

17.1 Multivariable extrema and constrained optimisation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 10 marks

KEY WORDS Hessian • Lagrange multiplier

Objective

Classify two-variable critical points with the Hessian; Use Lagrange multipliers with a regular constraint; Compare extrema and attainable values under regular constraints.

Original public practice. Marking guidance is authored locally. Use the topic reference for prerequisites and full theorem statements.

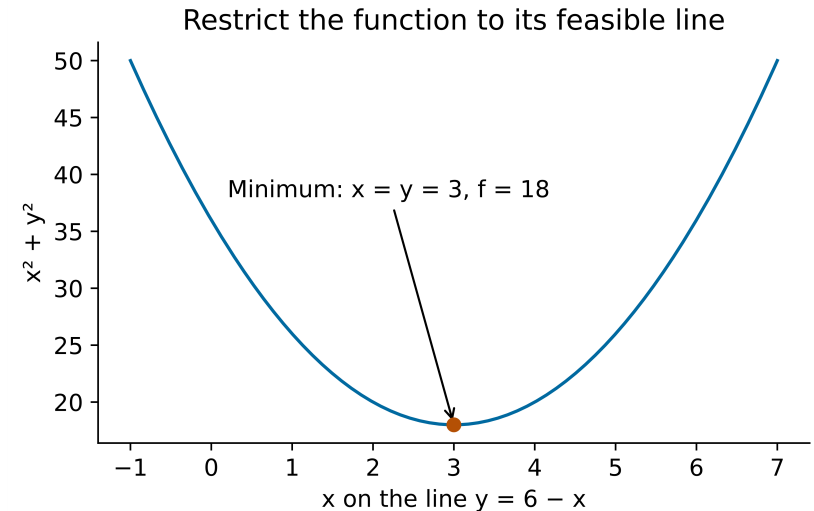
1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Hessian : The matrix of second partial derivatives used to study local curvature.

Lagrange multiplier : A scalar relating objective and regular constraint gradients at a constrained extremum.

For a differentiable function on an open domain, an interior local extremum has zero gradient. This condition is necessary, not sufficient. For two variables at a critical point, let $D = f_{xx}f_{yy} - (f_{xy})^2$. If $D > 0$, $f_{xx} > 0$ gives a strict local minimum and $f_{xx} < 0$ gives a strict local maximum; $D < 0$ gives a saddle. These tests require suitable second-derivative regularity near the point.

Minimise $x^2 + y^2$ subject to $x + y = 6$. The constraint gradient is $(1, 1)$, so $2x = \lambda$ and $2y = \lambda$. Thus $x = y$ and the constraint gives $x = y = 3$, with value 18. Completing the square on the line gives $x^2 + (6 - x)^2 = 2(x - 3)^2 + 18$, proving a global minimum. There is no maximum on this unbounded line, despite the existence of a multiplier candidate.



Substitute the constraint first: the minimum is at $x = y = 3$, where $x^2 + y^2 = 18$

2 Practice

2.1 At a critical point $f_{xx} = 2$, $f_{yy} = -2$ and $f_{xy} = 0$. What does the second-derivative test give? [1]

- A Strict minimum
- B Strict maximum
- C Saddle point
- D Inconclusive
- E No critical point

2.2 What is the maximum of xy subject to $x^2 + y^2 = 2$? [1]

- A -2
- B -1
- C 0
- D 1
- E 2

2.3 Classify the origin for $f(x, y) = x^2 - y^2$ and for $g(x, y) = x^4 + y^4$. State what a zero Hessian determinant permits you to conclude. [4]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Find all extrema of $f(x, y) = xy$ subject to $x^2 + y^2 = 2$. Compare with minimising $x^2 + y^2$ on the line $x + y = 4$, including whether maxima exist. [4]
