

Scuttle: A System for Multi-Objective MaxSAT

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Abstract

We describe the SCUTTLE system for multi-objective combinatorial optimization. SCUTTLE accepts multi-objective instances where the constraints are declared either as propositional clauses or pseudo-Boolean constraints, and implements a range of multi-objective maximum satisfiability algorithms (including ones for enumerating all Pareto-optimal and leximax-optimal solutions). Pseudo-Boolean constraints are translated to clauses, allowing for applying any of the implemented algorithms on both the clausal and the pseudo-Boolean level. SCUTTLE also includes tightly integrated preprocessing (both core boosting and liftings of SAT preprocessing techniques) for multi-objective instances and can provide proof certificates for selected algorithms.

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1 Introduction

Significant advances in maximum satisfiability (MaxSAT) [4] solvers have made MaxSAT a truly viable approach to efficiently finding provably optimal solutions to various types of real-world combinatorial optimization problem instances. Motivated by this and the fact that often real-world problems come with multiple conflicting objectives to optimize [14, Chapter 1], the challenge of lifting the success of MaxSAT solving to multi-objective combinatorial optimization, i.e., multi-objective MaxSAT (MO-MaxSAT), has received increasing attention [42, 44, 10, 11, 18, 25, 29, 26, 24].

We describe SCUTTLE version 1.0, a system for multi-objective combinatorial optimization. SCUTTLE offers implementations of a range of algorithmic approaches capturing different notions of sets of “optimal” solutions in the multi-objective setting, as well as preprocessing, optimality certification (proof logging), and various search space parameter options. In terms of flavors of multi-objective optimization, SCUTTLE supports both the notion of Pareto optimization [14, Chapter 2] (sometimes referred to as Pareto efficiency), and



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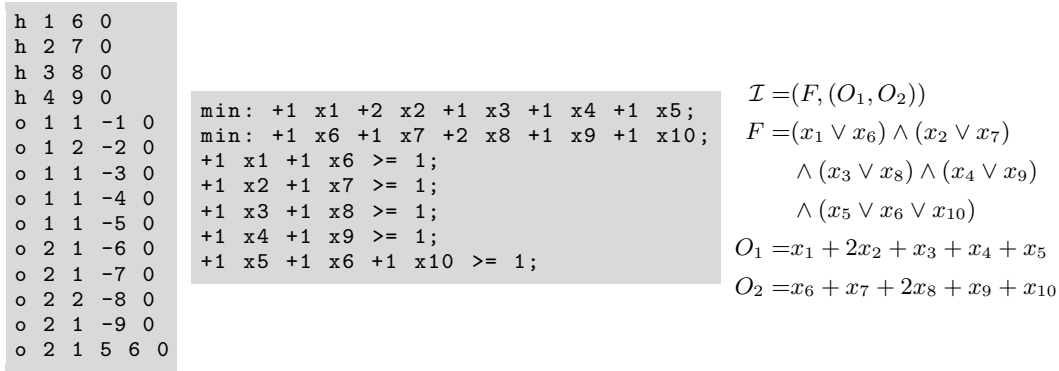
lexicographic max-ordering optimization (or leximax optimization in short) [14, Chapter 5]. The former refers to the enumeration of one (or all) representative solution(s) to each so-called non-dominated point in the solution space and is arguably perhaps the most central optimality notion in multi-objective optimization. The latter refers to a more restricted enumeration of specific Pareto-optimal solutions exhibiting in a sense minimal trade-offs among objective values across the objectives. Specifically, for a multi-objective MaxSAT instance $(F, (O_1, \dots, O_p))$ consisting of constraints represented as a propositional formula F in conjunctive normal form (CNF) and a set of p linear objective functions over Boolean variables, a solution α to F is Pareto-optimal [14, Chapter 2] if there is no solution β such that $O_i(\beta) \leq O_i(\alpha)$ for all $i = 1, \dots, p$ with $O_i(\beta) < O_i(\alpha)$ for at least one i , i.e., no other solution can be better in one objective without being worse in another. A non-dominated point is the tuple of objective values of a Pareto-optimal solution and the non-dominated set, the set of all non-dominated points of an instance. On the other hand, a solution α is leximax-optimal if there is no other solution for which the list of objective values sorted in decreasing order is lexicographically smaller than the sorted list of objective values of α . Thereby the definition of leximax optimality aims for a kind of “fair” balance between the objectives.

