COMP 2404 Take-home Final Exam
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. About the take-home final exam

1.1. **Wait, what? We're having a take-home final exam?**

Yes. I cancelled the online final exam for this course last week, as you were informed in my announcement dated March 30. Instead of an online exam, we are having a take-home final exam. In accordance with university regulations, take-home exams must be posted on April 7 and due on April 25.

1.2. **But Scheduling and Examinations Services (SES) is still showing an online date and time for this exam. What's going on?**

The most polite and professional thing I can say here is that SES is working on old information. I'm sure they'll catch up.

1.3. **Is this a real final exam?**

Yes. Although you get more time to do the work than a timed exam, it is still the most important, summative assessment of your understanding of the course material for the entire term.

1.4. **Is this like an assignment?**

No. The goal of the final exam is to assess your individual knowledge of the entire course material, and how much you have learned as a software designer and programmer.

1.5. **How is this different from an assignment?**

It's different in a few ways:

- The design and programming details are largely left to you. You are expected to demonstrate the correct OO design and development techniques that we learned throughout the course.
- Expectations are higher, since this is the summative assessment for the term.
- Support will be minimal; students are expected to complete exam work **individually**, and without assistance.
- Collaboration will result in more severe sanctions for academic misconduct, as this is a final exam.

1.6. **What do you mean, support will be minimal? What kind of help can I expect?**

Because this is a final exam, the work has to be done by you, **alone**. There will be no office hours during the exam period. Other than the grading of Assignment #4, our TAs are no longer employed for this course, and university policy prohibits them from assisting with final exams in any manner.

Do not email your code to the TAs or me, and do not email questions to the TAs or me. Please see the "Getting help" section below for instructions on how to handle your questions.

1.7. **I have personal circumstances or health issues that prevent me from doing the work [at all] [on time]. What can I do? What can you do?**

What can you do? Your best to complete the work, submitted on time. What can I do? Nothing.

On a personal level, I deeply and sincerely sympathize with what you are going through, and how scary and terrible these uncertain times are. But on a professional level, as the instructor of a mandatory course that is a prerequisite for 3rd year COMP courses, I am required to uphold university policies and the standards of academic integrity, and I am required to prepare you academically so that you can succeed in those 3rd year courses. So there is nothing I can do. This is a final exam, and it is mandatory. You are given 19 calendar days to do the work. If your submission is not in *cuLearn* before the due date and time, it will earn a grade of zero.

1.8. **How long will the grading take?**

I don't know. The final grades are due on May 8, and I promise that I will do my very best to be done on time. However, with a large class like this, it's possible that the grades will be a few days late. Keep in mind: The more emails I get during my grading, usually with questions about final grades, etc., the longer the grading will take, unfortunately. Answering emails in a conscientious and compassionate manner takes time and energy away from the grading.

2. Doing the work

2.1. **Where do I start?**

Start by getting a clear understanding of the requirements. Then start coding in very small amounts at a time, and getting that small amount of code to work before adding more.

2.2. **I don't think I can do this.**

Yes, you can. If you have completed all the assignments this semester, without too much help from TAs or others, then you are fully ready and capable of tackling the work in this exam.

If you have required a lot of help with assignments throughout the term, it may take you longer to do this work, because you haven't learned everything required from the assignments. You are still capable of doing the work, although it may take you longer.

2.3. **I want to [change] [add to] [remove from] the requirements. Is that ok?**

No. You are welcome to show creativity in the innovative feature that's required.

2.4. **I want to use code from a new library. Is that ok?**

No. Only libraries that are already installed in the VM and that we have used already in this course (for example, `iomanip`) are allowed.

3. Getting help

3.1. **I have a question. What do I do?**

It depends on the type of question.

3.1.1. I have a *what* question:

(a) What do I do for a specific requirement? The requirement is probably as descriptive as it's going to get, and I can add nothing further.

(b) What does a specific requirement mean? This may be a clarification question, which can be posted in the Clarifications forum, as described in the "Forum posting instructions" section below.

3.1.2. I have a *how* question: I can't answer those. You are being assessed on how you design and implement the code. I can't give you the solution.

3.1.3. I have a *where* question: You are expected to be familiar with all the course material **before** you start the work. That's how you will know where to find details on the techniques and examples required to do the work. If you have questions about the course material, please post them in the "Lecture questions" forum in *cuLearn*.

3.1.4. I have a *why* question: Don't we all... I probably can't or shouldn't answer questions of an existential nature. Looking at cat pictures helps.

3.2. **I have a problem with my code! It [doesn't compile] [crashes] [has a memory leak][other]. Where can I get help?**

The only person who can do anything about this is you. It's your code, and you know it best. You will have to debug it and find the issue yourself. You can use a debugger, or you can use valgrind, or you can use print statements throughout the code to help you locate the error.

It is a general expectation that, at the end of 2nd year, CS students can debug their own code.

4. Forum posting instructions

All posts on the Clarifications forum in *cuLearn* **must** comply with the following, or they will be removed:

4.1. Each thread must contain **one** question only.

4.2. Every thread subject **MUST** contain the instruction number from the exam requirements.

4.3. Only questions related to clarifying the wording of the requirements will be answered on the forum.

4.4. Other questions may be added to this FAQ and answered there.

All posts that do not conform to these requirements will be deleted.

5. A final word

Please try to have fun. Timmy and Harold have waited a long time to come out of retirement, and they are looking forward to their adventure to Dragon's Hollow with your help.