

Stochastic Finance (FIN 519)

Homework Solutions

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1. HW 1-1 SCFA Exercise 1.1

Solution: Let $T_{i,j}$ denote the expected time to go from level i to j . We are going to compute the answer as

$$T_{25,18} = T_{25,20} + T_{20,19} + T_{19,18}.$$

First, $T_{25,18} = 15$ from (1.15)

$$E(\tau | S_0 = 0) = \frac{B}{q-p} - \frac{A+B}{q-p} \frac{1-(q/p)^B}{1-(q/p)^{A+B}}$$

with $p = 1/3$, $q = 2/3$, $A = \infty$, $B = 3$. We also know $T_{21,20} = 3$ from $B = 1$. Next, $T_{20,19} = 37$ is calculated from

$$T_{20,19} = \frac{1}{10} \cdot 1 + \frac{9}{10}(1 + T_{21,20} + T_{20,19}).$$

Finally $T_{19,18} = 77$ is obtained from

$$T_{20,19} = \frac{1}{3} \cdot 1 + \frac{2}{3}(1 + T_{20,19} + T_{19,18}).$$

Therefore, $T_{25,18} = 15 + 37 + 77 = 129$.

2. HW 1-2 SCFA Exercise 1.3

Solution: Let N_k be the number of visits to the level $k \neq 0$ before returning to 0 for the first time. First, we prove that $P(N_k \geq 1) = 1/(2k)$ for $k \geq 1$. In order for the event, $N_k > 0$, to happen, the first step should be +1, ($X_1 = +1$). If the first step is -1, the random walk has to hit 0 before it reaches $k \geq 1$. Given that the first step is +1, the probability to hit k ($A = k - 1$ more steps up) before hitting 0 ($B = 1$ step down) is given as $1/k$ from Eq. (1.2). Combining the two results together, we have $P(N_k \geq 0) = 1/(2k)$ for $k \geq 1$.

Next, we prove that

$$P(N_k \geq j+1 | N_k \geq j) = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{k-1}{2k}.$$

Imagine that the random walk just hit the level k for the j -th time before hitting 0. If the next step is up, it is guaranteed that it will hit k at least one more time before returning to

0. If the next step is down, we know that the probability to hit k one more time ($A = 1$) before hitting 0 ($B = k - 1$) is $(k - 1)/k$. Adding the two probabilities together, we obtain the result.

Therefore, we can say that, for $j \geq 0$,

$$\begin{aligned} P(N_k > j) &= P(N_k > 0)P(N_k > 1|N_k > 0) \cdots P(N_k > j|N_k > j - 1) \\ &= \frac{1}{2k} \left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{k - 1}{2k} \right)^j = \frac{1}{2k} \left(\frac{2k - 1}{2k} \right)^j. \end{aligned}$$

We can prove the final statement:

$$\begin{aligned} E(N_k) &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} j \cdot P(N_k = j) = \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} P(N_k \geq j) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} P(N_k > j) \\ &= \frac{1}{2k} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \left(\frac{2k - 1}{2k} \right)^j = 1. \end{aligned}$$

3. **HW 2-1** In class, we derived the moments of the standard normal distribution:

$$E(Z^{2n}) = (2n - 1)(2n - 3) \cdots 3 \cdot 1 \quad \text{for } Z \sim N(0, 1).$$

We can derive the same result using the moment generating function. First, derive the moment generating function,

$$M_X(t) = E(\exp(tX)) = \exp\left(\mu t + \frac{1}{2}\sigma^2 t^2\right) \quad \text{for } X \sim N(\mu, \sigma^2).$$

Then, using the Taylor expansion of $M_X(t)$, derive the moment of Z . (After this problem, you can understand **SCFA Exercise 3.4** better. The solution is already provided.)

4. **HW 2-2** Martingale page in ([WIKIPEDIA](#)) gives the following example of Martingale. Prove (or disprove) the statement.

Suppose each amoeba either splits into two amoebas, with probability p , or eventually dies, with probability $q = 1 - p$. Let X_n be the number of amoebas surviving in the n -th generation (in particular $X_n = 0$ if the population has become extinct by that time). Let r be the probability of eventual extinction. (Finding r as a function of p is an instructive exercise. Hint: The probability that the descendants of an amoeba eventually die out is equal to the probability that either of its immediate offspring dies out, given that the original amoeba has split.) Then

$$\{r^{X_n} : n = 1, 2, 3, \dots\}$$

is a martingale with respect to $\{X_n : n = 1, 2, 3, \dots\}$.

See **2017-18 Midterm Exam Problem 1** to derive the extinction probability r as a function of p (and q).