In terms of algorithms, SCUTTLE offers from-scratch implementations of state-of-the-art representative approaches to MO-MaxSAT, including P -minimal [42, 34, 30], multi-objective implicit hitting set search combining SAT and integer programming [28], lower-bounding search [11], and the bi-objective algorithm BIOPTSAT [29], as well as different instantiations of SAT-based leximax optimization [10]. Additionally, SCUTTLE also provides an implementation of MIPPD [43], an integer programming-based approach instantiated for MO-MaxSAT for the first time. We provide empirical data to support the claim that SCUTTLE offers state-of-the-art implementations of the various MO-MaxSAT algorithms. In terms of input formats, as we describe, SCUTTLE accepts both a natural extension of the WCNF DIMACS clausal format, with support for multiple objectives, as well as constraints expressed in the pseudo-Boolean level OPB format. To handle pseudo-Boolean constraints, SCUTTLE automatically translates them into clausal constraints, allowing the use of the offered algorithms to solve multi-objective pseudo-Boolean optimization instances. Certification (proof logging) in the VERIPB 3 format [17, 9] is currently provided for a selection of the algorithms as well as for the PB-to-clausal translation, allowing for verifying that the enumerated solutions are exactly the sought-after optimal solutions [24]. Finally, SCUTTLE offers tightly-coupled integration of both liftings of SAT preprocessing techniques [25] and the recent so-called core boosting preprocessing/reformulation approach [26] for MO-MaxSAT. The SCUTTLE system is implemented in Rust and is available in open source at <https://bitbucket.org/coreo-group/scuttle>.

This description focuses on the main intended use-case of SCUTTLE as a standalone executable. Additionally, SCUTTLE can also be used via a prototype Rust API; more details on how to use the API are included in the solver repository.

2 Input Instances and File Formats

Internally SCUTTLE works on instances consisting of a CNF formula F describing the solution space and a tuple of linear objective functions $(O_1, \dots, O_p)$ over Boolean variables in F . Figure 1 (right) shows an example instance. As input formats, SCUTTLE supports both MCNF, a custom file format extending the WCNF format introduced for the MaxSAT Evaluation 2022 [6] standard to single-objective MaxSAT solvers, and an extension of the pseudo-Boolean OPB file format [41] that allows for multiple objective lines and expressing pseudo-Boolean constraints, which are internally translated to CNF.



■ **Figure 1** Left: An example MCNF file representing an instance $\mathcal{I}$. Middle: A multi-objective OPB file depicting the instance obtained after the blocking literal transformation on $\mathcal{I}$. Right: The representation of $\mathcal{I}$ that SCUTTLE uses internally.

The MCNF Format. An example of an MCNF file is shown in Figure 1 (left), corresponding to the instance in Figure 1 (right). Similarly to single-objective weighted partial MaxSAT, in this format each clause is either *hard* (i.e., must always be satisfied), or *soft* (incurring a cost when not satisfied). In the multi-objective setting, each soft clause needs to specify both the objective it belongs to and the cost of falsifying the clause. In the MCNF file format, hard clauses are specified in the same way as in the WCNF file format. A hard clause is a line that starts with the tag `h`, followed by space-separated non-zero integers specifying the literals of the clause (where variables are indexed starting from 1, and negative numbers represent a negated variable), and terminated by 0. Soft clause lines extend the soft clause format in WCNF in that they are prefixed by the character `o` followed by a positive integer specifying the index of the objective the soft clause belongs to. Everything after the objective index is identical to a soft clause in WCNF, i.e., a positive integer specifying the cost of not satisfying the clause followed by the clause described in the same format as hard clauses.

