

4. Find all function $f: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ such that:

$$f(0)=0$$

There is a real number z such that $f(n^{2022}) < n^{2022} + z$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$

For all $a, b, c \in \mathbb{N}$, we have $af^b(a) + bf^c(b) + cf^a(c)$ is a square

Solution:

We have $af(a)+1$ is a square for all a (1)

We have $3af^a(a)$ is a square for all a (2)

We have $af(a)+f^c(1)+cf^a(c)$ is a square for all c, a (3)

We have $cf^a(c)+a^2$ is a square for all a, c (4)

Case 1: There exists a u such that $f^u(1)=0$

Then for all large a and b we have $af^b(a)+bf(b)$ is a square.

For a large a , if $f(a)>0$ then $af(a)+f(1)$ and $af(a)+1$ is a square then $f(1)=1$, but then 3 is a square, contradiction.

Then $f(a)=0$ for all large a . Now from (3) consider a large c we have $af(a)$ is a square for all a , but from (1) we have $f(a)=0$ for all a .

We conclude that in case 1 the only solution is $f(a)=0$ for all a .

Case 2: $f^u(1) \neq 0$ for all u . Let $S = \{p^{2022} \mid p \in \mathbb{P}\}$

Fix a positive integer a .

Case 2.1: $f^a(c)=0$ for a large $c \in S$.

Then from (3) $bf(b)+f^c(1)$ is a square for all $b>a$ and a large $c \in S$. For all $b>>c$, if $f(b)$ is not equal to 0, then from (1) we have $f^c(1)=1$, since c is large enough we have $f(1)=1$ and we reach a contradiction. Therefore $f(b)=0$ for all large b , making f bounded, but we have $a^2+f^a(1)$ is a square for all a , then $f^a(1)$ is unbounded, contradiction.

Case 2.2: For all large $c \in S$, $f^a(c) \neq 0$

We have $cf(c)+1$ is a square for all $c \in S$. For a large c , if $f(c)=0$, then it is **case 2.1**. Otherwise, we have $f(c)=c-2$ or $f(c)=c+2$ for all large $c \in S$.

If $f(a)=0$ then $cf(c)+f^a(1)$ is a square for all large $c \in S$, thus $f^a(1)=1$, but we also have $cf(c)+f(1)+f^c(1)$ is a square for all large $c \in S$, thus $f(1)+f^c(1)=1$, contradiction.

Case 2.2.1: $f(c)=c-2$ for all large $c \in S$

We have $c(c-2)+f^c(1)+f(1)$ and $c^2+f^c(1)$ is a square for all large $c \in S$. We will prove that

$$c(c-2)+f^c(1)+f(1) > (\sqrt{c^2 + f^c(1)} - 2)^2$$

This is equivalent to $f(1)+4\sqrt{c^2 + f^c(1)} > 2c+4$ which is true for all large $c \in S$

$$\text{Thus } c(c-2)+f^c(1)+f(1) = (\sqrt{c^2 + f^c(1)} - 1)^2 \text{ for all large } c \in S$$

$$\text{This is to } 2\sqrt{c^2 + f^c(1)} = 2c+1-f(1)$$

$$\text{Thus } f^c(1) = c(1-f(1)) + \frac{1}{4}(1-f(1))^2 \text{ for all large } c \in S$$

$$\text{Let } M = \frac{1}{2}(1-f(1)) \text{ then } M < 0 \text{ since } f(1) \neq 1$$

From (3) we have $af(a)+2Mc+M^2+cf^a(c)$ is a square for all $c \in S$

We have $cf^a(c)+a^2$ is a square for all $c \in S$, thus $cf^a(c)+a^2 = (k_c c \pm a)^2$ for all $c \in S$

Case 2.2.1.1: $cf^a(c)+a^2=(k_c c+a)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Then $f^a(c)=k_c^2 c+2ak_c$ for infinitely many $c \in S$ and $k_c > 0$.

We have $g(c)=af(a)+M^2+k_c^2 c^2+2ak_c c+2Mc$ is a square for infinitely many $c \in S$. It is easy to see that if $k_c > M$ then $(k_c c+a-1)^2 < g(c) < (k_c c+a)^2$ therefore $k_c \leq M$ for infinitely many $c \in S$. Thus there are infinitely many $c \in S$ such that k_c attain the same value, let it be $T \leq M$.

We have $g(c)=af(a)+M^2+T^2 c^2+2aTc+2Mc$ for infinitely many c , thus $g(c)$ is a square of a polynomial in c , therefore we have $aT+M=\pm T\sqrt{af(a)+M^2}$

Thus for each positive integer a , there is a positive $T \leq M$ such that $(af(a)+M^2)T^2=a^2 T^2+2aTM+M^2$, it is easy to see that if a is large enough, we have $T=1$ and $f(a)=a+2M$.

Plugging $a \in S$ we have $M=-1$. Now for $a=1$ we have $T=1$ and $M=-1$, thus $f(1)=3$ and $3+1=1+2(-1)+1$, contradiction.

Case 2.2.1.2: $cf^a(c)+a^2=(k_c c-a)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Then $f^a(c)=k_c^2 c-2ak_c$ for infinitely many $c \in S$.

$af(a)+M^2+k_c^2 c^2-2ak_c c+2Mc$ is a square for many $c \in S$. Similarly, for all a there is a positive $T \leq M$ such that $(af(a)+M^2)T^2=a^2 T^2-2aTM+M^2$, if a is large enough we have $T=1$ and $f(a)=a-2M$. Plugging $a \in S$ then $M=1$, thus $f(1)<0$, contradiction.

Thus in case 2.2.1 we have no such function.

Case 2.2.2: $f(c)=c+2$ for all infinitely many $c \in S$

Similarly we have $c(c+2)+f^c(1)+f(1) < (\sqrt{c^2+f^c(1)}+2)^2$

Thus $c(c+2)+f^c(1)+f(1) = (\sqrt{c^2+f^c(1)}+1)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

This is equivalent to $2\sqrt{c^2+f^c(1)}=2c+f(1)-1$

Thus $f^c(1)=c(f(1)-1)+\frac{1}{4}(f(1)-1)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Let $M=\frac{1}{2}(f(1)-1)$ then $M>0$ since $f(1) \neq 1$

From (3) we have $af(a)+2Mc+M^2+cf^a(c)$ is a square for infinitely many $c \in S$

We have $cf^a(c)+a^2$ is a square for all $c \in S$, thus $cf^a(c)+a^2=(k_c c \pm a)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Case 2.2.2.1: $cf^a(c)+a^2=(k_c c+a)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Do exactly what we did in **Case 2.2.1.1**, we see that for each positive integer a , there is a positive $T \leq M$ such that $(af(a)+M^2)T^2=a^2 T^2+2aTM+M^2$, plugging a large a such that $f(a)=a+2$, we have $T=1$ and $M=1$, thus $f(a)=a+2$ for all a .

Case 2.2.2.2: $cf^a(c)+a^2=(k_c c-a)^2$ for infinitely many $c \in S$

Do exactly what we did in **Case 2.2.1.1**, we see that for each positive integer a , there is a positive $T \leq M$ such that $(af(a)+M^2)T^2=a^2 T^2-2aTM+M^2$, plugging a large a such that $f(a)=a+2$, we have $T=1$ and $M=-1$, thus $f(1)=-3$, contradiction.

Thus in case 2.2.2 we have $f(a)=a+2$ for all a .

We conclude that in case 1 the only solution is $f(a)=a+2$ for all a .