

# 7.2 Encapsulation and UML class diagrams

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: 21 marks

**KEY WORDS** encapsulation • private • public • accessor  
• mutator • UML class diagram

## Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **encapsulation and class design** – private and public members, accessors and mutators with validation, and UML class diagrams.

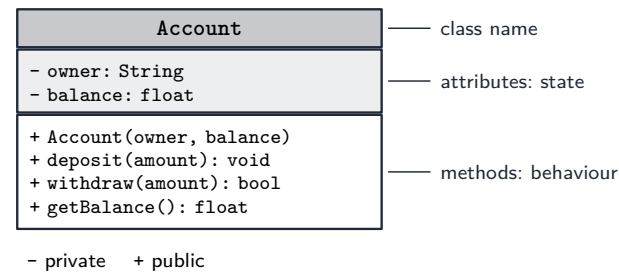
You must be able to:

- explain **encapsulation** and give its advantages
- mark members **private** or **public**, and say who can use each
- write an **accessor** and a **mutator** that rejects invalid values
- draw and read a **UML class diagram** from a scenario

## 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later.

### ■ Key knowledge: a UML class diagram



- Three compartments: name, attributes with types, methods with parameters and return types.
- Attributes are usually private (-); the methods other code needs are public (+).

- In Java: `private double balance;`. In Python a leading underscore marks a private attribute: `self._balance`.
- Worked example: validation in a mutator



The rule “the balance is never negative” is kept inside the class.

```
class Account:
    def __init__(self, owner, balance):
        self._owner = owner
        self._balance = max(0.0, balance)

    def get_balance(self):           # accessor
        return self._balance

    def withdraw(self, amount):     # mutator
        if amount <= 0 or amount > self._balance:
            return False
        self._balance = self._balance - amount
        return True
```

| Call                      | Returns | _balance after |
|---------------------------|---------|----------------|
| acc = Account("Li", 15.0) |         | 15.0           |
| acc.withdraw(30.0)        | False   | 15.0           |
| acc.withdraw(-5.0)        | False   | 15.0           |
| acc.withdraw(15.0)        | True    | 0.0            |

1. The check comes **before** the change, so a rejected call changes nothing.
2. No outside code can set `_balance` directly, so every change passes the check.

### ■ Worked example: from scenario to class

A gym member has a name and a number of credits. Credits can be added, and a class can be booked if the member has at least one credit, which booking uses up.

1. Nouns that are data: **name**, **credits** → private attributes.
2. Verbs: add credits, book a class → public methods; read credits → an accessor.
3. The rule lives in **book()**: it returns **False** when **credits** is 0.

## 2 Practice

2.1 Explain what is meant by encapsulation. [2]

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2.2 State **two** advantages of making an attribute private and providing a mutator. [2]

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2.3 Draw the UML class diagram for the gym member in the worked example, with a constructor, **add\_credits(n)**, **book()** and **get\_credits()**. [4]

2.4 State the output of `acc = Account("Bo", -20.0)`, then `print(acc.get_balance())`. [1]

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## 3 Exam-style questions

3.1 In a UML class diagram, what does - before an attribute mean? [1]

- ☐ A it is public  
☐ B it is private  
☐ C it is static  
☐ D it can be negative

3.2 Which method is an accessor? [1]

- ☐ A `set_age(a)`  
☐ B `get_age()`  
☐ C `birthday()`  
☐ D `__init__(name, age)`

3.3 Why should a mutator check a new value **before** changing the attribute? [1]

- ☐ A checking is faster before the change  
☐ B a rejected value then leaves the object unchanged  
☐ C accessors cannot read checked values  
☐ D the constructor needs the old value

3.4 A school locker system stores a locker's number, whether it is locked and a 4-digit code.

(a) Draw a UML class diagram for **Locker** with a constructor and the public methods **lock()**, **unlock(code)** and **is\_locked()**. [4]

(b) Write the method `unlock(code)`. It unlocks the locker and returns `True` only if `code` matches the stored code. [3]

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(c) Explain why the `code` attribute should be private and have **no** accessor. [2]

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## Solutions

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Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

### 2.1

- the data and the methods that act on it are bundled in one class
- the data is hidden and can only be reached through those methods

### 2.2

- the mutator can reject invalid values, so the object stays valid
- the inside of the class can change without breaking code that uses it

### 2.3

- name compartment **Member**
- - **name**: **String**, - **credits**: **int**
- + **Member(name)**, + **add\_credits(n)**: **void**, + **book()**: **bool**, + **get\_credits()**: **int**
- - on the attributes and + on the methods

### 2.4

- **0.0**: the constructor stores **max(0.0, -20.0)**

### 3.1 B

- - private, + public

### 3.2 B

- it returns a value and changes nothing

### 3.3 B

- check, then change

### 3.4

(a)

- name compartment **Locker**
- private attributes with types: - **number**: **int**, - **locked**: **bool**, - **code**: **String**
- constructor + **Locker(number, code)**
- + **lock()**: **void**, + **unlock(code)**: **bool**, + **is\_locked()**: **bool**

(b) One answer:

```
def unlock(self, code):
    if code == self._code:
        self._locked = False
        return True
    return False
```

- compares **code** with the stored code
- sets **locked** to **False** only on a match
- returns **True** or **False**

(c)

- other code cannot read the code and open any locker
- the only way in is through **unlock**, which checks the code