MATH 129 SECT 23
Spring 2010 Homework and Exam Guide

Standard for written homework and exam problems.

1. **Partial credit will be given only for partially correct solutions.** That is, you must make substantial progress toward a correct answer to receive credit. Writing lots of busy work in the hope of getting points for “effort” is not very effective.

2. **Show your work.** To receive full credit, you need to explain your answer (i.e., show the necessary work), not just state the answer.

3. **Use what you know.** If a problem does not ask you to use a specific method or technique, you can use whatever mathematical method you think is easiest (but see “write-up hints” below).

4. **Write clearly and legibly.** If I cannot decipher what you write, I can neither assess whether you understand the material nor help you correct your errors.

Write-up hints.

1. **Say what you are doing.** Unlike high school algebra or trigonometry, there are often many ways to solve a problem. If you first write “u-substitution” then proceed to carry out the substitution, it will be much easier to follow your answer.

2. **Present your steps in logical order.** If your write-up is messy and/or requires “leaps of faith,” it will (i) deprive yourself of the opportunity to learn to solve a problem logically, and (ii) confuse the instructor, with the possible consequence of missing out on partial credit.

3. **BUT GET TO THE POINT.** You don’t need to show all the algebra. Try to figure out the most important steps and write them down.

WebAssign hints.

1. **Notation:** WebAssign uses a “functional” notation, i.e., the value of a function $f$ with argument $x$ is always written as $f(x)$. For example, you should use $\exp(2)$ instead of $e^2$, since WebAssign interprets the latter as “the square of a variable named $e$ (not necessarily Euler’s constant 2.71...!)”. Similarly, use $\sqrt{5}$ instead of $\sqrt{5}$. (Note that $\sqrt{5}$ seems to work better than $5^{1/2}$.)

2. **Parentheses are VERY IMPORTANT:** $x*(x+2)$ is not the same as $x*x+2$. Similarly, use $\cos(x)$ instead of $\cos x$, $\ln(\abs{u})$ instead of $\ln \abs{u}$ (or $\ln \abs{u}$). When in doubt, use as many parentheses as you need to state your answer precisely.

3. **Variables:** Pay attention to the variable being used. Not every problem uses $x$ or $y$!

4. One advantage of WebAssign is that I can see your incorrect answers. E-mail me if you have trouble with your homework – I may be able to help you figure it out.