When processing MCNF input, SCUTTLE applies the well-known blocking literal transformation [4] to soft clauses. A unit soft clause (ℓ) with weight w is converted to the term $w \cdot \neg \ell$ in the respective objective. A non-unit soft clause C of weight w is augmented with a fresh variable x_C to form the hard clause $(C \vee x_C)$ and the term $w \cdot x_C$ in the objective. For example, consider the last soft clause in Figure 1 (left) which is extended with the fresh variable x_{10} included as a term in O_2 in the instance in Figure 1 (right)

The OPB Format Extended to MO. SCUTTLE also supports multi-objective pseudo-Boolean optimization instances expressed in a multi-objective extension of the OPB format [41] also used as the input format in some of the other multi-objective MaxSAT solvers [10, 11]. Concretely, SCUTTLE supports OPB files with variable names of form `x<idx>` where `<idx>` is the index of the variable. Objectives – either minimization (`min:`) or maximization (`max:`), which is converted to minimization by negating the objective – and constraints are allowed to contain negated variables, written as `~x<idx>`. An example of a multi-objective OPB file is shown in Figure 1 (middle).

Beyond clauses, SCUTTLE supports arbitrary pseudo-Boolean constraints. These are converted internally to clauses using RUSTSAT [23]. RUSTSAT detects PB constraints that can be expressed as clauses also in cases where the right-hand side is not ≥ 1 , such as in `-1 x1 -1 x2 >= -1`, which is equivalent to $(\neg x_1 \vee \neg x_2)$, and encodes ones that do not correspond

■ **Table 1** Algorithms implemented in SCUTTLE and the tasks the individual algorithms support. The “Enumeration” column refers to support for enumerating either all optimal solutions or all ParetoMCSes. “Certificates” refers to support for generating a certificate of correctness in the VERIPB format alongside solving.

Algorithm	# Objectives	Optimality notion	Enumeration	Certificates
p-minimal [42]	any	Pareto	yes	yes
bioptsat [29]	2	Pareto	yes	yes
lower-bounding [11]	any	Pareto	yes	yes
pareto-ihs [28]	any	Pareto	no	no
mip-pd [43]	any	Pareto	no	no
leximax-sat-unsat [10]	any	Leximax	no	no
leximax-msu3 [10]	any	Leximax	no	no

to clauses with the (generalized) totalizer encoding [5, 32]. With this pseudo-Boolean to CNF translation, SCUTTLE has been recently shown to be competitive with, and in some cases even outperform, multi-objective pseudo-Boolean optimizers that rely on native pseudo-Boolean reasoning [27].

3 Algorithmics

We shortly overview the algorithms and preprocessing techniques implemented in SCUTTLE.

3.1 Solving Algorithms

SCUTTLE implements a collection of algorithms for different multi-objective optimization tasks. The algorithm to use is selected via the command line interface of SCUTTLE; see Section 5. Table 1 gives an overview of the offered algorithms and the multi-objective optimization tasks the algorithms support. SCUTTLE also integrates its additional features, such as solving pseudo-Boolean input instances via translation and preprocessing, to each reimplementations. Further, **p-minimal**, **bioptsat** and **lower-bounding** can produce certificates (see Section 6) and support enumerating either all Pareto-optimal solutions or all so-called ParetoMCSes [44].¹

For all algorithms that iteratively employ a SAT solver as an oracle (i.e., all except **mip-pd**), SCUTTLE currently uses CaDiCaL v2.2.1 [8].² PB constraints over the objectives are encoded to CNF via the (generalized) totalizer encoding [5, 32] as implemented in RUSTSAT [23]. Additionally, the encoding structure is incrementally reused when changing bounds [37].

P-minimal. SCUTTLE provides a reimplementations of the solution-improving **p-minimal** algorithm [42, 34] based on enumeration of so-called *P*-minimal models. (The approach has been independently also referred to as the guided-improvement algorithm [30].) **p-minimal**

¹ In short, in our terminology, a ParetoMCS is a set of objective literals for which it holds that a solution that assigns precisely these literals to 1 is Pareto-optimal. Viewing the assignment of an objective literal to 1 as removing some constraints, ParetoMCSes represent minimal sets of constraints whose removal from the instance leaves the remainder satisfiable. Each ParetoMCS corresponds to a non-dominated point; a non-dominated point may correspond to several ParetoMCSes.

