Unit Testing in ASPIDE

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Abstract. Answer Set Programming (ASP) is a declarative logic programming formalism, which is employed nowadays in both academic and industrial real-world applications. Although some tools for supporting the development of ASP programs have been proposed in the last few years, the crucial task of testing ASP programs received less attention, and is an Achilles’ heel of the available programming environments.

In this paper we present a language for specifying and running unit tests on ASP programs. The testing language has been implemented in ASPIDE, a comprehensive IDE for ASP, which supports the entire life-cycle of ASP development with a collection of user-friendly graphical tools for program composition, testing, debugging, profiling, solver execution configuration, and output-handling.

1 Introduction

Answer Set Programming (ASP) [1] is a declarative logic programming formalism proposed in the area of non-monotonic reasoning. The idea of ASP is to represent a given computational problem by a logic program whose answer sets correspond to solutions, and then use a solver to find those solutions [2].

The language of ASP [1] supports a number of modeling constructs including disjunction in rule heads, nonmonotonic negation [1], (weak and strong) constraints [3], aggregate functions [4], and more. These features make ASP very expressive [5], and suitable for developing advanced real-world applications. ASP is employed in several fields, from Artificial Intelligence [6,7,8,9,10,11] to Information Integration [12], and Knowledge Management [13,14]. Interestingly, these applications of ASP recently have stimulated some interest also in industry [14].

On the one hand, the effective application of ASP in real-world scenarios was made possible by the availability of efficient ASP systems [6,18,19]. On the other hand, the adoption of ASP can be further boosted by offering effective programming tools capable of supporting the programmers in managing large and complex projects [20].

In the last few years, a number of tools for developing ASP programs have been proposed, including editors and debuggers [21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31]. Among them, ASPIDE [31] –which stands for Answer Set Programming Integrated Development Environment– is one of the most complete development tool[s] and it integrates a cutting-edge editing tool (featuring dynamic syntax highlighting, on-line syntax correction, autocompletion, code-templates, quick-fixes, refactoring, etc.) with a collection of user-friendly graphical tools for program composition, debugging, profiling, DBMS access, solver execution configuration and output-handling.

Although so many tools for developing ASP programs have been proposed up to now, the crucial task of testing ASP programs received less attention [32,46], and is an Achilles’ heel of the available programming environments. Indeed, the majority of available graphic programming environments for ASP does not provide the user with a testing tool (see [31]), and also the one present in the first versions of ASPIDE is far from being effective.

In this paper we present a pragmatic solution for testing ASP programs. In particular, we present a new language for specifying and running unit tests on ASP programs. The testing language presented in this paper is inspired by the JUnit [33] framework: the developer can specify the rules composing one or several units, specify one or more inputs and assert a number of conditions on both expected outputs and the

¹ For an exhaustive feature-wise comparison with existing environments for developing logic programs we refer the reader to [31].
expected behavior of sub-programs. The obtained test case specification can be run by exploiting an ASP solver, and the assertions are automatically verified by analyzing the output of the chosen ASP solver. Note that test case specification is applicable independently of the used ASP solver. The testing language was implemented in ASPIDE, which also provides the user with some graphic tools that make the development of test cases simpler. The testing tool described in this work extends significantly the one formerly available in ASPIDE, by both extending the language by more expressive (non-ground) assertions and the support of weak-constraints, and enriching its collection of user-friendly graphical tools (including program composition, debugging, profiling, database management, solver execution configuration, and output-handling) with a graphical test suite management interface.

As far as related work is concerned, the task of testing ASP programs was approached for the first time, to the best of our knowledge, in [32,46] where the notion of structural testing for ground normal ASP programs is defined and methods for automatically generating tests is introduced. The results presented in [32,46] are, somehow, orthogonal to the contribution of this paper. Indeed, no language/implementation is proposed in [32,46] for specifying/automatically-running the produced test cases; whereas, the language presented in this paper can be used for encoding the output of a test case generator based on the methods proposed in [32]. Finally, it is worth noting that, testing approaches developed for other logic languages, like prolog [34,35,36], cannot be straightforwardly ported to ASP because of the differences between the languages.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: in Section 2 we overview ASPIDE; in section 3 we introduce a language for specifying unit tests for ASP programs; in Section 4 we describe the user interface components of ASPIDE conceived for creating and running tests; finally, in Section 5 we draw the conclusion.

