

8.1 Database Concepts

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 23 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **database concepts** —why relational databases beat flat files, the relational terms, keys, relationships and **normalisation** 规范化.

You must be able to:

- state the limitations of a **file-based** approach and how a **relational database** 关系数据库 fixes them
- use the terms **table**, **record**, **field**, **primary key** 主键 and **foreign key** 外键
- read an **entity-relationship (E-R) diagram** and explain whether tables are in **3NF**

1 Worked examples

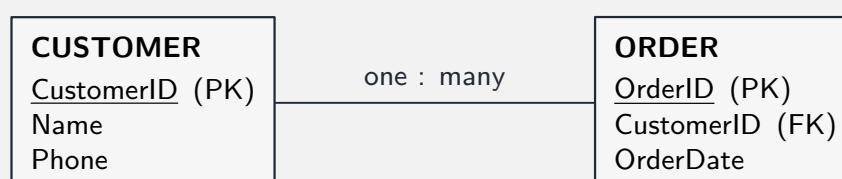
Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later —follow the steps and you can do the Practice and Exam-style questions yourself.

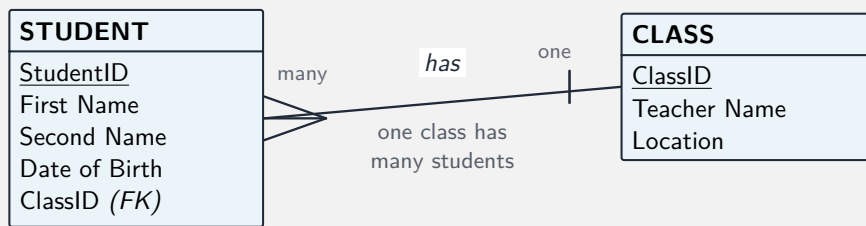
■ File-based limits → relational database

Storing data in separate **flat files** causes **data redundancy** (the same fact stored in several files), **data inconsistency** (copies updated separately disagree), and **data dependence** (programs tied to the file format). A relational database stores data once in linked **tables** managed by one DBMS, fixing all three.

■ Relational terms and keys

Term	Meaning
table (relation)	a grid for one entity, e.g. CUSTOMER
record (row)	one instance of the entity
field (column)	one piece of data about each record
primary key	field(s) that uniquely identify each record
foreign key	a field that refers to the primary key of another table





An entity-relationship diagram models the data

■ Normalisation (up to 3NF)

Normalisation removes redundancy. A table is in **Third Normal Form (3NF)** when every non-key field depends on **the key, the whole key, and nothing but the key** —i.e. atomic values (1NF), no partial dependency on part of a composite key (2NF), and no field depending on another non-key field (3NF). A **many-to-many** relationship is split using a **link (junction) table** holding two foreign keys.

■ Relationships and referential integrity

Two tables are linked by a **relationship** —**one-to-one**, **one-to-many** or **many-to-many**. The foreign key is placed on the **"many"** side. An **entity-relationship (E-R) diagram** shows these links.

Referential integrity 参照完整性 means every **foreign key** value must match an existing **primary key** in the other table (or be empty). It stops you recording, for example, an order for a customer who does not exist —the DBMS rejects a foreign key that has no matching record.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 State **two** limitations of a file-based approach to storing data. [2]

2.2 Define **primary key** and **foreign key**. [2]

2.3 State what an **entity** is in a relational database. [1]

2.4 State what **First Normal Form (1NF)** requires. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 (a) State **two** problems caused by storing data in separate flat files. [2]

(b) State how a relational database removes one of them. [1]

3.2 Define each term: (a) record (b) field (c) primary key. [3]

3.3 Explain what it means for a table to be in **Third Normal Form (3NF)**. [3]

3.4 A school needs to record which students belong to which clubs; a student can join many clubs and a club has many students. Describe how to represent this **many-to-many** relationship using tables. [3]

3.5 (a) State what is meant by **referential integrity**. [2]

(b) A database has a **CUSTOMER** table and an **ORDER** table; one customer can place many

orders. State the **relationship type** and which table holds the **foreign key**. [2]

4 Go further

You are now ready for the real exam questions on this subtopic. Open the **8.1 Database Concepts** past-paper sheet in the Library, or try these in **Practice mode**:

- 9618/11 N24 —Q2 (E-R diagram and normalisation)
- 9618/11 J25 —Q5 (keys and relationships)
- 9618/13 J25 —Q6 (referential integrity and 3NF)
- 9618/12 N24 —Q6 (relational database concepts)

Solutions

2.1 Any two of: data redundancy (same data in several files); data inconsistency (copies disagree); data dependence (programs tied to the file format); weak security/sharing/querying.

2.2 Primary key = field(s) that **uniquely identify** each record; foreign key = a field that refers to the **primary key of another table**.

2.3 A **thing** the database stores data about (e.g. a customer, a book) —one table per entity.

2.4 All values are **atomic** (single values) —no repeating groups in a field.

3.1 (a) Any two: redundancy; inconsistency; data dependence; poor sharing/security.

(b) e.g. each fact is stored **once** in a table, so there is no redundancy/inconsistency.

3.2 Record = one **row** (one instance of the entity); field = one **column** (one piece of data); primary key = field(s) that **uniquely identify** a record.

3.3 Every non-key field depends on **the whole primary key** and on **nothing but the key**; values are atomic (1NF) and there is no partial dependency (2NF); no non-key field depends on another non-key field (no transitive dependency).

3.4 Create a **link (junction) table** (e.g. STUDENT_CLUB) holding a foreign key to STUDENT and a foreign key to CLUB; each row records one student-in-one-club, so many-to-many becomes two one-to-many relationships.

3.5 (a) Every foreign key value must match an existing primary key in the related table (or be null), so the database cannot hold a reference to a record that does not exist.

(b) A **one-to-many** relationship; the foreign key (**CustomerID**) is held in the **ORDER** table —the "many" side.