Guidelines for Grades on Strategy Design Assignments

All grades are inherently a bit subjective, even in proof-based courses with a clear “correct” answer. Still, grades on strategy design assignments are inherently a little bit more subjective than the rest of the course. Below is a brief explanation of how your grades will be computed.

- Every strategy design assignment will be worth 35 points.

- 20 points can be obtained by “correctly” answering all prompts given in the assignment. “Correctly” is in quotes because the questions are not mathematically formal, and you are not expected to write a proof that your answer is “correct.” You are expected to rigorously justify your answer using ideas from the course (and it may or may not make sense to include a proof of a related statement). There may be multiple “correct” answers, but there will always be at least one that can be deduced using ideas from the course. These answers will be graded as objectively as any other problem in the course.

- 15 points will depend on the quality of your solution. There are two ways to earn these points:
  - Performance of your solution. We will run everyone’s submitted code, along with a few submissions by the course staff, ranging from trivial to more interesting. You’ll receive up to 15 points based on how many course-staff submissions you outperform. Observe that these points are not zero-sum, as you must only outperform the course staff.
  - Quality of writeup and strength of justification. This evaluation is inherently more subjective than the rest of the course and will be graded based on “how well you convinced the grader that your solution is a good approach.” You should focus on why your strategy is good, and not what your strategy does (although obviously the what is necessary to get into the why). You will receive up to 15 points for this portion.

- Your score will be the maximum of these two.¹

- There will be 5 strategy designs throughout the semester. Your lowest of the 5 grades will be dropped. You may wind up dropping your first grade because you found the instructions unclear at first, the last assignment because you’re happy with your first 4 grades, or any assignment during an unusually busy period. You do not need to declare which grade you would like dropped, your lowest grade will be automatically dropped (including empty submissions).

Collaboration: The emphasis of these projects are on design of strategies, not implementation. As such, you may use snippets of code provided by staff, or that you find online (provided that those snippets were not written with the intent of solving this strategy design exercise). You may not use snippets of code written by other students in this class or any previous iterations of this class.²

¹This is subject to change for SD2. This document will be updated before SD2 is released.
²For example, if for some reason your solution wants to find the minimum spanning tree in a graph, you may search for a solution online and copy it. But you may not copy your classmate’s code (although you may discuss extensively with your classmate how you plan to solve the problem, before coding on your own).