

Math 296 (the Linear Algebra parts¹)

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¹I didn't lock in before this (Analysis).

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Lecture 6

Basis

6.1 Algebraic Numbers

Definition 1. Fix $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$. Define $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha] = \text{span}(\alpha^i \mid i \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\})$ monomial powers of α . This is vector space over \mathbb{Q} .

Definition 2. The element $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$ is algebraic provided that there exists a nonzero polynomial $p \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ such that $p(\alpha) = 0$.

Example. $\alpha = \sqrt{2}$ is algebraic with $p(x) = x^2 - 2$.

Example. $i \in \mathbb{C}$ is algebraic with $p(x) = x^2 + 1$.

Example. $\pi \in \mathbb{C}$ is not algebraic.

Definition 3. If $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$ is not algebraic, then α is called transcendental.

Example. $\pi \in \mathbb{C}$ is transcendental.

Lemma 1. Let $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$. Then $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ is finitely generated over \mathbb{Q} if and only if α is algebraic.

Proof. Suppose $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ is finitely generated. Then there exists scalars $\overline{v}_1, \overline{v}_2, \dots, \overline{v}_m \in \mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ such that $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha] = \text{span}(\overline{v}_1, \overline{v}_2, \dots, \overline{v}_m)$. For each $1 \leq i \leq m$ we know $\overline{v}_i \in \mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ so we can write

$$\overline{v}_i = q_{i_0} + q_{i_1}\alpha^1 + \dots + q_{i_{n_i}}\alpha^{n_i}$$

where we can assume $q_{i_{n_i}} \neq 0$. To avoid this hellish notation let's replace

this with

$$\begin{aligned}\overline{v_1} &= \text{mess}_1 & \deg n_1 \\ \overline{v_2} &= \text{mess}_2 & \deg n_2 \\ &\vdots \\ \overline{v_m} &= \text{mess}_m & \deg n_m.\end{aligned}$$

Let $M = \max\{n_1, \dots, n_m\}$. Since $\alpha^{M+1} \in \mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ there exist scalars $d_1, \dots, d_m \in \mathbb{Q}$ such that $\alpha^{M+1} = d_1 \overline{v_1} + \dots + d_m \overline{v_m}$. Then $\alpha^{M+1} = d_1(\text{mess}_1) + \dots + d_m(\text{mess}_m) = r_0 + r_1 \alpha^1 + \dots + r_M \alpha^M$ with $r_i \in \mathbb{Q}$ by expanding all messes and collecting like terms in powers of α . Define $p(x) = x^{M+1} - (r_0 + r_1 x^1 + \dots + r_M x^M)$. We can clear the denominators to get a nonzero polynomial $\tilde{p}(x) \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ such that $\tilde{p}(\alpha) = 0$, so α is algebraic. \square

Note. This is only one direction of this proof, we will prove the other direction next time.

Recall from last time:

Lemma 2. Let $\alpha \in \mathbb{C}$. Then the vector space $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha] := \text{span}_{\mathbb{Q}}(1, \alpha, \alpha^2, \dots)$ is finitely generated over \mathbb{Q} if and only if $\alpha \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$

Proof. Last time we showed the forward direction. We assumed $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$ is finitely generated and we found a nonzero polynomial $\tilde{p} \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ such that $\tilde{p}(\alpha) = 0$. We took a generating family $(\overline{v_1}, \dots, \overline{v_m})$, and for all $1 \leq i \leq m$, there exist scalars in \mathbb{Q} such that $\overline{v_i} = \underbrace{q_{i_0} + q_{i_1} \alpha^1 + \dots + q_{i_{n_i}} \alpha^{n_i}}_{\text{mess}_i}$. Let

$M = \max\{n_1, n_2, \dots, n_m\}$. Consider $\alpha^{M+1} \in \mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$. There exist scalars $d_1, \dots, d_m \in \mathbb{Q}$ such that

$$\begin{aligned}\alpha^{M+1} &= \alpha^{M+1} = d_1 \overline{v_1} + \dots + d_m \overline{v_m} \\ &= d_1(\text{mess}_1) + \dots + d_m(\text{mess}_m) \\ &= r_0 + r_1 \alpha^1 + \dots + r_M \alpha^M\end{aligned}$$

So $0 = -\alpha^{M+1} + r_0 + r_1 \alpha^1 + \dots + r_M \alpha^M$. So defined $p(x) = -x^{M+1} + r_0 + r_1 x^1 + \dots + r_M x^M$ and we multiplied out the denominators to get $\tilde{p} \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$.

