

Questions for STEP Tutorial 1 – Division by zero

**STEP
Mathematics I
Summer 2003**

- 2 The first question on an examination paper is:

$$\text{Solve for } x \text{ the equation } \frac{1}{x} = \frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{b}.$$

where (in the question) a and b are given non-zero real numbers. One candidate writes $x = a + b$ as the solution. Show that there are no values of a and b for which this will give the correct answer.

The next question on the examination paper is:

$$\text{Solve for } x \text{ the equation } \frac{1}{x} = \frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{b} + \frac{1}{c}.$$

where (in the question) a , b and c are given non-zero numbers. The candidate uses the same technique, giving the answer as $x = a + b + c$. Show that the candidate's answer will be correct if and only if a , b and c satisfy at least one of the equations $a + b = 0$, $b + c = 0$ or $c + a = 0$.

**STEP
Mathematics I
Summer 2003**

- 6 Evaluate the following integrals, in the different cases that arise according to the value of the positive constant a :

$$(i) \int_0^1 \frac{1}{x^2 + (a+2)x + 2a} dx;$$

$$(ii) \int_1^2 \frac{1}{u^2 + au + a - 1} du.$$

**STEP
Mathematics I
Summer 2007**

- 4 Show that $x^3 - 3xbc + b^3 + c^3$ can be written in the form $(x + b + c)Q(x)$, where $Q(x)$ is a quadratic expression. Show that $2Q(x)$ can be written as the sum of three expressions, each of which is a perfect square.

It is given that the equations $ay^2 + by + c = 0$ and $by^2 + cy + a = 0$ have a common root k . The coefficients a , b and c are real, a and b are both non-zero, and $ac \neq b^2$. Show that

$$(ac - b^2)k = bc - a^2$$

and determine a similar expression involving k^2 . Hence show that

$$(ac - b^2)(ab - c^2) = (bc - a^2)^2$$

and that $a^3 - 3abc + b^3 + c^3 = 0$. Deduce that either $k = 1$ or the two equations are identical.

**STEP
Mathematics I
Summer 2003**

- 1 It is given that $\sum_{r=-1}^n r^2$ can be written in the form $pn^3 + qn^2 + rn + s$, where p , q , r and s are numbers. By setting $n = -1, 0, 1$ and 2 , obtain four equations that must be satisfied by p , q , r and s and hence show that

$$\sum_{r=0}^n r^2 = \frac{1}{6}n(n+1)(2n+1).$$

Given that $\sum_{r=-2}^n r^3$ can be written in the form $an^4 + bn^3 + cn^2 + dn + e$, show similarly that

$$\sum_{r=0}^n r^3 = \frac{1}{4}n^2(n+1)^2.$$