

Algebra Qualifying Exams

Spring 2016

1. (a) Prove that every subgroup of a cyclic group is cyclic.

Proof. Let G be a cyclic group. First, suppose that G is of infinite order. Then sending the generator of G to $1 \in \mathbb{Z}$ gives an isomorphism $G \cong \mathbb{Z}$. We claim that every subgroup of \mathbb{Z} is of the form $n\mathbb{Z}$, which is clearly cyclic. Let H be a subgroup of G and let n be the smallest positive integer in H . Then $n\mathbb{Z} \subseteq H$. Suppose the containment is strict and let m be the smallest positive integer in $H \setminus n\mathbb{Z}$. We then have that $1 \leq \gcd(m, n) < n$ and by Bezout's identity we have that $\gcd(m, n) = um + vn$ for some $u, v \in \mathbb{Z}$ is in H . But this contradicts the minimality of n , so we conclude that $H = n\mathbb{Z}$.

Suppose now that $G = \langle g \rangle$ is finite of order n so that $G \cong \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$. By the fourth isomorphism theorem (or lattice/correspondence theorem) there is a one-to-one correspondence between subgroups of $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ and subgroups of \mathbb{Z} containing $n\mathbb{Z}$. We have already shown that all subgroups of \mathbb{Z} are cyclic, and since the homomorphic image of a cyclic group is cyclic ($\varphi(g^k) = \varphi(g)^k$), we have that all subgroups of $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ are cyclic. \square

- (b) Is the automorphism group of a cyclic group necessarily cyclic?

Solution. This need not be the case. Let $G \cong \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}$. As G is cyclic, any automorphism of G is determined by where it sends a generator and it must map a generator to a generator. The generators of $\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}$ exactly correspond to the elements of $(\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z})^\times$ and we have that $\text{Aut}(\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}) \cong (\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z})^\times$. If N is a product of distinct primes $p, q > 2$ then the Chinese remainder theorem says that

$$(\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z})^\times \cong (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times \times (\mathbb{Z}/q\mathbb{Z})^\times \cong \mathbb{Z}/(p-1)\mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}/(q-1)\mathbb{Z},$$

which is not cyclic \square

2. Let $G = \mathbb{Z}/25\mathbb{Z}$ be the cyclic group of order 25.

- (a) Can G be given the structure of a $\mathbb{Z}[i]$ -module?

Solution. Yes it can. Observe that in $\mathbb{Z}/25\mathbb{Z}$, $-1 = 24 = 6 \cdot 4 = 9^2 \cdot 2^2$, so $18^2 = -1$. Define the action of $a + bi \in \mathbb{Z}[i]$ on $m \in \mathbb{Z}/25\mathbb{Z}$ by

$$(a + bi) \cdot m = (a + 18b)m.$$

This action gives G the structure of a $\mathbb{Z}[i]$ -module since

$$\begin{aligned}
[(a + bi) + (c + di)] \cdot m &= [(a + c) + (b + d)i] \cdot m \\
&= [(a + c) + 18(b + d)]m \\
&= (a + bi) \cdot m + (c + di) \cdot m. \\
(a + bi) \cdot (m + n) &= (a + 18b)(m + n) \\
&= (a + bi) \cdot m + (a + bi) \cdot n. \\
[(a + bi)(c + di)] \cdot m &= [(ac - bd) + (ad + bc)i]m \\
&= [(ac - bd) + 18(ad + bc)]m \\
&= (a + bi) \cdot [(c + di) \cdot m].
\end{aligned}$$

□

(b) Can G be given the structure of a $\mathbb{Z}/5\mathbb{Z}$ module?

Solution. No it cannot. If it could then we would have

$$\begin{aligned}
0 &= 0 \cdot 1 \\
&= 5 \cdot 1 \\
&= (1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1) \cdot 1 \\
&= 1 \cdot 1 + 1 \cdot 1 + 1 \cdot 1 + 1 \cdot 1 + 1 \cdot 1 \\
&= 5 \\
&\neq 0.
\end{aligned}$$

□

3. Prove that there is no simple group of order 520.

Proof. Write $520 = 2^3 \cdot 5 \cdot 13$. By Sylow's theorems, the number of Sylow-5 subgroups, n_5 is 1 mod 5 and divides $2^3 \cdot 13 = 104$. The only positive integers satisfying these constraints are 1 and 26. The same reasoning shows that n_{13} must be 1 or 40. If either of n_5 or n_{13} is 1, then since Sylow- p subgroups are conjugate to one another, then that subgroup would be normal. Suppose then that $n_5 = 26$ and $n_{13} = 40$. Then there are $26 \cdot 4 = 104$ elements of order 5 and $40 \cdot 12 = 480$ elements of order 13. But $104 + 480 = 584 > 520$, so this cannot be the case. We conclude that there must be a unique Sylow-5 or Sylow-13 subgroup which is normal. □

4. Let G be a finite group acting transitively on a set X with $|X| > 1$.

(a) State the orbit-stabilizer theorem.

