

# A New Taxonomy of Software Testing Approaches

Seeking More Standardized Standards

Samuel Joseph Crawford, Jacques Carette, & Spencer Smith  
{crawfs1, carette, smiths}@mcmaster.ca

Department of Computing and Software, McMaster University

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## Goal

Taxonomy of software testing approaches

- Should be **systematic, rigorous, and “complete”**
- Application: **automatically generating test cases** in Drasil [1]
- The **underlying domain** should drive the scope and prerequisites for generated test cases

## Problem

Existing software testing taxonomies are inadequate

- Tebes et al. (2020): focuses on parts of the testing process (e.g., test goal, testable entity)
- Souza et al. (2017): prioritizes organizing testing approaches over defining them
- Unterkalmsteiner et al. (2014): provides a foundation for classification but not its results

## Methodology

Since a taxonomy doesn't already exist, we should create one!

- Started from **established standards and resources**, such as IEEE [2, 3, 4] and SWEBOK [5]
- Relevant information (currently 190 testing approaches, 85 software qualities, and their definitions) is then **collected and organized** into spreadsheets
- We will iterate this process until we encounter diminishing returns, implying that something approaching a **complete taxonomy** has emerged!
- Since there are many standardized documents about software testing (or software in general), **this should be trivial, no?**

## In Our Experience...

# NO.

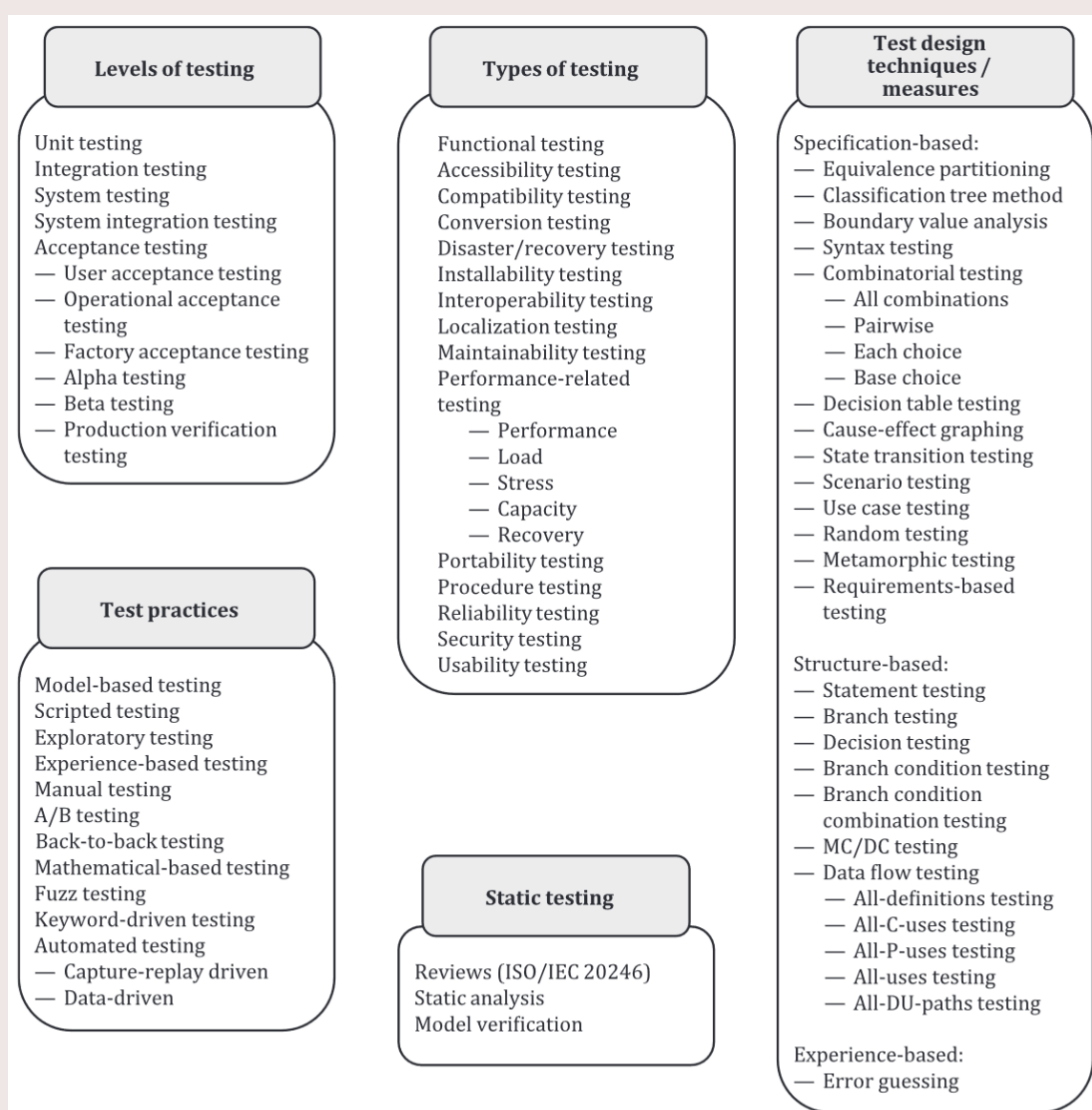


Figure 1: Classification of some “test approach choices” [2, p. 22].