2 ASPIDE: Integrated Development Environment for ASP

ASPIDE is an Integrated Development Environment (IDE) for ASP, which features a rich editing tool with a collection of user-friendly graphical tools for ASP program development. In this section we first summarize the main features of the system and then we overview the main components of the ASPIDE user interface. For a more detailed description of ASPIDE, as well as for a complete comparison with competing tools, we refer the reader to [31] and to the online manual published in the system web site http://www.mat.unical.it/ricca/aspide.

System Features. ASPIDE is inspired by Eclipse, one of the most diffused programming environments. The main features of ASPIDE are the following:

– **Workspace management.** The system allows one to organize ASP programs in projects, which are collected in a special directory (called workspace).

– **Advanced text editor.** The editing of ASP files is simplified by an advanced text editor. Currently, the system is able to load and store ASP programs in the syntax of the ASP system DLV [15], and supports the ASPCore language profile employed in the ASP System Competition 2011 [37]. ASPIDE can also manage TYP files specifying a mapping between program predicates and database tables in the DLVDB syntax [38]. Besides the core functionality that basic text editors offer (like code line numbering, find/replace, undo/redo, copy/paste, etc.), ASPIDE offers other advanced functionalities, like: Automatic completion, Dynamic code templates, Quick fix, and Refactoring. Indeed, the system is able to complete (on request) predicate names, as well as variable names. Predicate names are both learned while writing, and extracted from the files belonging to the same project; variables are suggested by taking into account the rule we are currently writing. When several possible alternatives for completion are available the system shows a pop-up dialog. Moreover, the writing of repeated programming patterns (like transitive closure or disjunctive rules for guessing the search space) is assisted by advanced auto-completion with code templates, which can generate several rules at once according to a known pattern. Note that code templates can also be user defined by writing DLT [39] files. The refactoring tool allows one to modify in a guided way, among others, predicate names and variables (e.g., variable renaming in a rule is done by considering bindings of variables, so that variables/predicates/strings
occurring in other expressions remain unchanged). Reported errors or warnings can be automatically fixed by selecting (on request) one of the system’s suggested quick fixes, which automatically change the affected part of code.

– Outline navigation. ASPIDE creates an outline view which graphically represents program elements. Each item in the outline can be used to quickly access the corresponding line of code (a very useful feature when dealing with long files), and also provides a graphical support for building rules in the visual editor (see below).

– Dynamic code checking and error highlighting. Syntax errors and relevant conditions (like safety) are checked while typing programs: portions of code containing errors or warnings are immediately highlighted. Note that the checker considers the entire project, and warns the user by indicating e.g., that atoms with the same predicate name have different arity in several files. This condition is usually revealed only when programs divided in multiple files are run together.

– Dependency graph. The system is able to display several variants of the dependency graph associated to a program (e.g., depending on whether both positive and negative dependencies are considered).

– Debugger and Profiler. Semantic error detection as well as code optimization can be done by exploiting graphic tools. In particular, we developed a graphical user interface for embedding in ASPIDE the debugging tool spock (we have also adapted spock for dealing with the syntax of the DLV system). Regarding the profiler, we have fully embedded the graphical interface presented in [40].

– Unit Testing. The user can define unit tests and verify the behavior of program units. The language for specifying unit tests, as well as the graphical tools of ASPIDE assisting the development of tests, are described in detail in the following sections.

– Configuration of the execution. This feature allows one to configure and manage input programs and execution options (called run configurations).