Solution. If a group G acts on a set X then for any $x \in X$, the size of the orbit of x under G is the index of the stabilizer of x under G , $|\mathcal{O}(x)| = [G : \text{Stab}(x)]$. \square

(b) Show that there is some element of G fixing no element of X .

Proof. Since the action of G on X is transitive there is a single orbit. Burnside's lemma (which immediately follows from the orbit-stabilizer theorem) then states that

$$1 = \frac{1}{|G|} \sum_{g \in G} |\{x \in X : g \cdot x = x\}|.$$

If $g \in G$ has fixed points then it contributes at least $1/|G|$ to the above sum. If *every* element has a fixed point then we must have that every term in the sum is $1/|G|$. But the identity element fixes every element in X and $|X| > 1$, so we must have that one term in this sum is zero, i.e. at least one element of G is fixed point free. \square

5. Let K be a field and let \bar{K} be an algebraic closure of K . Assume $\alpha, \beta \in \bar{K}$ have degree 2 and 3 over K , respectively.

(a) Can $\alpha\beta$ have degree 5 over K ?

Solution. No it cannot. We have that $K(\alpha\beta)$ is contained in the composite extension $K(\alpha)K(\beta)$. Furthermore, since the degrees of $K(\alpha)$ and $K(\beta)$ over K are relatively prime, we have that the composite extension has degree 6 over K . Since $K(\alpha\beta)$ is a subfield of the composite extension, its degree over K must divide 6. Since 5 doesn't divide 6 we have that $K(\alpha\beta)$ cannot have degree 5 over K . \square

(b) Can $\alpha\beta$ have degree 6 over K ?

Solution. Yes it can. Consider $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2})$ and $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[3]{2})$. $x^2 - 2$ and $x^3 - 2$ are irreducible over \mathbb{Q} by Eisenstein so these extensions are of degree 2 and 3, respectively. We claim that the product $2^{1/2} \cdot 2^{1/3} = 2^{5/6}$ has degree 6 over \mathbb{Q} .

We start by showing that $\mathbb{Q}(2^{5/6}) = \mathbb{Q}(2^{1/6})$. Clearly $\mathbb{Q}(2^{5/6}) \subseteq \mathbb{Q}(2^{1/6})$. On the other hand, $\frac{1}{24}(2^{5/6})^5 = 2^{1/6}$, so $\mathbb{Q}(2^{1/6}) \subseteq \mathbb{Q}(2^{5/6})$. Finally, $2^{1/6}$ is a root of the polynomial $x^6 - 2$, which is irreducible over \mathbb{Q} by Eisenstein, so we have that $2^{1/6}$, and therefore $2^{5/6}$, has degree 6 over \mathbb{Q} . \square

6. Let L/\mathbb{Q} denote a Galois extension with Galois group isomorphic to A_4 .

(a) Does there exist a quadratic extension K/\mathbb{Q} contained in L ?

Solution. By the fundamental theorem of Galois theory, a quadratic extension K/\mathbb{Q} corresponds to a subgroup of $\text{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q}) \cong A_4$ of index 2 (order 6). We claim that there is no such subgroup, and therefore no such quadratic sub-extension.

Any group of order 6 is isomorphic to either $\mathbb{Z}/6\mathbb{Z}$ or S_3 . A_4 consists of double 2-cycles, e.g. $(1\ 2)(3\ 4)$, and 3-cycles, e.g. $(1\ 2\ 3)$, none of which have order 6, so that leaves S_3 . S_3 has three elements of order 2, and since the three double 2-cycles in A_4 are exactly its elements of order 2, they must all lie in any subgroup isomorphic to S_3 . However, the elements of order 2 don't commute with one another in S_3 while they do in A_4 , so we cannot have a subgroup of A_4 isomorphic to S_3 . \square

(b) Does there exist a degree 4 polynomial in $\mathbb{Q}[x]$ with splitting field equal to L ?

Solution. \square

7. Let $A : V \rightarrow V$ be a linear transformation of a vector space V over the field \mathbb{Q} which satisfies the relation $(A^3 + 3I)(A^3 - 2I) = 0$. Show that the dimension $\dim_{\mathbb{Q}}(V)$ is divisible by 3.

