

Grading the projects

Remember that the purpose of the projects are to

1. Get the students to write something coherent in a mathematics course, and
2. Get them to think about deeper mathematical concepts than they are accustomed to.

This semester, there are only going to be two projects given during the course of the semester. Thus, the projects will not play a large role in grading. I think it will be best, therefore, that the grading is “light”. That is, let’s default to giving good grades if a clear effort was made. I recommend the following:

- Start with an assumption that the group has earned an *A*. Then, start taking points off according to the rough rubric given below.
- Below, I break the grading down into two categories: *presentation*, and *content*.

1. Presentation and appearance.

- If the appearance of the report is awful, take off up to one full letter grade. Examples of a poor appearance/presentation include:
 - (a) Project is not stapled.
 - (b) Paper has “danglies” as if it were just ripped out of a notebook.
 - (c) Papers looks like they were put into a blender before being turned in.
 - (d) etc.I’m sure there are a million other possibilities here. The point is: if it does not look professional and care was given, then take some points off.
- If it is clear that what they are turning in was their first attempt, take off a full letter grade. Clear evidence includes: text crossed out, arrows pointing for you to read somewhere else, etc. If they are too lazy to rewrite their solutions, they do not deserve a full grade.

2. Content.

- If they have not tried to answer all the questions/exercises, take off points – lots of points. This is the meat of the assignment, and they need to at least attempt to solve everything. If they can not solve something, they should say where they are stuck (this fact should be pointed out to the students).
- If they do not follow the instructions for the project writeup, take off points with the number of points (or size of deduction) depending on how much they left out. For example “rehash what the project did and then discuss new material” has two instructions: 1) Rehash what we just did, and 2) discuss the new material. Both should be done, and the new material should be put in the context of material given to them.

- Note: Everything above depends upon presentation and making an effort in terms of content. If they can not solve the mathematics being asked, but write about the efforts they made, I *do not* think they should lose more than one full letter grade. There is plenty of time in this class to grade them on mathematical talent. Here, you should be focussing on mathematical *writing*.