– Presentation of results. The output of the program (either answer sets, or query results) are visualized in a tabular representation or in a text-based console. The result of the execution can be also saved in text files for subsequent analysis.

– Visual Editor. The users can draw logic programs by exploiting a full graphical environment that offers a QBE-like tool for building logic rules [41]. The user can switch, every time he needs, from the text editor to the visual one (and vice-versa) thanks to a reverse-engineering mechanism from text to graphical format.

– Interaction with databases. Interaction with external databases is useful in several applications (e.g., [12]). ASPIDE provides a fully graphical import/export tool that automatically generates mappings by following the DLV<sup>DB</sup> TYP file specifications [38]. Text editing of TYP mappings is also assisted by syntax coloring and auto-completion. Database oriented applications can be run by setting DLV<sup>DB</sup> as solver in a run configuration.

**Interface Overview** The user interface of ASPIDE is depicted in Figure 1. The most common operations can be quickly executed through a toolbar present in the upper part of the GUI (zone 1). From left to right there are buttons allowing to: save files, undo/redo, copy & paste, find & replace, switch between visual to text editor, run the solver/profiler/debugger. The main editing area (zone 4) is organized in a multi-tabbed panel possibly collecting several open files. On the left there is the explorer panel (zone 2) which allows one to browse the workspace; and the error console (zone 3). The explorer panel lists projects and files included in the workspace, while the error console organizes errors and warnings according to the project and files where they are localized. On the right, there are the outline panel (zone 5) and the sources panel (zone 6). The first shows an outline of the currently edited file, while the latter reports a list of the database sources connected with the current project. Note that, the layout of the system can be customized by the user, indeed panels can be moved and rearranged.

ASPIDE is written in Java and runs on the most diffused operating systems (Microsoft Windows, Linux, and Mac OS) and can connect to any database supporting Java DataBase Connectivity (JDBC).

### 3 A language for testing ASP programs

Software testing [42] is an activity aimed at evaluating the behavior of a program by verifying whether it produces the required output for a particular input. The goal of testing is not to provide means for estab-
lishing whether the program is totally correct; conversely testing is a pragmatic and cheap way of finding errors by executing some test. A test case is the specification of some input $I$ and corresponding expected outputs $O$. A test case fails when the outputs produced by running the program does not correspond to $O$, it passes otherwise.
One of the most diffused white-box testing techniques is **unit testing**. The idea of unit testing is to assess an entire software by testing its subparts called **units** (and corresponding to small testable parts of a program). In a software implemented by using imperative object-oriented languages, unit testing corresponds to assessing separately portions of the code like class methods. The same idea can be applied to ASP, once the notion of unit is given. We intend as unit of an ASP programs $P$ any subset of the rules of $P$ corresponding to a splitting set [43] (actually the system exploits a generalization of the splitting theorem by Lifschitz and Turner [43] to the non-ground case [44]). In this way, the behavior of units can be verified (by avoiding unwanted behavioral changes due to cycles) both when they run isolated from the original program as well as when they are left immersed in (part of) the original program.

In the following, we present a pragmatic solution for testing ASP programs, which is a new language, inspired by the JUnit [33] framework, for specifying and running **unit tests**. The developer, given an ASP program, can select the rules composing a unit, specify one or more inputs, and assert a number of conditions on the expected output. The obtained test case specification can be run, and the assertions automatically verified by calling an ASP solver and checking its output. In particular, we allow three test execution modes:

- **Execution of selected rules.** The selected rules will be executed separated from the original program on the specified inputs.
- **Execution of split program.** The program corresponding to the splitting set containing the atoms of the selected rules is run and tested. In this way, the “interface” between two splitting sets can be tested (e.g., one can assert some expected properties on the candidates produced by the guessing part of a program by excluding the effect of some constraints in the checking part).
- **Execution in the whole program.** The original program is run and specific assertions regarding predicates contained in the unit are checked. This corresponds to filtering test results on the atoms contained in the selected rules.