² SCUTTLE uses CaDiCaL via its extended IPASIR interface and the proof tracer interface for proof logging. No custom modifications to CaDiCaL are necessary.

incrementally finds solutions and adds exclusion constraints to the SAT oracle to block these solutions, and any solutions dominated by them. Additionally, temporary constraints (realized via the SAT solver’s assumption interface) are used to heuristically guide the search. Without enumeration, the exclusion constraints are directly added to the SAT oracle. In order to facilitate enumeration, the exclusion constraints are first enforced via reversible assumptions, and subsequently made permanent only after enumeration is completed.

BiOptSat. SCUTTLE includes a reimplementation of the SAT-UNSAT variant – using solution-improving search for both objectives – of the `bioptsat` [29] algorithm. `bioptsat` supports bi-objective optimization following the lexicographic method. First, one objective is minimized. Then, fixing the value of the first-minimized objective to its optimal value, the other objective is minimized. By doing so, a non-dominated point is found and `bioptsat` proceeds by adding a constraint requiring the second objective to be better than the just-found conditional optimum, and iterating to find the next point.

Lower Bounding. Selectable as `lower-bounding`, SCUTTLE includes a reimplementation of the lower-bounding search algorithm from [11]. The `lower-bounding` algorithm executes the `p-minimal` algorithm within heuristically set upper bounds on the objectives. The bounds are incrementally increased until the full search space has been explored. In addition to being a from-scratch reimplementation of `p-minimal`, the SCUTTLE implementation differs from the original in the SAT oracle employed, the pseudo-Boolean encoding used for objective constraints, and the ability to produce certificates.

ParetoIHS. SCUTTLE includes the first implementation of the recent `pareto-ihs` [28] algorithm, extending the implicit hitting set approach to MO-MaxSAT. `pareto-ihs` performs single-objective implicit hitting set search on a linear combination of the objectives. Whenever an optimal solution is found, a so-called PD cut is enforced in the hitting set solver to block it and all solutions it dominates. As the hitting set solver, SCUTTLE supports the fully open-source HiGHS [19] mixed-integer programming (MIP) solver and Gurobi as a potentially more performant (but commercial) option. The encoding of PD cuts varies slightly depending on the hitting set solver used: the reification variables required are implemented with either the indicator constraint API (in Gurobi), or the big- M method (in HiGHS).

MipPd. SCUTTLE provides (to the best of our knowledge) the first implementation of the `mip-pd` algorithm described in [43] applied to MO-MaxSAT. `mip-pd` is the only implemented algorithm that does not make use of a SAT oracle. `mip-pd` optimizes a linear combination of the objectives by employing a MIP solver while iteratively blocking optimal solutions with Pareto dominance cuts. As the underlying MIP solver, HiGHS [19] and Gurobi can be used.

Leximax. SCUTTLE version 1.0 also includes from-scratch reimplementations of two leximax optimization algorithms from [10]. The first algorithm, `leximax-sat-unsat`, follows the solution-improving paradigm where a sequence of iteratively improving (in the leximax sense) solutions are found, while the second algorithm, `leximax-msu3`, finds a leximax optimum with iterative core-guided search based on the MSU3 MaxSAT algorithm [36]. The SCUTTLE implementation of these algorithms differs from the original in the SAT oracle used and the pseudo-Boolean encodings employed.

