

**Blockchain Foundations
Practice Midterm
2026**

1. The exam has 4 questions with a total of 100 points. You have 80 minutes to take the exam. Questions have different numbers of points so please allocate your time to each question accordingly.
2. Please write the answer in the designated area underneath each question. If you need more room for your answer, please indicate as such, and continue your response on the blank page at the end of all questions. No additional pages will be allowed.
3. Scratch paper will be provided and collected at the end of the exam, but will not be graded.
4. All answers should be justified, unless otherwise stated.
5. The exam is closed book but you are allowed one double-sided sheet of notes. A list of variables and reference information on the mining algorithm and the hash function are provided at the end of the exam. No other materials are allowed.

Good luck!

Name:
SUID:

1. (24 points) True-false questions (no explanations required). 2 points for a correct answer, 0 points for an incorrect answer. 1 point for leaving the answer blank. Knowing you don't know something has value.

Please shade your answer in completely to receive full credit.

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) While two conflicting transactions cannot both appear in the same valid block, they can appear in different blocks of a valid chain. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) A correctly parametrized proof-of-work equation ensures that all successful queries are always spaced at least Δ apart. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) As the network delay Δ decreases, the mining target T should be made more difficult. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) The probability that two different honest miners choose the same nonce to mine with is negligible in κ (see the MINE algorithm in the Reference section). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) The genesis block is anchored at a particular point in time in the real world by including real world data from a newspaper or other publicly verifiable source that cannot easily be faked. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) Changing the coinbase transaction public key during gossiping will fail because it will invalidate the coinbase signature. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (g) While honest miners mine blocks at a bounded rate, an adversary can mine as many blocks as she likes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (h) An adversary who manages to violate ledger safety can issue a transaction spending the money of an honest party. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (i) A ledger liveness violation implies a ledger safety violation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (j) An execution with $n = 1$, $t = 0$, $q = 1$ and $\Delta = 1$ sec has no temporary forks whatsoever. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (k) In the UTXO model under longest chain rule, a block in the chain can extend multiple parent blocks. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. (16 points) Let $H : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^\kappa$ be a collision-resistant hash function and define $G : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^{2\kappa}$ as $G(x) = H(x) \parallel H(x)$. Show that G is a collision-resistant hash function.

3. (30 points) We are working in a UTXO longest chain system with a block reward of 50 units and a confirmation rule of $k = 6$. Consider the transaction graph illustrated in Figure 1.

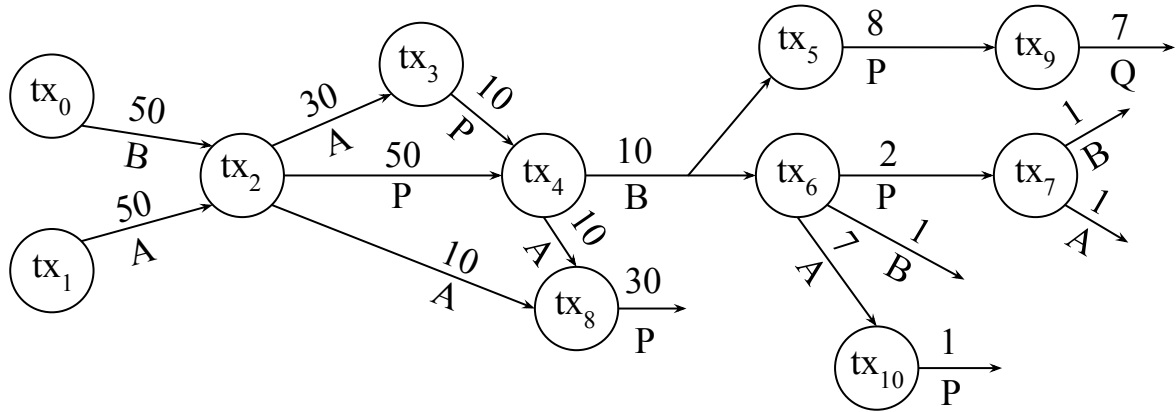


Figure 1: The transaction graph.

The party Q has adopted a chain C_Q such that $\mathbb{L}_Q = (\text{tx}_0, \text{tx}_1, \text{tx}_2)$, while the transactions recorded in C_Q are $(\text{tx}_0, \text{tx}_1, \text{tx}_2, \text{tx}_3, \text{tx}_4)$. The party Q is a miner who collects transactions into a mempool to create a template block to mine on.

- (a) (6 points) In what order should the rest of the transactions (tx_5 through tx_{10}) be arranged into a block by Q so that Q 's coinbase proceeds are maximized?
- (b) (6 points) What is the output value in Q 's new coinbase transaction?

- (c) (4 points) If Q successfully mined a block in part (a) and the block is buried under $k = 6$ other blocks, what does the new ledger \mathbb{L}_Q report?
- (d) (6 points) Which transactions (among tx_5 through tx_{10}) are missing from Q 's ledger and why?
- (e) (4 points) How much unspent money does Q have in the system, if we also include his mining proceeds?
- (f) (4 points) How much money do the parties A , B , and P have, in Q 's view, provided they are not mining any blocks?

4. (30 points) Consider the sequence of successful *honest* party queries in Figure 2. Recall that a successful query satisfies the proof-of-work equation $H(B) \leq T$.

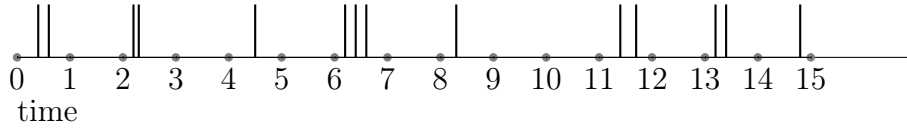


Figure 2: A sequence of honest successful query events.