## More Examples

[2] is a software testing standard that leaves much unstandardized (see Figure 2)

- Most (55 out of 99) testing approaches from [2] **do not have a definition!**
- Eight of these were (at the very least) described in the previous version of this standard [4]
- Nine were present in the same way in another IEEE standard [3] before this one was published

Having definitions does not mean they are useful; see Figure 3 for some good (bad?) examples

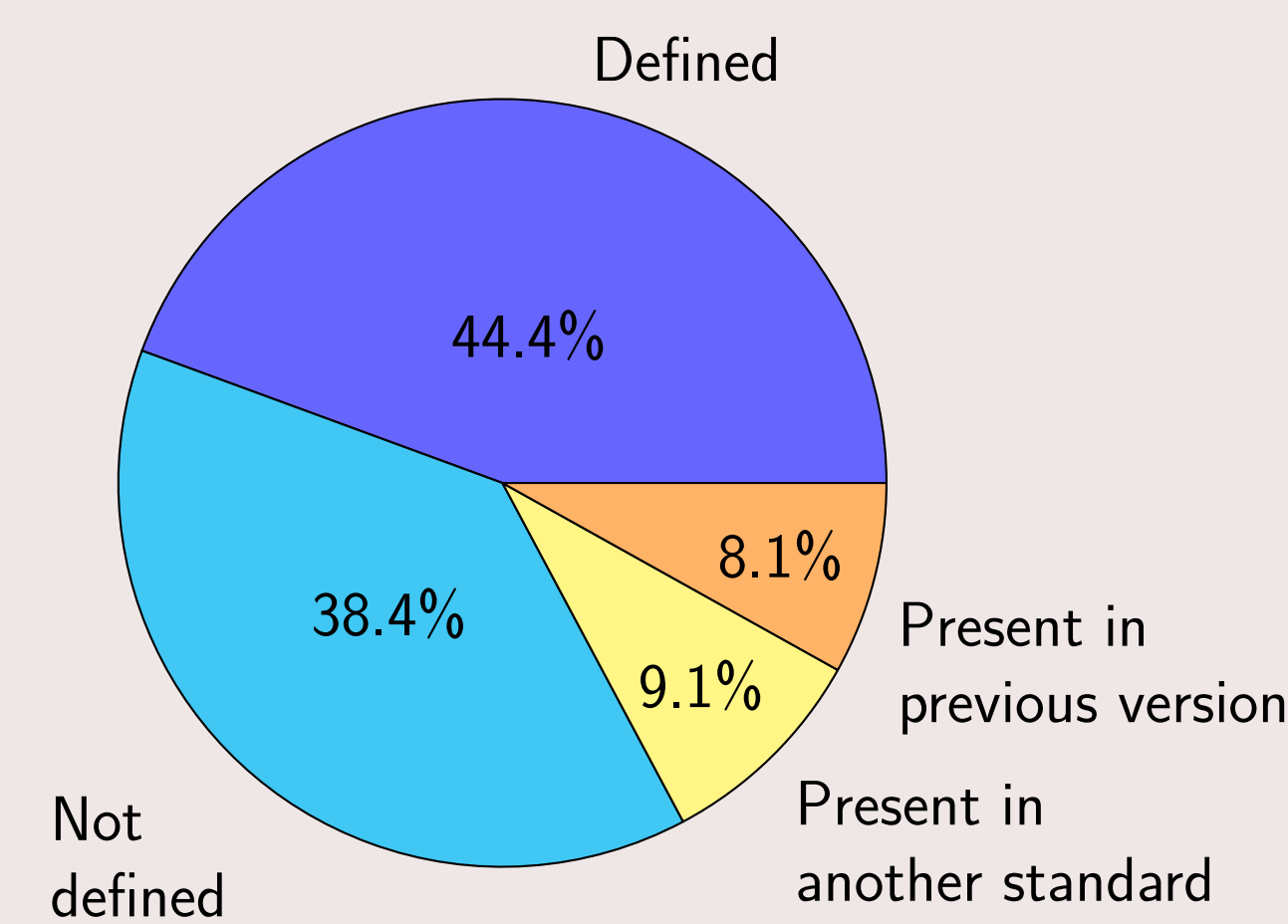


Figure 2: Breakdown of testing approach definitions in [2].

### software element

**1. system element that is software**  
*cf. system element, software/system element*

### event sequence analysis

**1. per**

### operable

**1. state of**

### device

**1. mechanism or piece of equipment designed to serve a purpose or perform a function**  
*cf. platform*

Figure 3: Less-than-helpful definitions

[3, pp. 421, 170, 136, 301 (counterclockwise from top)]. Note: “equipment” is not defined, and “mechanism” is only defined as how “a function ...transform[s] input into output” [p. 270].

## SWEBOK's Definition of “Scalability Testing”

“Scalability testing evaluates the capability to use and learn the system and the user documentation. It also focuses on the system's effectiveness in supporting user tasks and the ability to recover from user errors” [5, p. 5-9]

- The above definition is an amalgamation of usability, recovery, and functional testing
- SWEBOK's definition of elasticity testing cites a single source [5, p. 5-9] **that doesn't contain the words “elasticity” or “elastic”!**

Alpha testing is quite common, but there is disagreement on who performs it:

- 1 “users within the organization developing the software” [3, p. 17],
- 2 “a small, selected group of potential users” [5, p. 5-8], or
- 3 “roles outside the development organization” [6]

## Conclusions & Future Work

- Current software testing taxonomies are **incomplete, inconsistent, and/or incorrect**
- For one to be useful, it needs to be built systematically from a large body of established sources
- We will continue investigating how the literature defines and categorizes software testing approaches to analyze any discrepancies and structure these ideas coherently
- Hopefully, this leads to a **centralized, consistent taxonomy** that can grow alongside the literature as the field of testing advances

## References

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- [5] H. Washizaki, ed., *Guide to the Software Engineering Body of Knowledge, Version 4.0*. Jan. 2024.
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