

## A New Taxonomy of Software Testing Approaches

Seeking More Standardized Standards

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#### Goal

The first step to any formal process is understanding the underlying domain. Therefore, a systematic and rigorous understanding of software testing approaches is needed to develop formal tools to test software. In our specific case, our motivation was seeing which kinds of testing can be generated automatically by Drasil, "a framework for generating all of the software artifacts for (well understood) research software" [1].

## Problem

Most software testing ontologies seem to focus on the high-level testing process rather than the testing techniques themselves. For example:

- [2] mainly focuses on parts of the testing process (e.g., test goal, testable entity)
- [3] provides a foundation for classification but "does not aim at providing a systematic and exhaustive state-of-the-art survey of [either domain]" (p. A:2)

## Methodology

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

- We started with an ad hoc approach, focusing on textbooks trusted at McMaster
- We then realized that this was too arbitrary, so we started from more established sources, such as IEEE and SWEBOK
- The goal of this approach is to iterate, eventually revisiting the original textbooks, until enough knowledge is built up to encounter diminishing returns (ideally no returns!)
- Since there are many standardized documents about software testing (or software in general), this should be trivial, no?

## In Our Experience

#### Levels of testing

Unit testing Integration testing System testing System integration testing Acceptance testing

- User acceptance testing Operational acceptance
- Factory acceptance testing
- Alpha testing Beta testing
- Production verification testing

Model-based testing Scripted testing **Exploratory testing** Experience-based testing Manual testing A/B testing Back-to-back testing Mathematical-based testing Fuzz testing Keyword-driven testing

#### Test practices

Automated testing Capture-replay driven Data-driven

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#### Types of testing

Functional testing Accessibility testing Compatibility testing Conversion testing Disaster/recovery testing Installability testing Interoperability testing Localization testing Maintainability testing

testing Performance Load

Performance-related

- Stress Capacity
- Recovery Portability testing Procedure testing Reliability testing

Security testing

Usability testing

Static testing

Reviews (ISO/IEC 20246) Static analysis Model verification

Figure 1: A classification of some "test approach choices" [4, p. 22].

#### Test design techniques / measures

Specification-based: Equivalence partitioning Classification tree method

- Boundary value analysis Syntax testing
- Combinatorial testing All combinations
- Pairwise
- Each choice
- Base choice Decision table testing
- Cause-effect graphing State transition testing
- Scenario testing — Use case testing
- Random testing Metamorphic testing
- Requirements-based testing
- Structure-based:
- Statement testing Branch testing
- Decision testing Branch condition testing
- Branch condition combination testing MC/DC testing
- Data flow testing All-definitions testing All-C-uses testing
- All-P-uses testing All-uses testing All-DU-paths testing

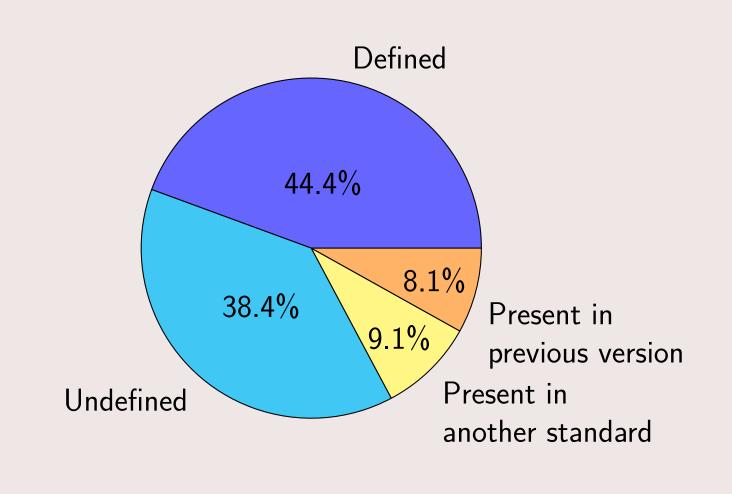
Experience-based: Error guessing

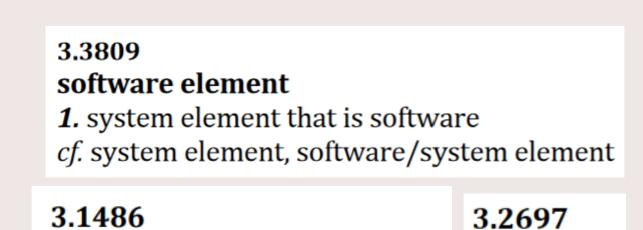
## Information often appears logical, but this often breaks down. For example, the classification of test approaches in Figure 1 reveals the following ambiguities:

- Experience-based testing is both a test design technique and a test practice
- What distinguishes the following pairs is unclear:
  - Disaster/recovery testing and recovery testing
- Branch condition testing and branch condition combination testing

## More Examples

A big contributor to the ambiguities in Figure 1 is the number of definitions that are not given. Despite its source [4] being a standard for general concepts related to software testing, it leaves much unstandardized. For example, as shown in Figure 1, most (55 out of 99) testing approaches mentioned do not have a definition! Eight of these were at the very least described in the previous version of this standard [5], and nine were present in the same way in another IEEE standard [6] that would have been available upon publication of this one. However, the presence of a definition does not guarantee that it is useful! See Figure 1 for some good (bad?) examples.





operable

1. state of

Figure 3: Some less-than-helpful definitions from [6].

event sequence analysis

**1.** per

Figure 2: Breakdown of testing approach definitions from [4].

## 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

# References

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