3.2 Preprocessing

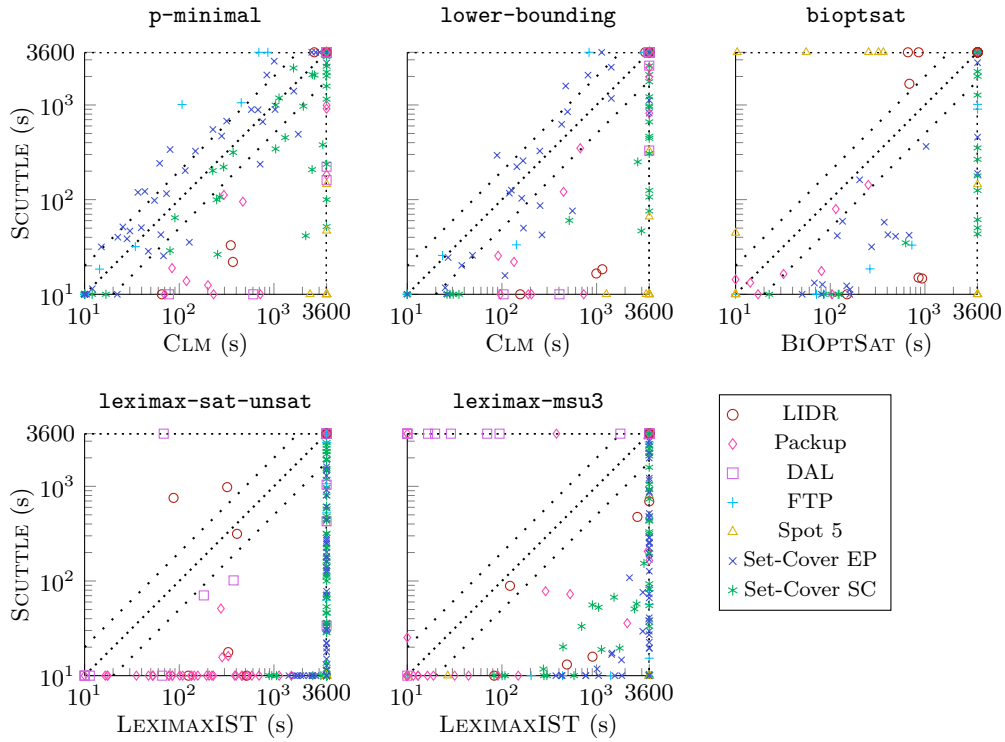
SCUTTLE offers tightly-coupled preprocessing techniques in conjunction with the implemented algorithms in the form of core boosting and liftings of SAT preprocessing techniques.

Core Boosting. Core boosting [26] is an MO-MaxSAT preprocessing technique that shrinks the search space by reformulating each individual objective with the help of a single-objective core-guided MaxSAT algorithm. It has been found to speed-up solution-improving style solving algorithms in particular [26]. In SCUTTLE, core boosting is implemented for all algorithms except for `mip-pd` and turned on by default for all except for `pareto-ihs`. (In contrast to the other algorithms, core boosting has not been found to speed up `pareto-ihs` [28].) Concretely, SCUTTLE performs core boosting by executing its own implementation of the OLL [38] single-objective MaxSAT algorithm with stratification [2] individually for each objective. Towards finding a minimum-cost solution for a single-objective MaxSAT instance, the OLL algorithm iteratively relaxes inconsistencies (unsatisfiable cores) of the instance and reformulates the objective to obtain a smaller value range and higher constant term. The instance reformulation is implemented using the totalizer [5] encoding. An MO-MaxSAT solver of choice is then executed on the reformulated instance. Core boosting is tightly integrated with the solving algorithms. In more detail, firstly, the SAT oracle used during core boosting is reused for solving, preserving lemmas and simplifications learned during core boosting. Secondly, for algorithms employing pseudo-Boolean constraint encodings over the objectives, the totalizer structures built during OLL are reused as parts of the (generalized) totalizer encodings employed in the solving algorithm. Lastly, for `pareto-ihs`, several modes of adding information about the instance reformulation built by core boosting into the hitting set solver can be selected.

