



MAS 2022-23 HW 4 MC Q - answers

Multi-agent systems (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Multi-Agent Systems

Homework Assignment 4

MSc AI, VU

E.J. Pauwels

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4 Monte Carlo simulation

4.1 MC sampling

Recall that Monte Carlo sampling allows us to estimate the expectation of a random function by sampling from the corresponding probability distribution. More precisely, if $f(x)$ is a 1-dim (continuous) probability density, and $X \sim f$ is a stochastic variable distributed according to this density f , then the expected value of some function φ can be estimated using Monte Carlo sampling by:

$$E_f(\varphi(X)) \equiv \int \varphi(x)f(x) dx \approx \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \varphi(X_i) \quad \text{for sample of independent } X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n \sim f.$$

1. Assume that $X \sim N(0,1)$ is standard normal. Estimate the mean value $E(\cos^2(X))$. Quantify the uncertainty on your result.
2. Suppose you're designing a deep neural network that needs to maximize some score function S . The actual design of the network depends on some hyperparameter A . Training the networks is computationally very demanding and time consuming, and as a consequence you have only been able to perform ten experiments to date. Based on these ten data points you observe a slight positive correlation of 0.3 between the value of the hyperparameter A and the score S . If this result is genuine, it suggest to increase A in the next experiment in order to improve the score. But if the correlation is not significant, increasing A could lead you astray. How would you use MC to decide whether the correlation is significant?

Hint: Compute the empirical p-value of the observed result, under the assumption of independence.

4.2 Importance Sampling

Importance sampling extends the basic MC approach to cases where it is difficult to sample from f but (relatively) easy to sample from a (somewhat) similar distribution g . More precisely:

$$\begin{aligned}
E_f(\varphi(X)) &= \int \varphi(x) f(x) dx \\
&= \int \varphi(x) \frac{f(x)}{g(x)} g(x) dx \equiv E_g \left[\varphi(X) \frac{f(X)}{g(X)} \right] \\
&\approx \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \varphi(X_i) \frac{f(X_i)}{g(X_i)} \quad \text{for sample of independent } X_1, \dots, X_n \sim g.
\end{aligned}$$

So this result tells us that it is possible to estimate the mean $E_f(\varphi(X))$ where X is distributed according to density f by sampling from a different (but similar) distribution g .

1. Let $X \sim N(0, 1)$ be a standard normal stochastic variable. Use importance sampling to estimate $E(X^2)$ by sampling from a uniform distribution $q \sim U(-5, 5)$ on the interval $[-5, 5]$. What value do you expect (based on your knowledge of the normal distribution)? How accurate is your estimate based on importance sampling?
2. Suppose some random process produces output $(-1 \leq X \leq 1)$ that is distributed according to the following continuous density:

$$f(x) = \frac{1 + \cos(\pi x)}{2} \quad (\text{for } -1 \leq x \leq 1).$$

Again we are interested in estimation $E(X^2)$. However, as this is not a standard distribution it makes sense to use importance sampling to estimate this value. Quantify the uncertainty on your result.

4.3 Kullback-Leibler divergence

The Kullback-Leibler (KL) divergence quantifies the similarity (or dissimilarity) of two probability densities. More specifically, given two continuous (1-dim) probability densities f, g , the KL-divergence is defined as:

$$KL(f||g) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) \log \left(\frac{f(x)}{g(x)} \right) dx \equiv E_f \left[\log \left(\frac{f(X)}{g(X)} \right) \right] \quad (1)$$

1. Let $f \sim N(\mu, \sigma^2)$ and $g \sim N(\nu, \tau^2)$ both be normal distributions. Express $KL(f||g)$ as a function of the means and variances of f and g . We mention in passing that the KL expression in eq.1 is called a **divergence** rather than a **distance** because it's not symmetric. Use the expression obtained above to convince yourself of this fact.
2. Check your theoretical result in (1) by computing a sample-based estimate of the KL-divergence (Monte Carlo simulation). Pick an appropriate sample size. Compare the MC estimate to the theoretical result.

5 Exploitation versus Exploration

5.1 UCB versus ϵ -greedy for k -bandit problem

Write a programme to experiment with the exploration/exploitation for the k -bandit problem (take $k = 2$ or some larger value if you're feeling lucky :-). Assume that the arms (a) generate normally distributed rewards with unit standard deviation, but different means $q(a)$ (e.g. randomly generated). Assume that in every single experiment the agent can take a total of $T = 1000$ actions (i.e. arm pulls). Let $L(t)$ be the expected total regret at time t , defined as:

$$\ell(t) = E \left(\sum_{i=1}^t (q^* - q(a_i)) \right)$$

- Compute the experimental $L(t)$ curves for different strategies (ϵ -greedy for different values of ϵ , UCB). Compare to the theoretical lower bound found by Lai-Robbins:

$$\ell(t) \geq A \log(t) \quad \text{where} \quad A = \sum_{a: \Delta_a \neq 0} \frac{\Delta_a}{KL(f_a || f_a^*)} \quad \text{and} \quad \Delta_a = q^* - q(a).$$

- Compute and compare the percentage correct decisions (selection of correct arm) under the different strategies (i.e. ϵ -greedy for different values of ϵ , UCB). What is the influence of the UCB hyper-parameter c ?

PS: *No need to submit code, only the results.*