Software Requirements Specification for Project “N-body Simulation”

# 1. Authors

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# 2. Introduction

This project aims to develop a physical simulator for studying the gravitational interaction between multiple bodies.

The simulator is organized as a two-stage workflow: from an initial configuration it computes the system’s state after an arbitrary time horizon and then produces a time-resolved playback (video) of the resulting motion.

The primary focus is algorithmic efficiency and time-integration design for N-body dynamics on a single workstation. Fast force evaluation (baseline O(N²), Barnes–Hut/octree) is paired with adaptive, hierarchical time stepping and sub-cycling for close encounters, partitioning the evolution into well-controlled time slices to preserve accuracy and stability over long horizons.

**Key functionality:**

* Accurate modeling of Newtonian gravitational forces with softening.
* Batch simulation from initial conditions to a specified end time; optional checkpoints.
* Post-processing pipeline that renders frames and composes a video timeline for playback.

# 3. Glossary

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| **N-body problem** | Motion of N particles under mutual Newtonian gravity. |
| **Δt** | Simulation time step (global or per-group/particle when using adaptive stepping). |
| **Barnes–Hut** | Tree-based approximation algorithm reducing O(N²) force computation to O(N log N). |
| **Softening (ε)** | Parameter preventing singularities at small separations. |
| **Headless run** | Non-graphical batch simulation used to produce results for later rendering. |
| **Headless mode** | Simulation mode without graphics, used for benchmarks or data export. |

# 4. Actors

| **Actor** | **Role** | **Goals / Responsibilities** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Student / Researcher** | End-user | Prepare initial conditions, run batch simulations to target time, generate video and data for analysis. |
| **Instructor / Demonstrator** | Presenter | Use predefined scenarios to illustrate gravitational phenomena in class or talks. |
| **Developer** | Developer | Develop, optimize, and maintain the simulation software, ensure the system runs efficiently, fix bugs, and implement new features as needed. |

# 5. Functional requirements

## 5.1. Strategic Use-cases

* **UC-S-1:** Initial condition preparation and validation
* **UC-S-2:** Batch simulation to target horizon
* **UC-S-3:** Rendering and video export; reproducibility

## 5.2. Use-cases for Student / Researcher

**Use-case UC-1-1: Create a new simulation**

**Actors:** Student / Researcher  
**Goal:** Define initial conditions and simulation parameters for a batch run.  
**Preconditions:** Application running; default project/scene loaded.  
**Main success scenario:**

1. User opens “New Simulation.”
2. Specify bodies (count, masses, positions, velocities) and other data of system in the input HDF5 file.
3. Set total duration T\_end and base step Δt (or adaptive policy).
4. Confirm to create the internal model and persist configuration.

**Use-case UC-1-2:** Load initial conditions

**Actors:** Student / Researcher  
**Goals:** Load initial conditions from file for a batch simulation.  
**Preconditions:** Application running.  
**Main success scenario:**

1. User opens an input file.
2. The program validates schema and units; loads data.
3. User confirms; the system builds the internal model.

**Alternative scenario “A”:**  
**Trigger:** User opens a file with invalid data (start from step 2).

1. Parser reports mismatches; the UI shows a clear error and suggests fixes; user retries..

**Use-case UC-1-3: Render timeline and export video**

**Actors:** Student / Researcher  
**Goals:** Produce a video playback of the computed motion.  
**Main success scenario:**

1. User selects a dataset or checkpoint range for rendering.
2. Configures visualization (camera path, scale, color mapping, trails, overlays, FPS, resolution).
3. System renders frames off-screen and composes a video file.
4. Exported assets include video and visualization metadata for reproducibility.

Rendering metrics (captured in test scenarios):

• Total render time; average FPS; time per frame; encode time.

• Dropped/retimed frames (if any); peak VRAM usage (if available).

• Recorded context: resolution, target FPS, overlays enabled, GPU/device and driver/runtime versions.

• Output data: indicators are recorded in a separate file.

## 5.3. Use-cases for Instructor

**Use-case UC-2-1: Demonstrate physical concepts**

**Actors:** Instructor  
**Goals:** Demonstrate physical concepts  
**Main success scenario:**

1. Select a predefined scenario (two-body, cluster, disk/merger).
2. Run batch simulation to T\_end.
3. Optionally render multiple variants to compare Δt, ε, or mass ratios.

## 5.4. Use-cases for Developer

**Use-case UC-3-1: Run batch simulation to T\_end**

**Actors:** Developer

**Goals:** Compute system evolution from initial state to the specified time horizon.

**Main success scenario:**

* 1. User starts the batch run in headless mode.
  2. The engine evaluates forces (O(N²) or Barnes–Hut) and integrates motion with the selected time-stepping policy (adaptive/hierarchical where enabled). Optionally exports images or video frames.
  3. The system saves periodic checkpoints and a final trajectory dataset (states vs time).
  4. On completion, a run report with metadata (seed, integrator, tolerances, commit/version) is produced.

Performance metrics (captured in test scenarios):

• Total wall-clock time; per-phase timings: tree build, force evaluation, integration, checkpoint I/O.

• Throughput: steps/s and bodies steps/s.

• Memory: peak RSS; when applicable, peak GPU memory.

• Output data: indicators are recorded in a separate file.

# 6. System-wide functional requirment

* **FR-SYS-01:** Import/export initial conditions and results.
* **FR-SYS-02:** Store seeds, units, integrator metadata, tolerances, and commit/version info for reproducible runs.
* **FR-SYS-03:** Provide a headless simulation mode and a separate rendering tool; GUI must not block the simulation.
* **FR-SYS-04:** Support predefined scenarios and user presets.
* **FR-SYS-05:** Support video export with configurable resolution, frame rate, and overlays (time, scale bar).

# 7. Non-functional requirement

## 7.1 Environment

* **OS:** Windows 10+, Ubuntu 22.04+.
* **CPU:** x86-64, ≥ 4 cores.
* **GPU (optional):** OpenCL 1.2+ device with vendor runtime.
* **Toolchain:** C++17+, CMake; rendering via OpenGL/SDL/SFML.
* **Build modes:** CPU\_ONLY, OPENCL (CMake options).

## 7.2 Performance

**CPU baseline:** With Barnes–Hut, N=10k finishes a 10k-step batch in practical time; off-screen render ≥ 30 FPS @1080p.

**OpenCL path:** Offload force eval/tree; target **≥ 3×** speedup vs CPU for N ≥ 50k; amortize H2D/D2H transfers; per-device auto-tuning.

## 7.3 Reliability & Accuracy

* Deterministic per backend (CPU or specific OpenCL device).
* GPU vs CPU parity: **L2 rel. error ≤ 1e-6** over 10⁴ steps on standard tests.
* Energy drift **≤ 1×10⁻³** (Leapfrog, appropriate ε).
* Stable 1-hour batch run; OpenCL errors trapped with clear messages; watchdog fallback to CPU.

## 7.4 Portability & Fallback

* Device selection by platform/device; sensible default to fastest discrete GPU.
* If OpenCL unavailable, automatically run CPU path (logged).
* Precision policy: FP32 by default; FP64 when available or requested.
* Kernels avoid vendor-specific extensions by default; guarded optimizations when present.

## 7.5 Extensibility & Observability

* Swappable CPU/OpenCL backends; clean interfaces for evaluators/integrators.
* Configurable and persisted knobs (θ, ε, Δt policy, WG sizes).
* Unit tests with CPU oracle; timing/memory metrics exported (e.g., JSON)