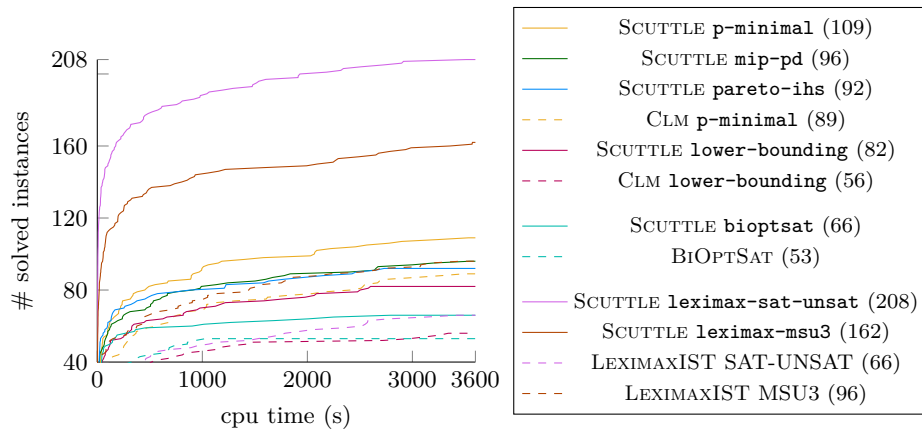
Lifted SAT Preprocessing Techniques. The MaxSAT preprocessor MAXPRE (version 2) [33] has been recently extended with support for multi-objective MaxSAT [25]. MAXPRE implements preprocessing techniques lifted from SAT (e.g., bounded variable elimination [13] and blocked clause elimination [31]) as well as MaxSAT-specific techniques such as subsumed label elimination [7]. SCUTTLE is compiled with multi-objective MAXPRE support by specifying `--features maxpre` at compilation time. With MAXPRE preprocessing enabled, the input instance is automatically processed by MAXPRE and the solutions found to the preprocessed instance reconstructed before reporting the solutions to the user.

4 Performance of Scuttle Compared to Earlier Implementations

As a short overview of the performance of the solving algorithms as implemented in SCUTTLE, Figure 2 shows a pairwise comparison between the algorithms implemented in SCUTTLE (with their default settings) and previous implementations of the same algorithms. Complementing the pairwise comparisons, Figure 3 shows the number of solved instances over time for each of the algorithm implementations. The experiments were run with a 1-hour time and 32-GB memory limit on machines with Intel Xeon Gold 6248 CPUs and 377 GB of RAM. As the instance set, we used the 320 instances under 2–7 objective (120 of which have two objectives) used most recently for evaluating the `pareto-ihs` algorithm [28]. In short, the reimplementations that SCUTTLE provides tend to outperform the earlier counterparts in all cases.



■ **Figure 2** Pairwise comparisons of algorithms implemented in SCUTTLE with previous implementations of the same algorithms in terms of solving time. The previous implementations are CLM [11], BiOPTSAT [29], and LEXIMAXIST [10]. The legend refers to benchmark domains as described in [28].



■ **Figure 3** Number of solved instances over time of all algorithms implemented in SCUTTLE and previously available implementations.

5 Command Line Options

Executing SCUTTLE with `scuttle <algorithm> <instance>` will run the selected algorithm with reasonable default options. Here we cover a selection of additional command line options SCUTTLE exposes for controlling algorithm execution. A full list of options for each algorithm (including algorithm-specific options) is available via `scuttle <algorithm> --help`.

Enumeration options. By default, SCUTTLE does not perform enumeration of solutions at each non-dominated or leximax-optimal point. With the option `--enumeration` enumeration of either all Pareto-optimal solutions (`--enumeration=solutions`) or ParetoMCSes (`--enumeration=pareto-mcs`) can be enabled for the `p-minimal`, `lower-bounding`, and `bioplsat` algorithms.

Limiting search. SCUTTLE provides options for limiting search in various ways, causing the solver to terminate once a limit is reached and therefore making the search incomplete. This can be useful in applications where available computing resources are insufficient for computing the entire non-dominated set, while e.g. a subset of k non-dominated points can still be of interest (`--non-dominated-point-limit=k`). More options for limiting search are described in the “Solver limits” section of the help output. In addition to limits set via command line options, SCUTTLE can be terminated via the POSIX `SIGTERM` signal, which allows for enforcing resource limits, e.g., via the `coreutils timeout` command, enabling anytime usage of the solver.

