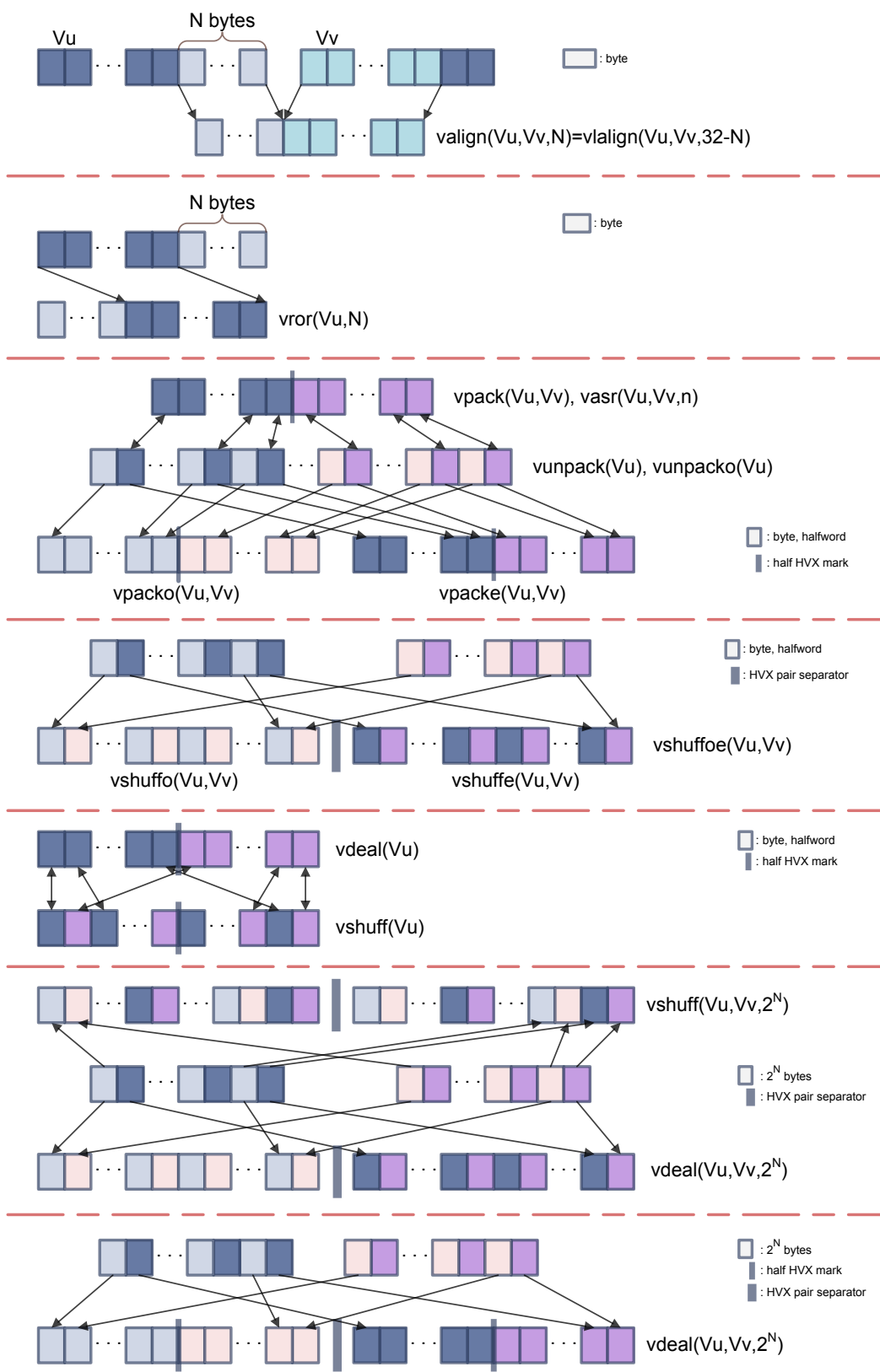
Figure 4-2 Summary of the most common HVX element manipulations

- `valign`, `vlalign`, `vror`

   These three instructions are straightforward:

   □ `valign` and `vlalign` create an HVX vector made out of the lowest bytes of one
      vector and the upper bytes of another.

   □ `vror` performs a circular rotation of an HVX vector by an arbitrary number of bytes.

- `vpacke`, `vpacko`, `vpack`, `vunpack`, `vunpacko`, `vdeal`

   `vpacke` and `vpacko` pack the even or odd 32-bit or 16-bit elements of two HVX vectors
   into one.

