COMP10003

Media Computation

Lecture 34 – Examination Technique

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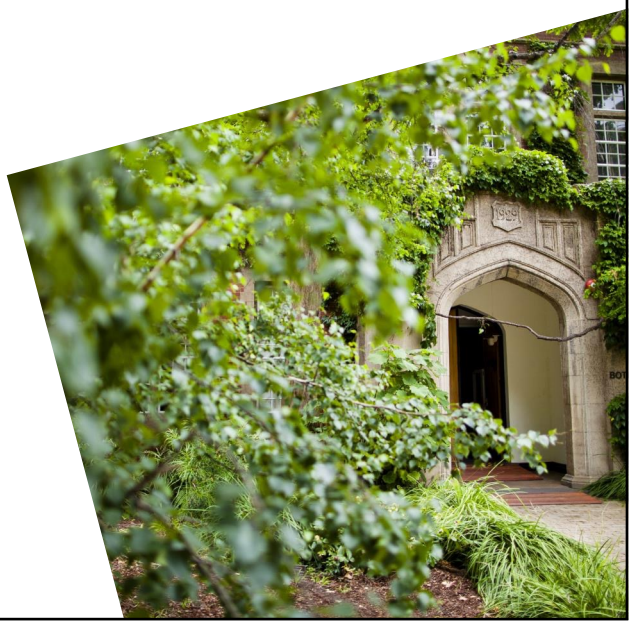

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Assessments

Mid-semester test – 15%

Workshop Assignment – 10%

Project Part 1 – 10%

Project Part 2 – 10%

Project Part 3 – 10%

Final Exam – 45%

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Examination

45% of course marks

- Will be in three main parts
- Part A: complete all questions
  15 multiple choice questions, 2 points per question
- Part B: complete all questions
  13 programming questions, 3 points per question
  You will be asked to write JavaScript pseudocode
- Part C: complete all questions
  6 short essay questions, 5 points per question

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Examination

With the programming parts:

- We will be (very) tolerant of minor syntax (punctuation) errors
- You are doing work in an semi-artificial context, so your memory won't be perfect
- Focus on:
  - Key decisions (e.g. comparisons)
  - Loops or if/else blocks
  - Making your meaning clear
- Don't stress over, for example, if a function is called "max" or "maximum" – we'll get the idea!

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Examination

Two hours long for the exam itself

Plus fifteen minutes reading time

This year the examination is online

Do bear in mind compliance with the online examination requirements

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Grades

H1 - First class Honours - 80% +

H2A – Second class Honours, Div. A – 75-79%

H2B – Second class Honours, Div. A – 70-74%

H3 – Third class Honours, Div. A – 65-69%

Pass – 50-64%

Fail – <= 49%

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Common Mistakes in Past Years

Many answers were good, but some repeated issues with examination technique were:

- Doing a lot on one question, little on another
- Very brief answers even when many marks
- Answering something that the question didn't ask

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Prose (Long) Answers in Exams

No answer = no marks

One fact = some marks, likely < 40%)

Multiple facts, bullet points, no logical connections, little or no concepts or principles ≈ basic pass (40% to 65%)

Multiple facts, written in prose, some connection between them; basic presence of principles and theories (mentioned, marginally applied) = fair pass (65% to 75%) ; higher marks in particular for better use of theories…

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Prose (Long) Answers in Exams

Many facts, prose, strong connections between facts in the answer; some further reading; clear application of theoretical principles = good to very good pass (75% to 85%) (stronger marks implies better logic, use of theory and clarity of argument)

Many facts, prose, strong connections between facts; connections drawn with relevant material close to but not in the question; good use of further reading precise application of principles (clear consideration of their limits and application of more than one) = excellent pass (85% plus)

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Wording in Questions

"Compare" – ensure that you take two contrasting ideas and identify what is *similar* and what is *different*

"Compare and contrast" – see the same, but more emphasis on *differences*

"Explain" – give an account of *why* and *how* things work, not just giving a "punchline"

"Explain in detail" – the above with more detail; marks will guide you to the depth of detail

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Wording in Questions

"With an example" – obvious, but really, very, very, very often overlooked

"Justify" – ensure to underpin your answer with a clear account that explains why it is not just a *good* method but ideally the *best*

…very often justify answers are very brief
(e.g. "because while is the best method for doing loops")

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Common Mistakes

One common mistake is writing too little, particularly for *explain* questions.

Here is a simple example:

Q: "Explain the possible values of a Boolean variable"

A: "True and false"

Is that actually an explanation?

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Common Mistakes

Similarly:

- Q: “Explain the types of variable you would choose..”
- A: “I would use a string.”

This isn’t an explanation – it’s simply telling (me) the answer

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What is an Explanation

A detailed account of *how* and *why* something is, not just *what* it is

So, for example, there are reasons you can give for *why* you make a recommendation

These are worth 30%+ of the marks for most questions

There were many cases where this was overlooked – so please don’t forget this!

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Example

If choosing between boolean and strings:

- Give the differences between them
- Describe the relevance *to the example/problem*
- Make a recommendation
- Explain why it is a better fit

And finally

- Just saying "I'd use strings because they are better" isn't an explanation!

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Time Management

Time management in an exam is something you've probably been told a lot about

Symptoms of it being wrong:

- You spend a long time on one part, feel rushed in another
- You get to the end of a question and spot you've not answered it
- You find it hard to fit the answer in (too long/too short)

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Time Management

PLAN! Don't just dive in

- Work out how long you should spend on each part
- Identify key points to raise
- Perhaps think of an example (across a whole qn)

This planning will take time

- It is not just "reading" the paper

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Time Management

Spend at least 10% of the time planning

- So e.g. 12 minutes for a 2hr paper

Spend at least 10% on finishing the paper

- Same numbers

Leaving 80% of the total time for the writing

It's better to do this than just do as much as you can

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Plan Actions

Write a time beside each part
- Later, keep an eye on the time

Jot down key ideas
- on another piece of paper or beside the question

Prioritise
- If something looks harder, give it more time, but trim time elsewhere

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Exercise

Let's take the following question:
- "Compare and contrast *while* and *if* statements, explaining in detail the differences between the two".

If this was worth 11% of the exam grade and you had two hours to complete the exam

How long should you spend on it?

How much can you write in that time?

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Practice Exercise

An exercise with exams is to ensure you learn your own pace and time

Very often we just “try out” a mock test with no time limit or other constraints

This isn’t what we do in an examination

It’s even worthwhile pushing your time *down* so that it is worse when rehearsing than in the examination – why?

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Exam Tips

Learn to set your own pace for doing examination questions

Budget your time accordingly

Rehearse the exam situation – not just the ideas in open-ended times

Underline each key thing the question tells you to do (and tick it off when you’ve done it)

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Thank you

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