

# Class consensus on questions

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## Introduction

Something we'll do repeatedly this semester is try to reach a class consensus on a question or questions. The process I'm recommending is very much the same process we're using for programming problems.

## Small-group work

1. *Divide into groups.* We will try to form groups that are diverse, so that each group contains
  - People with different degrees of experience
  - People with experience using different languages
  - People with interests in different research areas
2. *Choose a recorder.* One the groups have been formed, please *introduce yourselves* to each other. Then agree on one person to *record* the views expressed in the group, including
  - Decisions the group makes collaboratively
  - Significant dissent

*The recorder will speak for the group.* Everyone will have the opportunity to serve as a recorder during the term.
3. *Discuss possible answers to the questions.* Use the whiteboard, a computer, or whatever else you need. This is a “brainstorming” phase. Don't stop with a single answer; *look at things from all angles.*
4. *Reach consensus on the most satisfying answers.* Perhaps the group will agree on answers that satisfy everyone. Perhaps there will be significant dissent—maybe even no majority view.
5. *Prepare to report to the class as a whole.* Your report should cover the following points:
  - The preferred answers according to the consensus reached by your group.
  - The *reasons* that you prefer these answers. Focus on *concrete properties* that you can point to.
  - Any significant minority views.
  - A few words about answers that your group considered but ultimately rejected.

## The plenary session

1. *Recorders from individual groups present their groups' conclusions.* We'll write down these conclusions on the whiteboard.
2. *Class discussion and class consensus.* We'll discuss and evaluate the groups' conclusions. We'll try to forge a coherent consensus view that the whole class can agree on, but also be alert for gaps, inconsistencies, and incoherence.
3. *Comparison with professional consensus.* When possible, I'll compare the conclusions reached by the class with my interpretation of the consensus position of the body of researchers interested in functional programming.

## A permanent record?

We need to decide if we want to create a permanent record of our conclusions, perhaps to be shared on the Web.