   `vpack` performs an element size reduction, shrinking the contents of two HVX vectors
   into one after saturation.

   `vunpack` and `vunpacko` are the opposite forms from `vpack`, respectively unpacking the
   even and the odd 8-bit or 16-bit elements into elements twice as large.

   `vdeal` (the flavor that consumes one input register) operates in the same way as
   `vpacke` and `vpacko` combined together but on half the number of elements: it packs
   the even elements from the input register into the lower half of the output register and
   packs the odd elements into the upper half.

- `vshuffe`, `vshuffo`, `vshuffoe`, `vshuff`

   `vshuffe` and `vshuffo` are similar to their counterparts, `vpacke` and `vpacko`, in that
   they move the even or odd elements of two HVX into one HVX vector. The difference
   with their `vpack` counterparts is that elements from both input HVX vectors are
   interleaved (the contents of both input register is being *shuffled* into one register).

   The `vshuff` and `vpack` variants come handy in different use cases. For example, if an
   HVX register contains pairs of (x,y) coordinates, `vpacke` and `vpacko` are useful to
   separate the x and y elements in different vectors. On the other hand, `vshuffo` or
   `vshuffe` might be best suited following HVX instructions that produce HVX vectors
   with double precision and store the results of consecutive operations in the upper and
   lower registers of a pair.

   `vshuffoe` executes both `vshuffe` and `vshuffo` at the same time and generates a
   register pair where the two registers in the pair are the output from the `vshuffo` and
   `vshuffe` instructions.

   `vshuff` (the flavor that consumes one input register) interleaves the elements from
   the upper and lower parts of a register into another register.

- `vasr`

   A narrowing shift: it takes two input HVX vectors and returns one output HVX vector.
   The narrowing shift is applied alternatively on each element of the two input HVX
   registers, and thus produces output with the same order as a `vshuffe` or `vshuffo`
   instruction.

- Crosslane `vshuff, vdeal`

  These instructions are very powerful but not trivial to understand. They perform a multi-level transpose operation between groups of registers. The most common configurations used with `vshuff` and `vdeal` are for positive and negative powers of 2.

  `vshuff` with an element size of Rt = 2^N bytes place in the low register of the output pair the 2^N-byte even elements from both input vectors, and the 2^N-byte odd elements in the high register. This operation is essentially a generalization of `vshuffoe` to larger element sizes.

  `vshuff` with an element size of Rt = -2^N bytes interleave the 2^N-byte elements from both input vectors into the output register. This operation is essentially a generalization of the non-crosslane variant of `vshuff` to larger element sizes.

  `vdeal` with an element size of Rt = 2^N bytes is identical to `vshuff`.

  `vdeal` with an element size of Rt = -2^N bytes pack the 2^N-byte even elements from both input vectors into the low output register pair and the odd elements in the high pair. For N=0, this instruction is therefore being the same as executing `packo` and `packe` at the same time.

- `vdelta, vrdelta`

  `vdelta` and `vrdelta` use a network of switchboxes to permute or copy bytes within an HVX vector. Consider using these instructions when you need some transforms with some irregular patterns not covered in the various operations listed above.

  `vdelta` and `vrdelta` are configured with an HVX vector. The simplest and safest way of determining the configuration values for this register is to use a configuration tools provided with the SDK tools under
  `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/tools/HEXAGON_Tools/<version number>/Examples/`
  `libcore/Vdelta_Helper/General_permute_network.htm`.

  At the bottom of this page, you can specify a pattern in which the bytes of the input vector should be reordered. For example, if bytes 1 and 5 are to be dropped from the input vector, specify in the TPERM[N] control box a sequence of bytes that begins with 0, 2, 3, 4, 6, … .

  Once the output pattern is fully specified, click **Submit for Benes** or **Submit for Delta** to retrieve the configuration, if one exists, to achieve the pattern transformation using either a sequence of a `vrdelta` and `vdelta` instruction (Benes approach), or one `vrdelta` instruction.

4.3.4 VTCM/lookup

Starting with V65, support is added for scatter/gather. With this added support, you can now perform vectorized random-access memory lookups that are not limited to 256 entries as is the case with the `vlut` instruction available on all DSP variants.

For more details on this instruction, see the *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44).

