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A couple of notes on the exam

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The ingredients

- We’re going to have
  - 10 true/false questions
  - A series of short-answer explanations of concepts and key points
    - May include pseudocode
    - May include small amounts of mental arithmetic
  - One or two paper-programming tasks that give more points and take more time

True/false questions

- You're only *required* to state one or the other
- You are also at liberty to add a quick sentence or two to explain your answer

- If the answer is correct, I won't consider the explanation
- If the answer is incorrect but explained, it earns 0 points
- If the answer is incorrect and without reasoning, it earns a negative score

Why is it like this?

- This is because I don’t care for random guesswork
  - The negative score makes random, unjustified guesses average to 0/10 instead of 5/10
- I don’t want to create a silly game about whether or not you should dare to answer when in doubt
  - Just add a short explanation, and I’ll see that you’re not just guessing blindly

Short-answer questions

- Try to keep it to a paragraph of a few sentences at most, we're not looking for extended essays
  - Get to the point
- State your assumptions
  - Using natural language, it is almost impossible to make questions that can only be interpreted in one and only one way
  - If you can think of two ways to answer a question, write down *your* way and answer according to that

Policy on trick questions

- I hate trick questions, and never make them on purpose
  - Frankly, I don't understand the point
  - Due to the ambiguity thing, it is regrettably still possible that you can find a way to make questions *look* like they hide some subtle traps
- If a question looks like it has a super-obvious answer, that's usually the case
  - It just means that you learned the curriculum
- The exam is not an IQ test
  - 4 hours in a gymnasium is no context for solving complicated problems

The ideal I aim for

- My ideal exam question is
  - Easy to answer if you've studied the curriculum
  - Impossible to answer if you haven't
- Therefore, I tend to ask for simple applications of quite specific terms from the literature
  - Simple, to save effort when you know what they mean
  - Specific, to avoid lengthy essays that try to circle in the concept by guesswork and intuition
- I don't always manage this perfectly, but lord knows I try
  - Please help me by simply providing some documentation that you have, in fact, read and understood the syllabus

Programming tasks

- You'll only have a text box
  - No compilation and test runs
  - That's on purpose
  - I'd hate for anyone to spend 30 minutes on some stupid debugging detail in a context with this kind of time-pressure
- I don't care if you make simple syntax errors, omit some arguments, forget a semi-colon, or whatever
  - The exercise is about verifying that you know about all the parts that need to go into a statement
  - As long as they're all present, I trust that you can figure out the exact notation given a proper terminal and a less stressful context
  - In a bind, you can just write pseudo-code and get most of the points as long as it makes sense
- There will be a small API summary attached to the exam set
  - I don't expect you to memorize documentation, in the real world we have manuals and reference volumes

Meta-tasks at the end

- In the event that you want to add some footnotes, make a drawing on paper, *etc.* there will be two un-scored tasks at the end of the exam set
  - One will let you add any arbitrary text you want in free format
  - One will let you express yourself on a piece of paper that you submit to the invigilators, so that they scan it and attach it to your submission afterwards
- Our exam-tool is a little bit restrictive, I don't want it to stop you from using diagrams, handwriting, or anything else you would like to submit
  - In principle, you can answer the whole damn thing as one giant, handwritten paper attachment if you please, I'll read everything you submit
  - Bring a pen

Don’t Panic

- You’ll probably do just fine