

# Framework, Approach and System of Intelligent Fault Tree Analysis for Nuclear Safety Assessment

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

By

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July, 2013

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## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literatures used are indicated in the thesis.

Sydney, 1 July 2013

Production Note:  
Signature removed prior to publication.

Julwan Hendry PURBA

## DEDICATION

*To my amazing wife, Rita, for sharing the pain, sorrow and depression during the hard time and above all for her unconditional love, patience and encouragement.*

*To my wonderful sons, Carlo & Nathan, for being the nicest friends through this challenging and exciting journey.*

“My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:2.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the great pleasures of writing this thesis is acknowledging the efforts of many peoples who were involved in and crucial to the process of my PhD study.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor, Prof. Jie Lu, for accepting me as one of her PhD students and guiding me to complete my study. Thank you for your continuous accurate critical comments and suggestions, patience, and encouragement, which have influenced my critical thinking and strengthened this study significantly. Your strict academic attitude, generous personality and conscientious working style have shaped me into a good researcher and will be of great benefit to me in my future research work and life. I also would like to address my sincere thanks to my co-supervisor, Prof. Guangquan Zhang for his knowledgeable suggestions and invaluable advice, which have greatly improved the quality of my research. I also would like to address my sincere thanks to my external-supervisor, the late Prof. Da Ruan, for his great ideas and invaluable comments to strengthen my research in the first half of my study. To me, you are not only an outstanding researcher and a great supervisor, but also a warm-hearted friend. I am really honoured to have had you as one of my PhD supervisors. Rest in peace Prof.

I also wish to express my appreciation to all my friends and the members of the Decision Systems & e-Service Intelligence (DeSI) Lab for their help, participation and invaluable comments in every presentation I made during my study. Friendships and encouragements that we have developed during this journey will be good memories in my future research life. I wish you all the very best in your future research works and life.

I also appreciate the travel funding that I have received from the FEIT and the UTS Vice-Chancellor conference fund for attending an international conference.



I also would like to thank Barbara Munday and Sue Felix from the Centre for Quantum Computation & Intelligent Systems (QCIS) for being proofreaders of my published papers and thesis. I sincerely appreciate the efforts you have given to proofread the papers and the thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank AusAID for funding and providing support during my PhD study. I am very grateful to have been able to study and have experiences in a very beautiful country like Australia. This dream would not have come true without the support from AusAID.

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# ABSTRACT

Probabilistic safety assessment by fault tree analysis has been considered as an important tool to evaluate safety systems of nuclear power plants in the last two decades. However, since the estimation of failure probabilities of rare events with high consequences is the focus of this assessment, it is often very difficult to obtain component failure rates, which are specific to the nuclear power plant under evaluation. The motivation of this study is how to obtain basic event failure rates when basic events do not have historical failure data and expert subjective justifications, which are expressed in qualitative failure possibilities, are the only means to evaluate basic event failures.

This thesis describes a new intelligent hybrid fault tree analysis framework to overcome the weaknesses of conventional fault tree analysis, qualitative failure possibilities and their corresponding mathematical representations to articulate nuclear event failure likelihoods, an area defuzzification technique to decode the membership functions of fuzzy sets representing nuclear event failure possibilities into nuclear event reliability scores, and a fuzzy reliability approach to generate nuclear event quantitative fuzzy failure rates from the corresponding qualitative failure possibilities subjectively evaluated by experts. Seven qualitative linguistic terms have been defined to represent nuclear event failure possibilities, i.e. *very low*, *low*, *reasonably low*, *moderate*, *reasonably high*, *high*, and *very high* and the corresponding mathematical forms are represented by triangular fuzzy numbers, which are defined in the  $[0, 1]$  universe of discourse based on nuclear event failure data documented in literatures using inductive reasoning. Finally, an intelligent software system called InFaTAS-NuSA, which has been developed to realize the new intelligence hybrid fault tree analysis framework to overcome the limitations of the existing fault tree analysis software systems by accepting both quantitative failure probabilities and qualitative failure possibilities, is also described in this thesis.

The results of the InFaTAS-NuSA evaluation using a real world application confirm that InFaTAS-NuSA has yielded similar outputs as the outputs generated by a

well-known fault tree analysis software system, i.e. SAPHIRE, and therefore it can overcome the limitation of the existing fault tree analysis software system, which can accept only quantitative failure probabilities. The experiment results also show that the fuzzy reliability approach seems to be a sound alternative for conventional reliability approach to deal with basic events which do not have historical failure data and expert subjective opinions are the only means to obtain their failure information.