NOTE: The scatter/gather operations are very memory intensive, so they are prone to stalling when memory conflicts occur. For information on how to avoid scatter/gather stalls, see the *Avoid scatter/gather stalls* section of the *Hexagon V66 HVX Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-44).

4.3.5 Emulate floating-point

HVX does not have native floating-point support. However, the qmath library provided with the Hexagon SDK introduces a pseudo floating-format that supports a similar precision and dynamic range to IEEE floating-point. In this format and using the libraries provided in qmath, it is possible to perform all basic arithmetic operations (add, sub, mult, mac, divide, sqrt). In addition, the qmath library provides a set of functions allowing to convert an array of IEEE floating-point values into this pseudo float format and vice-versa.

Using the qmath float library is the simplest way to speed up floating-point code with HVX, as long as data processing is parallelized. For more details on this library, see the library package and its documentation (*Qualcomm Math (qmath) Library*, 80-VB419-105) in `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/libs/common/qmath`. For examples on how to use the library, see the code example in `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/examples/compute/qmath_sample`.

4.3.6 Convert float to fix

Another approach for porting floating-point code to an HVX implementation consists of converting the arithmetic to fixed-point. Qualcomm provides a library that helps with that process. The library helps you characterize the behavior of all floating-point variables, provide hints on how to represent floating-point variables in fixed-point to maximize accuracy and guarantee no overflow, and provide bit-exact simulations of various fixed-point implementations to help you strike the right balance between accuracy and compute efficiency without having to write any actual HVX code first. Only when you are satisfied with the behavior of the fixed-point model do you need to write the corresponding HVX implementation, thus saving considerable development effort.

For more details on this library, see the library package and its documentation (*Qualcomm Fixed Point (qfxp) Library*, 80-VB419-69) in `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/libs/common/qfxp`. For examples on how to use the library, see the code example in `{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/examples/compute/qfxp_sample`.

5 Debugging

Why is it not working?

All software developers find themselves in this situation at one time or another. And there are many ways of approaching such a situation, with or without the use of tools.

Tools might occasionally point you to the source of a bug. More often than not however, this process is not quick. As a result, it is preferable to begin with ensuring you are not making one of the most common mistakes before resolving to spending time actually debugging the code. Section 5.1 discusses common mistakes that lead to the program crashing or behaving unexpectedly. Section 5.2 discusses various tools that you might want to use to assist with debugging code.

5.1 Common issues

NOTE: All errors returned by a failed FastRPC call are discussed in the *FastRPC Debugging* section of the Hexagon SDK online documentation.

- Using incorrect array size with FastRPC

  When passing an array to the DSP using FastRPC, the array size must be specified as the number of elements in the array, not its size in bytes.

- Missing the 128-byte compilation flag

  If you compile a function to be run with the 128-byte HVX mode, you must explicitly set the `-mhvx-double` when compiling the code.

- Using incorrect memory alignment for scalar accesses

  When making memory accesses from assembly, you must ensure that the address is aligned to the size you are accessing. Common ways of ensuring correct pointer alignment include using:

  □ Static allocation with a type large enough to guarantee alignment. For example,

    ```
    HVX_Vector ptr[3];
    ```

  □ Static allocation with the aligned attribute. For example,

    ```
    int16 ptr[N] __attribute__((aligned(128)));
    ```

  □ Dynamic memory allocation with `memalign`. For example,

    ```
    int16* ptr = (int16 *)memalign(128,N);
    ```

  □ Dynamic memory allocation of more memory than required, zeroing out the lowest bits and adding a 128-byte offset to the address. For example,

```
int16* tmpPtr = (int16 *)malloc(128,N+127);
int16* ptr = (int16*) (((int8*)tmpPtr+127) &~127);
// ensure to free(tmpPtr) and not free(ptr) when done!
```

NOTE: HVX load and stores are unaligned: the memory access instructions simply ignores the lower bits, yielding an aligned address, and allowing the code to run without crashing.

- Calling input/output libraries such as `printf` from the DSP

  With Hexagon SDK 3.2 or earlier, `printf` is only supported when running on the CPU. When running code on the DSP, use FARF instead or use Hexagon SDK 3.3 or later.

- Compiling for the wrong target

  Ensure your compilation flag is compatible with the architecture you are targeting. For example, do not run code compiled for V62 on an MSM8996 device.

- Making out of bound memory accesses

  This is obviously a common mistake to make on any target architecture and can result in various behaviors. However, this behavior also applies to L2 prefetching: L2 prefetching throws an exception if the start address is invalid. However, if a prefetch crosses into an invalid page, the remainder is simply dropped without failure.

