Course administration and assessment

We tell you what you need to do each week on the Activities Timeline. Check that page each week for deadlines, and any new links or tips.

Your final mark is made up of:

- 10% from your best 6 out of 7 marks from weekly core questions.
- 25% from assignment 2.
- 65% from the final exam in December.

There are also questions in the notes, which are not assessed. We ask you to submit brief answers to these anyway. It’s too easy to look at answers before committing to an answer, and to think “I would have got that”. You need to practice being sure for the exam. Seeing the class’s answers also helps us to help you. Wrong and alternative answers are really useful!

We intend the overall workload for the class to be manageable (10–13 hours a week) for someone with the background pre-requisites, and have tried to give you flexibility over when you study. Nevertheless, however we structure things, learning substantial new material is hard work.

1 Tutorials

Tutorials are mainly small group discussion of questions you’ve done for the class, and follow-on material. Come willing to ask questions, risk looking foolish, and engage in discussion. This is your chance to really stretch your ability to work with the material, and your ability to explain it to others.

Your tutors are there to help, and cannot affect your mark on the course. We take in core questions separately, to make sure everyone has some common ground for discussion, but these are marked centrally and anonymously, not by your tutor.

As on the timeline, and as the course has always been run, tutorials will start in week 3. You will only attend one of the sessions listed in the University timetable. Students change their course options into week 2, so we won’t assign your group until the last minute, at the end of week 2, or even Monday of week 3. We know you’ll have some constraints and preferences. We’ll let you know about arrangements by email to the class list, an announcement on Learn, and in class meetings. Until then, please be patient.

Tutorials are not open to ‘class-only’ or auditing students. To attend tutorials you must be registered to take the class for credit.

2 Weekly core questions

Our aim with the regular core questions, with no extensions, is to let us give you timely feedback and to avoid people falling behind. The tutorials do not work well if some people have done nothing that week. We hope that most people will do more than the core questions most weeks.

Each hand-in is worth less than 2% of your final course mark. Make sure you do what you can: if you did nothing for every handin, your final mark would fall by a whole grade. However, if you don’t get the marks for a few questions, it really won’t matter; they should not be a source of stress.

We expect that most students will be sick, or otherwise have a bad week, so we will only take your best 6 of your 7 weekly handins. If you have special circumstances that affect
more than one of the weekly hand-ins, you will have to follow the special circumstance procedures to ask for a hand-in to be discounted. Do not approach the lecturers about special circumstances.

If the weekly deadlines really can’t work for you (e.g., because of a relevant disability or chronic illness), you should formally agree learning adjustments with the University and tell us now.

3 Assessed assignment

This will be an extended task with short questions involving code, mathematical reasoning, and English explanations. The unassessed assignment 1 will provide you with practice and feedback.

The assignment is not a large project. However, we are giving you 4 weeks to do it, so you can fit it around your other work. You are likely to have multiple deadlines at the end of Semester, so we recommend that you get it out of the way early.

Resist the temptation to spend large amounts of time trying to get a couple more percent on your final course average. Your time is better spent on other courses, or preparing for the exam. A grade difference on the assignment is often worth a comparable amount of credit to a single part of a question on an exam.

4 December Exam

The exam contributes 65% of your final mark. It’s open-book, will be taken online, and you must not communicate with anyone else during the exam.

More information is on the Activities Timeline.