COSC-211: DATA STRUCTURES
HOMEWORK SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND RUBRIC

1   Rubric

We will mark your homework on a 5-point scale. You can interpret this scale as follows:

5 points You've got it! If there are any errors or misconceptions, we can almost certainly resolve them with a five minute meeting.

4 points You're on the right track. There are a few concepts we need to clear up. We can probably address any misconceptions within the time of a one-on-one office hours appointment (15 minutes or so).

3 points You've got some of the right ideas. There are some larger issues that we need to address. We might need to meet for up to half an hour or so to discuss this material.

2 points You've made a good faith effort, but we'll need to do a fair amount of work to clear up some gaps and misconceptions. Please come talk to us as soon as possible.

1 point You submitted something. (For programming assignments, your submission needs to pass the compile/run autograder check to get this point.)

Note that this scale is not a grade, in the sense that there is not a direct mapping from points to a letter grade. Instead, we intend for your homework score to give you a clear indication of how you're doing and, more importantly, what you should do to get back on track if you didn't get a 5.

2   Submission Guidelines

Your work for this class has a few different audiences. For programming assignments, one audience is the computer: the computer should be able to "understand" your code in the sense that your code should run without causing errors. The other audience, for both programming and written assignments, consists of the people (Prof. Kaplan, Prof. Gardner, and the TAs) who will read your work. You should strive to ensure that whatever you submit—code or written work—is clear, legible, and understandable to this human audience.

We're not going to require you to follow specific style guidelines for your code, but here are some suggestions for writing code that is readable by humans:

- Be consistent about spacing, indentation, bracketing, etc.

- Give your variables and methods meaningful names that indicate their purpose.

- Use some general naming conventions (e.g., classes should begin with capital letters, variable and method names with lowercase letters).

- Think about your code organization (e.g., put fields at the top of the class before any methods, write a method rather than repeating the same code in multiple places).

- Comment your code.

Code that is very difficult for your human audience to follow may not get a 5 on the above rubric, even if it produces the desired behavior when run.

In written work, too, it's important that your audience can follow what you're talking about. Here are some suggestions:

- Use complete sentences, and check your spelling, grammar, etc.

- If you're writing your solutions by hand, please make sure your writing is neat and legible.

- If you're typing your solutions, check to make sure any symbols, images, etc. are visible and show up the way you want them to in the document that you submit.

- Proofread!

3 Deadlines, Late Days, and Extensions

Homework usually will be assigned on Friday and due the following Thursday night. You may take 4 late days during the semester. These can be used for any reason, without penalty, and you do not need to ask me or tell me that you are using them. Details:

- 11:59pm (midnight) ET is the cutoff for what constitutes a "day" (that is, if the homework is due on Thursday, then if you submit it between 12:00am ET and 11:59pm ET on Friday it is one day late, if you submit it between 12:00am ET and 11:59pm ET on Saturday it is two days late, etc.

- You may use up to 2 late days without penalty on any individual homework assignment.

- We'll grant additional extensions only if we hear from your class dean that you are facing extenuating medical or personal circumstances. If you need an additional extension, please get in touch with your section instructor (Prof. Gardner or Prof. Kaplan) as soon as possible, and certainly before the assignment is due.

4 Collaboration and Intellectual Responsibility

We encourage you to discuss the course material with your study group and other classmates. However, your final writeup must be entirely your own work and it must reflect your own individual understanding. Our rule of thumb on collaboration is that you should leave discussions with your classmates with new ideas, but no new tangibles (e.g., notes, screenshots, photos of the whiteboard, etc.) Work with your classmates to formulate an approach to a problem, but then work independently to write up your solution. Do not look at other students' written work or code, and

do not show your written work or code to other students. Please do not discuss assignments or share work with anyone other than myself, the course TA, and students currently enrolled in the class.

Please do not go to the internet with the express purpose of finding a solution to a homework problem. This defeats the purpose of homework as a tool to help you develop your problem-solving skills. A warning: There is a great deal of information available on the internet. Some of it is very helpful, and some of it is garbage. Please be mindful of this, and evaluate your internet sources carefully should you choose to turn to the internet as a resource to support your learning (and again, you may not look for homework solutions on the internet, under any circumstances).