- Missing a function implementation

  A missing function implementation does not result in a compilation error if the function is declared as extern but it results in a runtime error. Inspect the DSP logs for the presence of an `undefined PLT  symbol <function name> in <your library>.so` message. Also, remember that C++ mangles function names, so to access a function written in C or assembly from a C++ file, the function must be defined as `extern "C"`.

- Using an incorrect function declaration

  If you modify the parameters of an implementation, remember to modify the parameters of its declaration. Otherwise, your code might still compile but you end up passing incorrect parameters to a function and get an unexpected behavior.

- Modifying callee-saved registers

  The calling conventions specify which registers are the responsibility of the calling function to save, and which registers are the responsibility of the callee function to save. When writing assembly code, it is important to save all callee-saved registers if you modify them in your implementation. These registers are R16-R27 and R29-R31. The following example shows how you do so with registers R16-R19, for example:

```
{
  ALLOCFRAME(#2*8)     // enough space for 4 32-bit registers
                       // Note: needs to be a multiple of 8
} {
  memd(r29 + #0) = r17:16
  memd(r29 + #8) = r19:18
} {
  <your code here>
} {
  r17:16 = memd(r29 + #0)
```

```
        r19:18 = memd(r29 + #8)
    } {
        DEALLOC_RETURN
    }
```

- Not locking HVX context before executing HVX code.

    Prior to V65, you must explicitly lock an HVX context before running any HVX code.

- Failing to make assembly code position-independent

    Code can be compiled properly when testing for the simulator, which builds a static library, but fail to compile when building a dynamic library. This might be caused by setting a register to an immediate address:

    ```
    test_array:
        .byte 0,1,2,3
    ...
    r1 = #test_array
    ```

    instead of using a PC relative approach:

    ```
    r1 = ADD(PC,##test_array@PCREL)
    ```

- Running out of memory on the stack

    Currently, thread stacks are 16 KB. Do not use excessive local variables, and be especially careful with HVX intrinsics, which might spill onto the stack and add up quickly.

5.2 Debugging with the tools

5.2.1 qprintf library

The Hexagon SDK comes with the qprintf library. This library provides different APIs to display scalar and vector registers in various formats from C/C++ or assembly.

For example, after including `qprintf_asm.h` to your assembly code, insert the following lines to display the contents of V0 as a succession of 32-bit integers in the logs:

```
qprintf("v0 = %d",v0);
qprintf_example_asm.S[174]: v0 =
  -1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1
  -1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1
  -1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1
  -1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1,-1
```

The library also supports more advanced options for controlling the format of the output, the elements to hide or display, or the number of columns for displaying the elements of a vector register. For example:

```
qprintf("Displaying scalar registers in various
formats: %u, %x. %23d. %+.6d or %5.2f. Etc.",r20,r20,r20,r20,r21);
qprintf_example_asm.S[162]: Displaying scalar registers in various
formats: 20, 14, 20, +000020,  4.00. Etc.
```

Another example:

```
qprintf("Masked vector register contents as 16-bit unsigned integers in
rows of 5 elements: %m(5)uu",v0);
qprintf_example_asm.S[183]: Masked vector register contents as 16-bit
unsigned integers in rows of 5 elements:
    [7e]= 65535,[7c]= 65535,[76]= 65535,[74]= 65535,[6e]= 65535
    [6c]= 65535,[66]= 65535,[64]= 65535,[5e]= 65535,[5c]= 65535
    [56]= 65535,[54]= 65535,[4e]= 65535,[4c]= 65535,[46]= 65535
    [44]= 65535,[3a]= 65535,[38]= 65535,[32]= 65535,[30]= 65535
    [2a]= 65535,[28]= 65535,[22]= 65535,[20]= 65535,[1a]= 65535
    [18]= 65535,[12]= 65535,[10]= 65535,[0a]= 65535,[08]= 65535
    [02]= 65535,[00]= 65535,
```

For more details on this library, see the library package and its documentation
(*Qualcomm qprintf Library*, 80-VB419-109) in
`{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/libs/common/qprintf`.

For examples on how to use the library, see the code example in
`{HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/examples/compute/qprintf_example`.

5.2.2 Build targets

Until the application has been fully debugged, it is preferable to build the Debug flavor of
the DSP library. This flavor uses fewer compilation optimizations and enables diagnostic
messages making it easier to follow disassembled code.

