Exam 2 Post Mortem

The scores on Exam 2 had an unusual feature. This class did unusually well on problems that require understanding derivatives, what they measure, and how to use them in applications. But this class did unusually poorly on the task of computing derivatives. This is actually a good situation, since the first thing is very hard to get good at and represents a much deeper understanding. The second thing is not so hard to get good at, so I propose that we spend some more time on it.

First I want you to do your own analysis of your test score as follows:

1. Add up all the individual scores. Check that it agrees with what I posted in the online gradebook. If this is 65 or better, then that’s a good score. If it’s lower then it’s important to know why. Make an appointment to see me if you would like to talk about it.

2. Add up just your scores on Problems 1, 2, 3 and 4. These are the conceptual and applied problems. If your score on these problems is 35 or better, call it good. If it’s 30–35, it’s not so bad. If it’s below 30 then there are still some problems with the conceptual understanding of what derivatives measure and how to use them. Perhaps we should make an appointment to talk about this.

3. Add up your scores on Problems 6, 7, 8 and 9. These are the problems that are essentially just “take a derivative”. If you missed any points here it’s important to know why. If your score is 30–35, that’s quite good. If it’s 25–30 it’s bearable. If it’s below 25 then there is room for significant improvement.

Once you do your self-grading, consider this proposal:

1. I will hold an extra class every Thursday from now until the end of the semester.
   Time: 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
   Location: Math/Geo Room 106

2. If you want to get better at taking derivatives, show up. We will practice taking derivatives.

3. If you do this I will use the fact that you did it, together with the work that you do in each of these one hour sessions, to re-evaluate your Exam 2 score at the end of the semester. I can’t commit to a numerical scheme for this, but it certainly can’t hurt your grade and it can probably help it.