**Testing Language.** A test file can be written according to the following grammar [3]

A test file might contain a single test or a test suite (a set of tests) including several test cases. Each test case includes one or more assertions on the execution results.

The **invocation** statement (line 1) sets the global invocation settings, that apply to all tests specified in the same file (name, solver, and execution options). In the implementation, the invocation name might correspond to an ASPIDE run configuration, and the solver path and options are not mandatory.

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2 A test conceived for verifying some functionality of an application without knowing the code internals is said to be a black-box test. A test conceived for verifying the behavior of a specific part of a program is called white-box test. White box testing is an activity usually carried out by developers and is a key component of agile software development [22].

3 Non-terminals are in bold face; token specifications are omitted for simplicity.
The user can specify one or more global inputs by writing some input and inputFile statements (line 2). The first kind of statement allows one for writing the input of the test in the form of ASP rules or simply facts; the second statement indicates a file that contains some input in ASP format.

A test case declaration (line 4) is composed by a name and an optional parameter that allows one to choose if the execution will be done on the entire program, on a subset of rules, or on the program corresponding to the splitting set containing the selected rules. The user can specify particular solver options (line 6), as well as certain inputs (line 7) which are valid in a given test case. Moreover, global inputs of the test suite can be excluded by exploiting excludeInput and excludeInputFile statements (lines 8 and 9). The optional statements filter, pfilter and nfilter (lines 11, 12, and 13) are used to filter out output predicates from the test results (i.e., specified predicate names are filtered out from the results when the assertion is executed). The statement selectRule (line 15) allows one for selecting rules among the ones composing the global input program. A rule \( r \) to be selected must be identified by a name, which is expected to be specified in the input program in a comment appearing in the row immediately preceding \( r \) (see Figure 1). ASPIDE adds automatically the comments specifying rule names. If a set of selected rules does not belong to the same splitting set, the system has to print a warning indicating the problem.

The expected output of a test case is expressed in terms of assertion statements (lines 16/21). The possible assertions are:

- `assertTrue("atomList")`/`assertCautiouslyTrue("atomList")`. Asserts that all atoms of the atom list must be true in any answer sets;
- `assertBravelyTrue("atomList")`. Asserts that all atoms of the atom list must be true in at least one answer set;
- `assertTrueIn(number, "atomList")`. Asserts that all atoms of the atom list must be true in exactly `number` answer sets;
- `assertTrueInAtLeast(number, "atomList")`. Asserts that all atoms of the atom list must be true in at least `number` answer sets;
- `assertTrueInAtMost(number, "atomList")`. Asserts that all atoms of the atom list must be true in at most `number` answer sets;
- `assertConstraint(":-constraint. ")`. Asserts that all answer sets must satisfy the specified constraint;
- `assertConstraintIn(number, ":-constraint. ")`. Asserts that exactly `number` answer sets must satisfy the specified constraint;
- `assertConstraintInAtLeast(number, ":-constraint. ")`. Asserts that at least `number` answer sets must satisfy the specified constraint;
- `assertConstraintInAtMost(number, ":-constraint. ")`. Asserts that at most `number` answer sets must satisfy the specified constraint;
- `assertBestModelCost(intcost)` and `assertBestModelCost(intcost, intlevel)`. In case of execution of programs with weak constraints, they assert that the cost of the best model with level `intlevel` must be `intcost`;

...together with the corresponding negative assertions: `assertFalse`, `assertCautiouslyFalse`, `assertBravelyFalse`, `assertFalseIn`, `assertFalseInAtLeast`, `assertFalseInAtMost`. The `atomList` specifies a list of atoms that can be ground or non-ground; in the case of non-ground atoms the assertion is true if some ground instance matches in some/all answer sets. Assertions can be global (line 20-21) or local to a single test (line 16-17).

In the following we report an example of test case.

**Test case example.** The maximum clique is a classical hard problem in graph theory requiring to find the largest clique (i.e., a complete subgraph of maximal size) in an undirected graph. Suppose that the graph \( G \) is specified by using facts over predicates `node` (unary) and `edge` (binary), then the program in Figure 1 solves the problem.