5.2.3 Disassemble code

When an application does not behave as expected, it might be necessary to understand
what exact instructions are being executed on the DSP. Inspecting the assembly code
produced by the compiler can sometimes help you to understand the source of a bug, a
mismatch between what you intended the C code to do and what it actually got
interpreted.

If `foo.c` was compiled with the `hexagon_ReleaseG_dynamic_toolv81_v60` target, the
following command interleaves the C/C++ source with the corresponding assembly for
any given object file and it writes the output to temp.txt:

```
hexagon-llvm-objdump -disassemble -source -demangle
hexagon_ReleaseG_dynamic_toolv81_v60\foo.o > temp.txt
```

NOTE: `hexagon-llvm-objdump.exe` is in the `tools\bin` directory of the Hexagon tools provided
as part of the Hexagon SDK. The `-source` flag is only available starting with 8.1.x
Hexagon tools, which are used in SDK 3.3 and later.

In some cases, compiler optimizations make it difficult to follow exactly how each C
expression is being translated into assembly and it can be useful to recompile the code
with all optimizations disabled to facilitate the debugging process.

Disabling all compiler optimizations is accomplished by building the Debug flavor or adding the following line in hexagon.min:

```
_OPT = -O0
```

When the simulator reports a crash, it returns the following information:

- An error code (SSR) indicating the type of exception that occurred

- the PC value for the instruction executed when the exception occurred (ELR)

- When applicable, a virtual address indicating the data accessed when the exception occurred (BADVA)

If the code was disassembled with the `-r` option (for relocation), use the ELR value returned in the crash report to find the corresponding location in the disassembled code where the exception occurred. In addition, Table 7-15 in the *Hexagon V66 Programmer's Reference Manual* (80-N2040-42) explains the meaning of the various SSR codes.

5.2.4 Use the debugger

As of Hexagon SDK 3.3, it is possible to use the LLDB debugger with the MSM8998 and newer devices, on target or in Simulator mode. There is, however, no on-target debugger support for earlier processor variants.

The simplest way to access the debugger is to use it from Eclipse. The *Debugging > Remote Debugger* section of the Hexagon SDK online documentation describes the process for creating an Eclipse project from a make-based Hexagon project and setting up the target for debugging support.

Once these steps are followed, you can perform common debugging operations such as single-stepping through the code, using breakpoints, and inspecting register and memory contents.

5.2.5 Obtain and analyze crash reports

When a crash occurs on the DSP, the FastRPC handler sends a crash report to logcat. As explained in the *Exceptions* section of the Hexagon SDK online documentation, this crash report includes the following information:

- User process name

- Thread name

- Name of the shared object and its load address

- Type of exception and its details

- Last known PC value

- Call trace

If this information is not generated or is not sufficient to debug your application, force a crash on the DSP, collect the crash dumps, and analyze the dumps with the debugger to obtain additional information, such as the backtrace of all threads running on your device. These steps are documented in the *PD Dump Collection* section of the Hexagon SDK online documentation.

6 Profiling

The Hexagon SDK provides profiling tools as well as the debugging tools.

6.1 Read timers

You can use timer APIs to time a specific section of code directly. The most useful APIs are the following:

6.1.1 Measure time

The most accurate way of measuring time consists of accessing the UTIMERHI:UTIMERLO registers. This pair of 32-bit register is a direct measure of the elapsed time reported in ticks. One tick is 1/19.2 MHz seconds.

These registers can be accessed from C with the `HAP_perf_get_qtimer_count` API.

Alternatively, you can invoke `HAP_perf_get_time_us` accessible from C by including `HAP_perf.h`. This API returns directly the elapsed time in microseconds by deriving the time from the number of ticks and performing a division, which consumes some extra cycles.

6.1.2 Measure processor cycles

For measuring elapsed processor cycles, access the `UPCYCLEHI: UPCYCLELO` registers using the `HAP_perf_get_pcycles` API available from C by including `HAP_perf.h`. However, this measuring technique is not as precise because the register values are accessed using traps, which might include occasional delays.

6.2 Profile on the simulator

The Hexagon simulator enables various kinds of profiling data to be collected. Two types of profiling are available and intended to work together.

6.2.1 High-level profiling

The simulator generates a number of profiling data that help you get a sense of where the bottlenecks are in an application. This information is useful to work on high-level software optimizations.