Proof. Since A satisfies the polynomial $(x^3 + 3)(x^3 - 2)$, the minimal polynomial of A over \mathbb{Q} must divide $(x^3 + 3)(x^3 - 2)$. Since $x^3 + 3$ and $x^3 - 2$ are both irreducible over \mathbb{Q} by Eisenstein, the minimal polynomial must be either $x^3 + 3$, $x^3 - 2$ or $(x^3 + 3)(x^3 - 2)$. Furthermore, the minimal polynomial divides the characteristic polynomial whose degree is the dimension of V over \mathbb{Q} . Since the minimal polynomial and characteristic polynomial have the same roots in an algebraic closure, we must have that the characteristic polynomial is of the form $(x^3 + 3)^a(x^3 - 2)^b$ for some nonnegative integers a, b at least one of which is positive. Since the degree of such a polynomial is divisible by 3, we must have that the dimension of V over \mathbb{Q} is divisible by 3. \square

8. True/False.

(a) If K_1, K_2 are fields and $\varphi : K_1 \rightarrow K_2$ is a ring homomorphism such that $\varphi(1) = 1$, then φ is injective.

Solution. True. The kernel of φ is an ideal in K_1 . Since K_1 is a field its only ideals are (0) and all of K_1 . Since $\varphi(1) = 1$, we have that the kernel of φ is not all of K_1 , so it must be trivial, forcing φ to be injective. \square

(b) The unit group of \mathbb{C} is isomorphic to the additive group of \mathbb{C} .

Solution. Assuming “the unit group of \mathbb{C} ” means the nonzero complex numbers, \mathbb{C}^\times , then this is false. \mathbb{C}^\times contains an element of order 2, -1 , whereas the additive group $(\mathbb{C}, +)$ contains no elements of order 2. \square

(c) Let n be a positive integer. Then $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z} \otimes_{\mathbb{Z}} \mathbb{Q} = 0$.

Solution. True. For any simple tensor $a \otimes \frac{p}{q}$ in $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z} \otimes_{\mathbb{Z}} \mathbb{Q}$ we have

$$\begin{aligned} a \otimes \frac{p}{q} &= a \otimes \frac{np}{nq} \\ &= na \otimes \frac{p}{nq} \\ &= 0 \otimes \frac{p}{nq} \\ &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

□

9. For each of the following either give an example or show that none exists.

(a) An element $\alpha \in \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2}, i)$ such that $\mathbb{Q}(\alpha) = \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2}, i)$.

Solution. As this is a finite extension of \mathbb{Q} and since any such extension is separable as \mathbb{Q} is perfect, the primitive element theorem guarantees the existence of such an α . We claim that $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2}, i) = \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2} + i)$. The inclusion $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2} + i) \subseteq \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2}, i)$ is obvious. Note that $(\sqrt{2} + i)^3 = -\sqrt{2} + 5i$. This gives

$$(\sqrt{2} + i)^3 + (\sqrt{2} + i) = 6i,$$

so $i \in \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2} + i)$. Subtracting i from $\sqrt{2} + i$ shows that $\sqrt{2} \in \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2} + i)$ as well and we have the reverse inclusion. □

(b) A tower of field extensions $L \supseteq K' \supseteq K$ such that L/K' and K'/K are Galois extensions but L/K is not Galois.

Solution. Consider the extensions $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2})/\mathbb{Q}$ and $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[4]{2})/\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{2})$. Both of these extensions are Galois since they are quadratic. However, $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[4]{2})/\mathbb{Q}$ is not Galois because it doesn't contain the non-real roots of $x^4 - 2$. □

10. Let L_1, \dots, L_r be all pairwise non-isomorphic complex irreducible representations of a group G of order 12. What are the possible values for their dimensions $n_i = \dim_{\mathbb{C}} L_i$? For each of the possible answers of the form (n_1, \dots, n_r) give an example of G which has such irreducible representations.

Solution. We have that $n_1^2 + \dots + n_r^2 = 12$ and that r is the number of conjugacy classes in G . Since the one-dimensional trivial representation is always a representation of G , we know that at least one of the n_i is 1. We also know that the number of conjugacy classes divides the order of G by Lagrange's theorem. These constraints give us three possible configurations of the n_i :

$$(1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1) \quad (1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2) \quad (1, 1, 1, 3).$$

Here are some examples from each class.

$(1, \dots, 1)$: The irreducible representations of an abelian group are all one-dimensional, so a group like $\mathbb{Z}/12\mathbb{Z}$ would fall into this category.

$(1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2)$: We can safely place the dihedral group D_{12} in this category because it has six conjugacy classes and this is the only configuration of the n_i consistent with this.

$(1, 1, 1, 3)$: The alternating group A_4 is in this category because it has four conjugacy classes.

□