Comments on the way to present your responses in an exam

In exams you are requested to present your responses in a clear, ordered and carefully justified manner. This means the following, among other things:

- You should use a clear, easily legible handwriting. You can't expect to get a fair grade if what you wrote is hard to understand.
- A clear and ordered response should consist, almost always, of a single sequence of steps. Each step should only use givens of the problem, data or facts that you clearly justify, and/or results from previous steps. A step should never use results from later steps.
- There are a few exceptions, in which it may be justified to present two sequences of steps in parallel. This would be the case, for example, if you're performing two similar calculations on different data. Even in this case, however, a step should never use results from later steps. And "auxiliary calculations" should not be presented in parallel: they should be integrated into the single sequence of steps that forms your presentation.
- Your response shouldn't consist simply of a sequence of equations or expressions. Each step should include a brief text (normally one or two sentences) explaining what is being done. For example: "The gradient of this function is:". That text should also give a brief (but clear) justification, unless the justification is evident. For example: "At the minimum, the gradient of the function is zero; therefore…"
- You should always use correct and clear notation. Use of incorrect notation will negatively influence your grade. Among other things:
    - You should always explain the meaning of the symbols that you use, unless that is perfectly clear from the context.
    - You should never use the same symbol with two different meanings, unless you very clearly explain that you are doing so.
    - Your notation should be mathematically correct. For example, there should never be two consecutive arithmetic operation symbols.
- Your statements should all be correct. If you correctly solve a problem but include, somewhere, a statement that is wrong, that will have a negative influence on your grade, even if that statement doesn't have any relationship with, or any influence on the solution.

Note that presenting your responses in an unclear or disordered manner will have a negative influence on your grade. That influence can be large. In extreme cases, if your presentation is very unclear or very disordered, it can lead to a grade of zero – even if your reasoning was ultimately correct!

These notes apply specifically to the exams of our course, but also apply, more generally, to exams and tests of most courses. Therefore you should always keep them in mind.

Be careful with the way in which you present your responses. And good luck for your exam!