When profiling an application on the simulator, ensure that the simulator runs in its cycle-accurate mode. That mode is enabled by using the `--timing` option. This option results in the simulator counting cycles accurately but results in increasing significantly the simulation time.

The `--profile` or `-p` options direct the simulator to generate gmon data files that are then postprocessed with hexagon-gprof.

The main purpose of hexagon-gprof is to report the number of cycles executed in each function. This allows you to have a high-level understanding of where most cycles are spent in a given implementation. For more information about the hexagon-gprof profiler, see the *Hexagon gprof Profiler User Guide* (80-N2040-29).

In addition, you can use the `--statsfile` and `--pmu_statsfile` options to direct the simulator to gather statistics on instruction and cache utilization. The statistics are not required to be postprocessed with hexagon-gprof. For more information about these options, see the *Simulator statistics files* and *PMU statistics files* sections in the *Hexagon Simulator User Guide* (80-N2040-17).

6.2.2 Low-level profiling

If more performance is needed in an application, check the implementation of a specific function and understand how the cycles are spent. In order to do so, you must run the simulator with additional options such as `--packet_analyze` or `--uarchtrace`.

The Hexagon SDK includes tools that assist you by postprocessing some of these files. For example, the Hexagon profiler processes the output from the simulator packet analysis and generates a user-friendly html file displaying the following information:

- Total number of cycles executed
- Total number of stall cycles
- Highest cycle or stall counts (by function or instruction packet)
- Commit and stall statistics (by function or instruction packet)
- PMU event counts (by event type or instruction packet)
- Annotated disassembly of instruction packets
- Assembly instruction counts

For more information about the Hexagon profiler, see the *Hexagon Profiler User Guide* (80-N2040-10).

6.3 Profile on target with the Hexagon Trace Analyzer

Starting with the SM8150, SM7150, and SM6150 devices, Qualcomm provides the ability to collect trace files (only on the Compute DSP) and post process them with a trace analysis tool, the Hexagon Trace Analyzer. This tool outputs detailed per function, per instruction, and per section statistics.

One type of output from the trace analyzer is Flamegraph files, which can be viewed in a browser. These views allow you to zoom in and out, and for each thread, understand which functions take the most cycles to execute. Figure 6-1 provides an example of such a view.
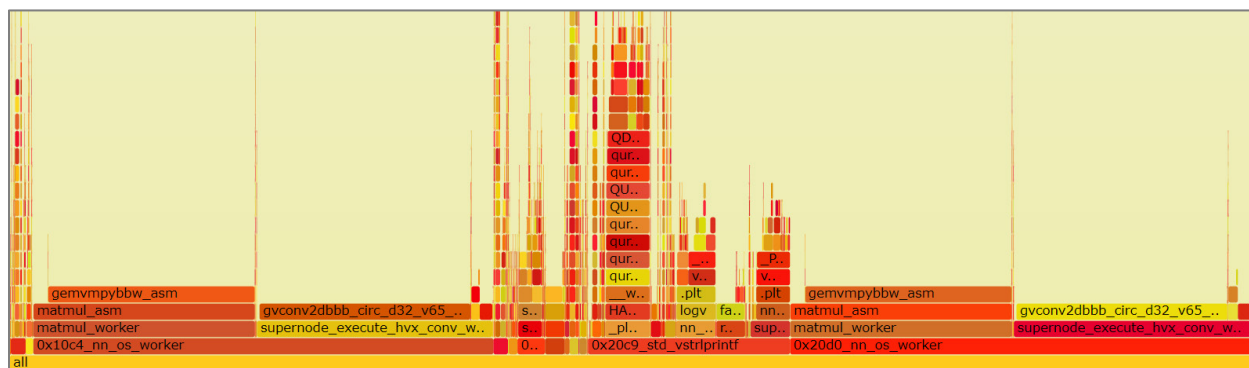

Figure 6-1 Flamegraph output from the Hexagon Trace Analyzer

The trace analyzer also provides a view that shows thread activity over time, and an Excel spreadsheet with detailed per function and per packet statistics.

For more information about the trace analyzer, see
`${HEXAGON_SDK_ROOT}/tools/debug/hexagon-trace-analyzer/readme.txt`.

6.4 Profile on target with the Android Hexagon profiler

Qualcomm provides an Android application called the Sysmon DSP profiler. This application allows to collect high-level statistics on an application running on target. This application is useful to monitor load distribution and bus activity over time.

For more information about this tool, see *Tools > Sysmon DSP Profiler* included in the Hexagon SDK online documentation.