Preprocessing options. Core boosting and MAXPRE-based preprocessing are controlled via the Boolean `--core-boosting` and `--maxpre-preprocessing` flags, respectively, which can be set to either `true` or `false`. For core boosting, core minimization and exhaustion can additionally be enabled via the `--oll-core-minimization` or `--oll-core-exhaustion` options. For MAXPRE, the exact techniques used can be specified via `--maxpre-techniques`, with the default being `[[uvsrgc]VRTG]` which includes unit propagation, bounded variable elimination [13], subsumption elimination, self-subsuming resolution [39, 13], group subsumed label elimination [7], binary core removal [16, 33], TrimMaxSAT [40], failed literal elimination [45, 15, 35], and intrinsic at-most-one constraint extraction [20, 21].

ParetoIHS-specific options. Specific options only apply to `pareto-ihs`. The MIP solver is selected via the `--hitting-set-solver` command line option. The algorithm itself has two configuration parameters: the strategy for choosing scalarization constants can be selected via the `--scalarization-constants` option, and `--precompute-lexicographic` controls how many lexicographic optima are precomputed before the main algorithm. Related to single-objective IHS refinements, the `--seeding` flag controls constraint seeding [12] into the hitting set solver, `--ihs-core-extraction` controls the strategy in which cores are extracted each iteration, and `--reduced-cost-fixing` controls reduced cost fixing [3]. Lastly, `--ihs-cb-treatment` controls the integration of core boosting into `pareto-ihs`.

Output options. The `--verbose (-v)` option increases logging verbosity during search and can be repeated to increase verbosity further. With the `--log-non-dominated` option, logging of non-dominated points as they are found can be enabled. Similar options are available for candidate solutions encountered during search and optimal solutions. With the `--print-solutions` option, the binary assignment of all optimal solutions found is printed as a `v` line in the format used in the MaxSAT evaluation [6]. All other options related to solver output are described in the “Output options” section of the help output.

6 Certificates

SCUTTLE supports generating a machine-checkable certificate (proof log) in the VERIPB 3 format [17, 9] as a witness for the facts that all discovered solutions are correct solutions, that all discovered solutions that are not dominated by another discovered solution are

Pareto-optimal, and that at termination, for each non-dominated point at least one solution has been discovered [24]. Support for generating such certificates is currently implemented for `p-minimal`, `bioplsat`, and `lower-bounding`. To produce a certificate, SCUTTLE is invoked with an additional parameter `scuttle <algorithm> <instance> [proof]` where `[proof]` specifies the path to write the VERIPB proof log to.

While the VERIPB proof system can be used to certify that at least one solution per non-dominated point was enumerated, the VERIPB checker does not currently support parsing multi-objective input files. To circumvent this limitation and check the proofs generated by SCUTTLE, the VERIPB checker currently needs to be supplied with an input file that contains only the constraints (after the blocking literal transformation) of the input instance. The objectives are baked into the partial order that is loaded at the beginning of the proof itself. For OPB input files, the required constraint-only file is obtained by simply removing all objective lines (starting with `min:`) from the instance file. For generating a similar input file when working with MCNF instances, SCUTTLE is supplied with an additional input parameter. SCUTTLE will then output an OPB instance file containing all constraints after the blocking literal transformation. For this use-case, SCUTTLE is invoked as `scuttle <algorithm> <instance> [proof] [opb-constr]`, followed by the VERIPB checker as `veripb <opb-constr> <proof>`.

For OPB input files with non-clausal PB constraints, the encoding of pseudo-Boolean constraints to clauses that SCUTTLE generates internally is also certified in the generated proof following [27]. This allows for end-to-end verification from the multi-objective OPB input file to the computed result.

7 Conclusions

We presented SCUTTLE, a system for multi-objective combinatorial optimization via MO-MaxSAT. SCUTTLE supports both propositional and pseudo-Boolean constraint level input, offers state-of-the-art implementations of a range of MO-MaxSAT solving algorithms for Pareto and lexicmax optimization with tightly integrated preprocessing, as well correctness certification (proof logging) for selected algorithms. Enabling VERIPB certificates for `pareto-ihs` and the lexicmax optimization algorithms – building on recent advances in certifying IHS [22] and the VERIPB proof system [1] – as well as stable C and Python APIs remain as future work.

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