University of Bristol – School of Mathematics

Use of Calculators in Mathematics Examinations

The Rules

In the majority of Mathematics Department examinations, calculators may not be used. Each unit description should say, in the Assessment section, whether or not calculators are allowed. If in doubt, ask the unit organiser.

For those exams in which calculators are allowed, they must have:

- no graphics capability
- no complex number or matrix or capability
- no symbolic algebra or calculus capability
  (for example, it must not be able to give you the formula \( (1 + x)^4 = 1 + 4x + 6x^2 + 4x^3 + x^4 \),
  or tell you that \( \sin 2A = 2 \sin A \cos A \), or that the derivative of \( \cos x \) is \( -\sin x \)).
- no equation-solving capability
- no capacity to store text
- no programming capability.

If you are not sure whether your calculator satisfies these conditions, see the Undergraduate Coordinator (Room G2).

The Reason for the Rules

Sophisticated calculators are available at a range of prices. Students who can afford elaborate calculators may have an unfair advantage if they are allowed to use them in examinations. This issue was discussed with student representatives and the result was a decision to allow only simple calculators in exams. Students are, of course, free to use any equipment they like for their work during the year.

Examples

The list below gives the basic model types for some cheap calculators, costing from about £7. It is difficult to be more precise as manufacturers are constantly upgrading their models. You are not restricted to these; you may use other calculators, but it is your responsibility (even for the types listed below) to check that your calculator satisfies the requirements above.

- Casio FX 83, FX 85
- Sharp EL 531
- Texas Instruments TI 30

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