

10.6 Comparison Tests for Convergence

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS limit comparison • direct comparison • converges
 • diverges • geometric series

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on the **comparison tests** for convergence.

You must be able to:

- use the **direct comparison test** with a known series
- use the **limit comparison test** ($\lim a_n/b_n$ finite and positive)
- choose a good comparison series (a p-series or geometric series)

1 Key knowledge and 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.

■ Direct comparison

If $0 \leq a_n \leq b_n$ and $\sum b_n$ **converges**, then $\sum a_n$ converges. If $a_n \geq b_n \geq 0$ and $\sum b_n$ **diverges**, then $\sum a_n$ diverges.

■ A direct comparison example

$\sum \frac{1}{n^2 + 1}$: since $\frac{1}{n^2 + 1} \leq \frac{1}{n^2}$ and $\sum \frac{1}{n^2}$ converges, the series **converges**.

■ Limit comparison

If $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} = L$ with $0 < L < \infty$, then $\sum a_n$ and $\sum b_n$ do the **same** thing. Easier when the terms only *behave* like a known series.

■ A limit comparison example

$\sum \frac{2n+1}{n^3+5}$: compare with $b_n = \frac{1}{n^2}$. $\frac{a_n}{b_n} = \frac{(2n+1)n^2}{n^3+5} \rightarrow 2$, finite and positive. Since $\sum \frac{1}{n^2}$ converges, so does the series.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 For $\sum \frac{1}{n^3 + 2}$, name a good comparison series. [1]

2.2 Is $\frac{1}{n^3 + 2} \leq \frac{1}{n^3}$? What does this tell you? [2]

2.3 For limit comparison of $\sum \frac{n}{n^2 + 1}$, a good b_n is $\frac{1}{n}$. Find $\lim \frac{a_n}{b_n}$. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 In the limit comparison test, if $\lim \frac{a_n}{b_n} = L$ with $0 < L < \infty$, then [1]

☐

- A** $\sum a_n$ always converges
B $\sum a_n$ and $\sum b_n$ behave the same way
C $\sum a_n$ always diverges
D the test is inconclusive

3.2 Use direct comparison to show $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n + 1}$ converges. [3]

3.3 Use limit comparison with $b_n = \frac{1}{n}$ to decide whether $\sum \frac{n+2}{n^2+3}$ converges. [4]