
MATH 620: Variational Methods and Optimization I

Homework 5



Problem 1 (Weak derivatives and membership in $W^{1,2}$). In talking about the definition of weak derivatives, we have discussed that functions with kinks and, in some cases, functions that are discontinuous can have weak derivatives even though they clearly are not differentiable in the “classical” sense.

But not all discontinuous functions have a weak derivative. For example, the following function of one variable,

$$u(x) = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if } x < 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } x \geq 0, \end{cases}$$

does not have a weak derivative. Convince yourself that that is true, and explain your thinking.

Next, consider the function $u : \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ of two arguments,

$$u(\mathbf{x}) = \sin(\arctan(x_2/x_1))$$

that is discontinuous at the origin?¹ Can you guess a weak gradient for this function u (which is of course a two-dimensional vector field) and prove that it really is *the* weak gradient?

If so, what spaces $W^{1,p}(B_1(0))$ is u in if we take the unit ball in \mathbb{R}^2 as the domain?

(Hint: Plot the function. Then think about whether there is possibly a coordinate system better suitable to the task.)

(20 points)

Problem 2 (Boundedness of dual functionals). The dual space X' of a vector space X is the set of all linear, continuous functionals $\varphi : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$.

We say that a functional φ is bounded if it satisfies the condition

$$|\varphi(x)| \leq c\|x\|_X$$

for all $x \in X$ and with some constant $c = c(\varphi) < \infty$.

Show that (i) if $\varphi \in X'$, then it is bounded; and (ii) that if a linear functional is bounded, then it is also continuous. (In other words, a linear functional φ is in X' *if and only if* it is also bounded.)

(20 points)

¹For the given expression for u to make sense, we need to make sure that you define \arctan with the right branch cut. It is here to be understood as $\arctan(x_2/x_1) = \theta$ where θ is the angle a point $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^2$ makes against the positive x_1 axis.

Problem 3 (The dual space of L^p). Every $a \in L^q$ induces a bounded linear functional $\varphi : L^p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ of the form

$$\varphi(u) = \int_{\Omega} a(x)u(x) \, dx.$$

Here and below, we will always assume that $\frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{q} = 1$, and that $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ is a bounded domain.

Show in a first step that this functional is linear and bounded (and consequently continuous), i.e., that indeed we have $\varphi \in (L^p(\Omega))'$.

It is of course conceivable that X' is indeed larger than just the functionals introduced above. One of the possibilities would be that one could choose a larger class of functions a than just the L^q functions above. Show that this is not the case, i.e., that a function $a \notin L^q$ (for example if $a \in L^r$ with $r < q$ but $a \notin L^q$) does not induce a functional $\varphi \in X'$.

This statement is not easy to show in its full generality – though as often, it's all about finding the right approach. Here, it means showing that for such an a , φ can not be linear and continuous (or linear and bounded). If you don't see how to do this, create an example: Pick a particular p and corresponding q , then choose a specific $a \in L^r \setminus L^q$ (for example, a function with a singularity) and show that the corresponding φ is either not linear, not continuous, or not bounded by playing with functions $u \in L^p$ and investigating what $\varphi(u)$ is.

(It is worth noting that this argument only shows that linear functionals of the form shown above with $a \in L^r \setminus L^q$ do not give rise to functionals φ in $(L^p(\Omega))'$. It does not show that there are no *completely different* ways to construct linear and continuous functionals. It is the [Riesz representation theorem](#) that states that such other ways do not, in fact, exist.)

(20 points)

Problem 4 (The norm on the dual space of L^p). The previous problem claimed that every (dual) functional $\varphi \in (L^p(\Omega))'$ can be written in the form

$$\varphi(u) = \int_{\Omega} a(x)u(x) \, dx$$

for some $a \in L^q$. Furthermore, we have defined the norm on the dual space as

$$\|\varphi\|_{(L^p(\Omega))'} = \sup_{u \in L^p(\Omega)} \frac{|\varphi(u)|}{\|u\|_{L^p(\Omega)}}.$$

Prove that

$$\|\varphi\|_{(L^p(\Omega))'} = \|a\|_{L^q(\Omega)}.$$

(Hint: It is not difficult to show that $\|\varphi\|_{(L^p(\Omega))'} \leq \|a\|_{L^q(\Omega)}$ using Hölder's inequality. To complete the proof, find a $u \in L^p$ so that $|\varphi(u)| = \|a\|_{L^q(\Omega)}\|u\|_{L^p(\Omega)}$ for which a good approach is to try $u(x) = |a(x)|^s \text{sign}(a(x))$ with some exponent s to be chosen conveniently. You'll then have to check that this u is in L^p , as well as what $\varphi(u)$ is.)

(20 points)

Problem 5 (Weak convergence). Define the function w on $[0, 1]$ as

$$w(x) = \begin{cases} \alpha & \text{if } x \leq \frac{1}{2} \\ \beta & \text{if } x > \frac{1}{2}, \end{cases}$$

and let \bar{w} be its periodic extension to all of \mathbb{R} .

Next consider the following sequence of functions on the set $\Omega = [0, 1]$:

$$u_n(x) = \bar{w}(nx).$$

In other words, $u_n(x)$ takes the periodic extension $\bar{w}(x)$, compresses it by a factor of n in x direction, and then restricts consideration to the domain $[0, 1]$.

Show the following statements

- (a) The sequence u_n does not converge strongly to any u in any of the L^p spaces, $1 \leq p \leq \infty$.
- (b) We have

$$u_n(x) \rightharpoonup \frac{\alpha + \beta}{2} \quad \text{in } L^p$$

for any $1 \leq p < \infty$.

- (c) We have

$$u_n(x) \not\overset{*}{\rightharpoonup} \frac{\alpha + \beta}{2} \quad \text{in } L^\infty.$$

(A similar result is actually true for more general cases: If you start with *any* bounded function $w : [0, 1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ and its periodic extension \bar{w} , then the u_n defined above converges weakly or weak-* to the *mean value* $\int_0^1 w(x) dx$. The proof is not much different but does not shed any further light on the issue, so we are content with the simpler case above.)

(20 points)