Unit A6: Polynomials and Equations

Objective: (1) To learn the properties of polynomials with real coefficients in one variable.
(2) To learn division algorithm, remainder theorem and Euclidean algorithm and their applications.
(3) To resolve rational functions into partial fractions.
(4) To learn the properties of roots of polynomial equations with real coefficients in one variable.

Detailed Content	Time Ratio	Notes on Teaching
6.1 Polynomials with real coefficients in one variable	5	Students are expected to know the general form of a polynomial with real coefficients in one variable and the following terms: degree of a non-zero polynomial, leading coefficient, constant term, monic polynomial, null or zero polynomial. Definitions of equality, sum, difference and product of two polynomials should also be studied. Also from definition, it is clear that for non-zero polynomials f(x), g(x) deg { f(x) g(x) } = deg f(x) + deg g(x). and deg {f(x) + g(x)} $\leq$ max {deg f(x), deg g(x)} The greatest common divisor (G.C.D.) or highest common factor (H.C.F.) of two non-zero polynomials should be defined. Students should clearly distinguish between division algorithm and Euclidean algorithm. By the division algorithm, the remainder theorem can be proved. Since students have studied the remainder theorem in lower forms, more difficult problems on this theorem can -be given. The Euclidean algorithm is a method of finding the G.C.D. of two polynomials. Some problems on finding the G.C.D. of two polynomials should be given as exercise.
6.2 Rational functions	4	A rational function should be defined first. Students may come across partial fractions the first time. Teacher may quote a simple example such as $\frac{1}{x(x+1)} = \frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{x+1}$. The fractions $\frac{1}{x}$ and $\frac{1}{x+1}$ are called partial fractions. The rules for resolving a proper rational function into partial fractions should be clearly stated and examples studied. It should be emphasized and illustrated by examples that if a given rational function is improper, it should first be expressed as the sum of a polynomial and a proper fraction. Applications of partial fractions should be studied.

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Detailed Content	Time Ratio	Notes on Teaching
6.3 Polynomial equations with real coefficients in one variable	6	Examples: 1. Express $\frac{x^2-8x+9}{(x+1)(x-2)^3}$ in partial fractions. 2. Resolve $\frac{x^4}{(x-a)(x^2+a^2)}$ into partial fractions. 3. Evaluate $\sum_{r=1}^{n}\frac{1}{r(r+1)}$ For the quadratic equation $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$ ($a \neq 0$) with α, β as roots, students should be familiar with the relations $\alpha+\beta=-\frac{b}{a}$, $\alpha\beta=\frac{c}{a}$ For the general polynomial equation of degree n, $f(x) = a_nx^n + a_{n-1}x^{n-1} + \ldots + a_1x + a_0 = 0$ or $\sum_{k=0}^{n}a_kx^k=0$, the following theorem gives the relations between coefficients and roots: If $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_n$ are the roots of the polynomial equation $f(x) = 0$, then the sum s_k of all possible products of the α_j's taken k at a time ($k = 1, 2, \ldots, n$) is equal to $(-1)^k\frac{a_{n-k}}{a_n}$ i.e. if $f(x)=a_n(x-\alpha_1)(x-\alpha_2)\ldots(x-\alpha_n)$, then $s_1=\alpha_1+\alpha_2+\ldots+\alpha_n=-\frac{a_{n-1}}{a_n}$, $s_2=\alpha_1\alpha_2+\alpha_2\alpha_3+\ldots+\alpha_{n-1}\alpha_n=\frac{a_{n-2}}{a_n}$, $s_3=\sum\alpha_1\alpha_2\alpha_3=-\frac{a_{n-3}}{a_n}$, …… …… $s_n=\alpha_1\alpha_2\ldots\alpha_n=(-1)^n\frac{a_0}{a_n}$.

Detailed Content	Time Ratio	Notes on Teaching
	15	The following properties should be studied in detail: (i) The number of distinct zeros of a non-zero polynomial is less than or equal to the degree of the polynomial. (ii) If the polynomial equation with integral coefficients has a rational root of the form $\frac{p}{q}$ where p and q are coprime integers, then p is an exact divisor of the constant term and q is an exact divisor of the leading coefficient of the polynomial. (iii) The condition for repeated (multiple) roots: For the polynomial equation $f(x) = 0$ to have $x = \alpha$ as a repeated root, it is necessary and sufficient that $f(\alpha) = 0$ and α is also a root of the equation $f'(x) = 0$ where $f'(x)$ denotes the derivative of $f(x)$. The more general form will be: For any positive integer k, α is a root of multiplicity $k + 1$ of the equation $f(x) = 0$ if and only if $f(\alpha) = 0$ and α is a root of multiplicity k of $f'(x) = 0$. and α is a root of multiplicity $k + 1$ of the equation $f(x) = 0$ if and only if α is a common root of $f(x) = 0$, $f'(x) = 0$ $\vdots$ $f^{(k)}(x)=0$ but not of $f^{(k+1)}(x)=0$ N.B. Complex roots occurring in conjugate pairs will be treated in the study of complex number in Unit A10.

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