The disjunctive rule \((r_1)\) guesses a subset \( S \) of the nodes to be in the clique, while the rest of the program checks whether \( S \) constitutes a clique, and the weak constraint \((r_5)\) maximizes the size of \( S \). Here,

\[ \text{pfilter selects only positive literals and excludes the strongly negated ones, while nfilter has opposite behavior.} \]
an auxiliary predicate $\text{uedge}$ exploits an ordering for reducing the time spent in checking. Suppose that the encoding is stored in a file named $\text{clique.dl}$; and suppose also that the graph instance, composed by facts 

{ node(1). node(2). node(3). node(4). node(5). node(6). node(7). edge(1,2). edge(2,3). edge(2,4). edge(1,4). edge(1,5). edge(4,5). edge(2,5). edge(4,6). edge(5,7). edge(3,7). },

is stored in the file named $\text{graphInstance.dl}$ (the corresponding graph is depicted in Figure 2). The following is a simple test suite specification for the above-reported ASP program:

```plaintext
invocation("MaximalClique", "/usr/bin/dlv", "");
inputFile("clique.dl");
mmaximalClique()
{
 assertBestModelCost(3);
}

constraintsOnCliques()
{
 excludeInput("\!:˜ outClique(X2).");
 assertConstraintInAtLeast(1,"\!: not inClique(1), not inClique(4).";
 assertConstraintIn(5,"\!: #count{ X1: inClique(X1) } < 3."");
}

checkNodeOrdering(SELECTED_RULES)
{
 inputFile("graphInstance.dl");
 selectRule("r2");
 selectRule("r3");
 assertFalse("uedge(2,1).";

 guessClique(SPLIT_PROGRAM)
{
 selectRule("r1");
 assertFalseInAtMost(1,"inClique(X).";
 assertBravelyTrue("inClique(X).";

 Here, we first set the invocation parameters by indicating DLV as solver, then we specify the file to be tested $\text{clique.dl}$ and the input file $\text{graphInstance.dl}$, by exploiting a global input statement; then, we add the test case $\text{maximalClique}$, in which we assert that the best model is expected to have a cost (i.e., the number of weak constraint violations corresponding to the vertexes out of the clique) of 3 ($\text{assertBestModelCost(3)}$ in Figure 3).

In the second test case, named $\text{constraintsOnCliques}$, we require that (i) vertexes 1 and 4 belong to at least one clique, and (ii) for exactly five answer sets the size of the corresponding clique is greater than 2. (The weak constraint is removed to ensure the computation of all cliques by DLV.)

In the third test case, named $\text{checkNodeOrdering}$, we select rules $r_2$ and $r_3$, and we require to test selected rules in isolation, discarding all the other statements of the input. We are still interested in considering ground facts that are included locally (i.e., we include the file $\text{graphInstance.dl}$). In this case we assert that $\text{uedge(2,1)}$ is false, since edges should be ordered by rules $r_2$ and $r_3$.

Test case $\text{guessClique}$ is run in $\text{SPLIT_PROGRAM}$ modality, which requires to test the subprogram containing all the rules belonging to the splitting set corresponding to the selection (i.e., \{inClique, outClique, node\}). In this test case the sub-program that we are testing is composed by the disjunctive rule and by the facts of predicate $\text{node}$ only. Here we require that there is at most one answer set modeling the empty clique, and there is at least one answer set modeling a non-empty clique.
The test file described above can be created graphically and executed in ASPIDE as described in the following section.
In this section we describe the graphic tools implemented in ASPIDE conceived for developing and running test cases. Space constraints prevent us from providing a complete description of all the usage scenarios.
and available commands. However, in order to have an idea about the capabilities of the testing interface of **ASPIDE**, we describe step by step how to implement the example illustrated in the previous section.

Suppose that we have created in **ASPIDE** a project named MaxClique, which contains the files `clique.dl` and `graphInstance.dl` (see Fig. 1) storing the encoding of the maximal clique problem and the graph instance presented in the previous section, respectively. Moreover we assume that both input files are included in a run configuration named `MaximalClique`, and we assume that the DLV system is the solver of choice in `MaximalClique`. Since the file that we want to test in our example is `clique.dl`, we select it in the workspace explorer, then we click the right button of the mouse and select New Test from the popup menu (Fig. 3a).

The system shows the test creation dialog (Fig. 3b), which allows one for both setting the name of the test file and selecting a previously-defined run configuration (storing execution options and input files). By clicking on the Finish button, the new test file is created (see Fig. 3c) where a statement regarding the selected run configuration is added automatically. We add the first unit test (called `maximalClique`) by exploiting the text editor (see Fig. 3d), whereas we build the remaining ones (working on some selected rules) by exploiting the logic program editor. After opening the `clique.dl` file, we select rules `r_2` and `r_3` inside the text editor, we right-click on them and we select `Add selected rules in test case` from the menu item Test of the popup menu (fig. 3e). The system opens a dialog window where we indicate the test file in which we want to add the new test case (fig. 3f). We click on the Create test case; the system will ask for the name of the new test case and we write `guessClique`; after that, on the window, we select the option `execute selected rules` and click on the Finish button. The system will add the test case `guessClique` filled with the `selectRule` statements indicating the selected rules. To add project files as input of the test case, we select them from the workspace explorer and click on `Use file as input` in the menu item Test (fig. 3g).

We complete the test case specification by adding the assertion, thus the test created up to now is shown in figure 3h. Following an analogous procedure we create the remaining test cases (see Fig. 4a). To execute our tests, we right-click on the test file and select Execute Test. The Test Execution Dialog appears and the results are shown to the programmer (see Fig. 4b). Failing tests are indicated by a red icon, while green icons indicate passing tests. At this point we add the following additional test:

```plaintext
checkNodeOutClique() {
    excludeInput("edge(2,4).edge(2,5).";
    assertFalse("inClique(2). inClique(5). ");
}
```

This additional test (purposely) fails, this can be easily seen by looking at Figure 2b; and the reason for this failure is indicated (see Fig. 4b) in the test execution dialog. In order to know which literals of the solution do not satisfy the assertion, we right-click on the failed test and select Manage Asserts from the menu. A dialog showing the outputs of the test appears where, in particular, predicates and literals matching correctly the assertions are marked in green, whereas the ones violating the assertion are marked in red (gray icons may appear to indicate missing literals which are expected to be in the solution). In our example, the assertion is `assertFalse("inClique(2). inClique(5). ");` however, in our instance, node 5 is contained in the maximal clique composed by nodes 1, 4, 5; this is the reason for the failing test. Assertions can be modified graphically, and, in this case, we act directly on the result window (fig. 4). We remove the node 5 from the assertion by selecting it; moreover we right-click on the instance of `inClique` that specifies the node 5 and we select Remove from Assert. The atom `node(5)` will be removed from the assertion and the window will be refreshed showing that the test is correctly executed (see fig. 4). The same window can be used to manage constraint assertions; in particular, by clicking on Manage Constraint Assert of the popup menu, a window appears that allows the user to set/edit constraints (see fig. 4).

5 Conclusion

This paper presents a pragmatic environment for testing ASP programs. In particular, we propose a new language, inspired by the JUnit framework, for specifying and running unit tests on ASP programs. The testing language is general and suits both the DLV and clasp ASP dialects. The testing language has been implemented in **ASPIDE** together with some graphic tools for easing both the development of tests and the analysis of test execution (via DLV).
As far as future work is concerned, we plan to extend ASPIDE by improving/introducing additional dynamic editing instruments, and graphic tools like VIDEAS. Moreover, we plan to further improve the testing tool by supporting (semi)automatic test case generation based on the structural testing techniques proposed in [32,46].

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