Now we need to prove the other direction, assume $\alpha \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$. We will begin with a motivating example.

Example. Suppose α is a root of $x^5 - 67x^2 + 3 = 0$, how does this give us a generating family for $\mathbb{Q}[\alpha]$?

Let's continue with the proof. Since $\alpha \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ there exist a nonzero $p \in \mathbb{Z}[x]$ such that $p(\alpha) = 0$. We can write $p(\alpha) = a_0 + a_1\alpha^1 + \dots + a_N\alpha^N$ with $a_i \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $a_N \neq 0$. So

$$\alpha^N = -\frac{a_0}{a_N} - \frac{a_1}{a_N}\alpha^1 - \dots - \frac{a_{N-1}}{a_N}\alpha^{N-1} \quad (*)$$

We claim $\underbrace{\mathbb{Q}[x]}_{\text{LHS}} = \underbrace{\text{span}(1, \alpha, \dots, \alpha^{N-1})}_{\text{RHS}}$. We will show this by two-way containment. We have $\text{LHS} \supseteq \text{RHS}$ immediately from definitions. To show $\text{LHS} \subseteq \text{RHS}$, fix $\bar{v} \in \text{LHS}$ so $\bar{v} = \sum_{i \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}} b_i \alpha^i$ with $b_i \in \mathbb{Q}$ and all but finitely many are zero.

Define the degree of \bar{v} to be $\max\{i \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\} \mid b_i \neq 0\}$, that is the greatest nonzero power. Note this is empty if $\bar{v} = \bar{0}_V$. In this case $\bar{v} \in \text{RHS}$ so we are done. Assume $\bar{v} \neq \bar{0}_V$ so a maximum exists.

We start with a nice case, if $\deg(\bar{v}) < N$, we are done. Now let's tackle a harder case. For $\deg(\bar{v}) \geq N$ set $j = \deg(\bar{v}) - (N - 1)$. Note $j = 1$ when $\deg(\bar{v}) = N$. We will induct on j . So for our base case $j = 1$, we have $\deg(\bar{v}) = N$. We want to show $\bar{v} \in \text{RHS}$. By (*), we may replace α^N in \bar{v} with the combination in (*). Then \bar{v} is a linear combination of vectors in $(1, \alpha, \alpha^2, \dots, \alpha^{N-1})$ so we win!

Now we have our strong inductive hypothesis: Suppose that if $1 \leq j < n$, then $\bar{v} \in \text{RHS}$. We will prove that if $j = n$, then $\bar{v} \in \text{RHS}$. Assume $j = n$, so $\deg(\bar{v}) - (N - 1) = n$, or alternatively, $\deg(\bar{v}) = n + (N - 1)$. So we can write \bar{v} as

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{v} &= b_{N-1+n} \alpha^{N-1+n} + \bar{v}' \\ &= b_{N-1+n} \cdot \alpha^{n-1} \cdot \alpha^N + \bar{v}' \end{aligned}$$

with $b_{N-1+n} \in \mathbb{Q} \setminus \{0\}$ and $\deg(\bar{v}') < N - 1 + n$. Now we can replace α^N with (*) so

$$\bar{v} = b_{N-1+n} \left[-\frac{a_0}{a_N} - \frac{a_1}{a_N}\alpha^1 - \dots - \frac{a_{N-1}}{a_N}\alpha^{N-1} \right] + \bar{v}'$$

and by our inductive hypothesis $\bar{v} \in \text{RHS}$. □