Consider executions¹ with *maximum* network delay $\Delta = 1$. You are a powerful rushing adversary and you have 7 successful queries at your disposal. You are given the (fictitious) ability to place your successful queries at whichever points on the timeline you prefer. Honest parties gossip blocks, but you can schedule the delay of each honest message freely, as long as it is within a maximum of Δ . As the adversary, you are also allowed to choose how each honest party will choose to break ties among competing chains of the same length.

Describe the following executions, consistent with the above timeline. For each of the below executions, draw the block tree. For each block in the block tree, indicate whether it was honestly or adversarially mined, and what time it was mined at. You can use just the integer part of the time (for example, you can write “1” for a block that was mined at time “1.4”). Your three executions do not all have to be different.

- (a) (10 points) An execution in which Common Prefix with $k = 7$ is violated. What is the adopted chain tip of each honest party in your execution?

¹An *execution* is the transcript of everything that happened, including *who* mined each block, when each block was mined, what the whole private and public blocktree looks like, when and if each block was broadcast, and when it was received, including all adversarial actions.

- (b) (10 points) An execution in which three different honest parties adopt chains C_1 , C_2 and C_3 such that $C_1[: -k]$, $C_2[: -k]$, $C_3[: -k]$ are different from each other for $k = 4$. ($C[: -k]$ means the chain resulting from removing the last k blocks in a chain C .)

- (c) (10 points) An execution *minimizing* Chain Quality (across all executions) of the whole chain for *some* honest party. What is the Chain Quality of the chain adopted by your chosen honest party?

Extra page for answers

Reference

Some helpful definitions are provided below.

Definition 1 (Collision Resistance). A hash function $H : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^\kappa$ is collision resistant if for all PPT adversaries \mathcal{A} ,

$$\Pr[\text{collision-game}_{H, \mathcal{A}(\kappa)} = 1] = \text{negl}(\kappa).$$

The game is defined in Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1 The collision-finding game for a hash function H .

```
1: function COLLISION-GAME $_{H, \mathcal{A}}(\kappa)$ 
2:    $x_1, x_2 \leftarrow \mathcal{A}(1^\kappa)$ 
3:   return  $H_\kappa(x_1) = H_\kappa(x_2) \wedge x_1 \neq x_2$ 
4: end function
```

Definition 2 (Weak Conservation Law). A transaction tx satisfies the Weak Conservation Law if

$$\sum_{i \in \text{tx.ins}} i.v \geq \sum_{o \in \text{tx.outs}} o.v.$$

Definition 3 (Velocity). The velocity τ of a chain of an honest party P between times $r_1 < r_2$ is the ratio $\frac{|\mathcal{C}_{r_2}^P| - |\mathcal{C}_{r_1}^P|}{r_2 - r_1}$.

Definition 4 (Common Prefix). The Common Prefix virtue, parametrized by $k \in \mathbb{N}$, is satisfied if for all honest parties P_1, P_2 and for all times $r_1 \leq r_2$, it holds that $\mathcal{C}_{r_1}^{P_1}[: -k] \preceq \mathcal{C}_{r_2}^{P_2}$.

Definition 5 (Chain Quality). The Chain Quality of a chain chunk \mathcal{C} is defined as the ratio of the honestly produced blocks divided by the total blocks within that chain chunk.

Our variables.

- κ : The security parameter
- \mathcal{A} : The uniform PPT adversary
- Π : The honest protocol
- H : The hash function
- G : The genesis block, an *honestly* mined reference block
- Δ : The maximum network delay
- T : The mining target

- p : The probability of a successful query
- n : The total number of parties (includes both honest and adversarial)
- t : The number of adversarial parties
- q : The hashing power of a single party per unit of time
- k : The Common Prefix parameter, in blocks
- μ : The Chain Quality parameter, as a proportion
- τ : The velocity, in blocks per unit of time

Terminology.

- The proof-of-work equation: $H(B) \leq T$.
- A *successful query* is a fresh query to the random oracle H that satisfies the proof-of-work equation.
- A *convergence opportunity* is an *honest* successful query which is spaced at least Δ apart from all other *honest* successful queries.
- A *negligible function* is eventually smaller than all inverse polynomials.
- A block tree has the *Common Prefix* virtue with parameter k if, for any two chains C_1, C_2 currently adopted by honest parties, $C_1[:-k]$ is a prefix of C_2 .

Algorithms.

Algorithm 2 The mining algorithm.

```

1: function MINE( $s, \bar{x}$ )
2:    $ctr \xleftarrow{\$} \{0, 1\}^\kappa$ 
3:   while true do
4:      $B \leftarrow s \parallel \bar{x} \parallel ctr$ 
5:     if  $H(B) \leq T$  then
6:       return  $B$ 
7:     end if
8:      $ctr \leftarrow ctr + 1$ 
9:   end while
10: end function

```

Chain addressing notation.

- $|\mathcal{C}|$: Chain length
- $\mathcal{C}[i]$: i^{th} block in the chain (0-based). The block height is i .
- $\mathcal{C}[-i]$: i^{th} block from the end.

- $\mathcal{C}[0]$: Genesis (by convention honest).
- $\mathcal{C}[-1]$: The tip.
- $\mathcal{C}[i:j]$: Chain chunk from block i (inclusive) to j (exclusive).
- $\mathcal{C}[:j]$: Chain chunk from the beginning and up to block j (exclusive).
- $\mathcal{C}[i:]$: Chain chunk from block i (inclusive) onwards.
- $\mathcal{C}[:-k]$: The stable chain.