

Comments on grading problem set #1

As the answer key states, each problem set received a grade of $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{-}$.

Whatever your grade, you should study the answer key provided. At times, I may have written: “SAK” = see answer key.

Remember that for final grading purposes, we will drop the lowest problem set grade that you receive. I urge you to give attention to understanding the material covered in the problem sets rather than being concerned with the particular grade you received. That said, people will want to know what criteria I used to determine the grade for the problem set. Here is how it worked.

The answer to each question received an individual mark of $+$, $\sqrt{}$, or $-$.

A mark of “ $+$ ” indicates that your answer correctly provided the key point or points.

A mark of “ $\sqrt{}$ ” indicates that your answer was mostly right but you may have not treated some aspect that we wanted covered or you may have misstated some aspect of the correct answer.

A mark of “ $-$ ” indicates that your answer was pretty much off the mark. See the answer key to understand where you went wrong or come talk to me during office hours.

A couple of comments about specific questions.

Regarding question 3(b): In lecture on January 31st, we provided the elements for you to answer this question. You saw two overheads. One of these explained neutral technical change. The other explained the concept non-neutral technical change. Nonetheless, I’ve decided that to arrive at the answer we were looking for may have required too large a leap. For the purposes of the overall grade on the problem set, the mark you received on 3(b) is irrelevant. I wrote an extensive answer to 3(b) for inclusion in the answer key to fill in whatever blanks may have been left by the lecture.

Regarding question 2: This was a question that had been used in previous years. I realized now that we should have replaced 2005 with 2006 or 2007. Despite the problem, many of your answers were right. Nonetheless, since the question was potentially confusing, it will not be counted against you.

Now to explain how I arrived at grades of $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{-}$ for your problem sets.

- $\sqrt{+}$: with respect to individual marks on questions, at most two \sqrt{s} and no $-$ (minus) marks for the problem set as a whole.
- $\sqrt{}$: cases in between $\sqrt{+}$ and $\sqrt{-}$.

- $\sqrt{-}$: more than half – (minus) marks on individual questions for the problem set as a whole. Leaving aside question 2 and question 3(b), for reasons explained above, that leaves 7 questions. So you got a $\sqrt{-}$ if you received – (minus) scores on 4 of 7 questions. Your primary concern should not be the implications for your overall course grade, but rather that you review the answer key to make sure that you understand the material. The effect of a single problem set mark on your overall grade will be very, very small.

I am happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about the problem set. I encourage you to come to talk with me about the substance of the assignment. I do want to discourage complaints about grades. Be aware that if you ask me to consider changing your grade on the problem set, my policy will be to re-grade the entire problem set. I've been told by students in the past that their approach is to contest every grade to see if they can secure some improvement. So, in response, to discourage frivolous contestation of grades, the process must include some risk, some potential cost, for the person seeking to contest their grade.