

CSC165 exam tactics

December 4, 2009

The exam is nine questions long, marked out of 90, and lasts three hours. It is comprehensive, that is you are responsible for the entire twelve-week semester. Some questions are similar to material you've worked on for assignments, term tests, or tutorials. You always have the option of leaving a question blank or writing "I do not know how to answer this" for 20% of the marks applicable to that portion of the exam. For a formal proof, you will receive roughly half marks if you write a correct outline and do not write any steps that you can't justify.

Here are some suggestions for the best use of your time.

1. Be sure to be familiar with (although the exam may not be limited to these):
 - Logic, precise logical notation, implication, Venn diagrams.
 - Proof techniques, structured proof format.
 - Big-Oh (big-Omega, big-Theta).
 - Algorithm complexity.
 - Binary numbers, floating-point representation, sources of error.
 - Tests, assignments, exercises, lecture examples.
2. Read every exam question before starting, since you may find some easier than others.
3. Make sure you understand what you're being asked to do before you begin writing. When in doubt, ask me a question and I will try to provide a fair answer.
4. Write the outline of a proof, even if there are steps you can fill in. Indicate which steps you can't fill in. Specify which things you assume without proof.
5. Use the spaces left on the exam paper as an indication of expected length.