What is PeerWise?

PeerWise is described as “an online collaborative multiple-choice question repository.” This software has been developed in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Auckland, in New Zealand, by Paul Denny. The software allows students to post, anonymously, multiple-choice exam-type questions. These questions are then made available to other students to answer; also on an anonymous* basis. As part of answering a question students are asked to rate the question and provide comments. The rating and comments about a question are available for viewing by everyone and can be used to help determine which questions might be the most valuable for study purposes.

To be able to write a good question, and to explain the answer, is an excellent way to improve one’s understanding of the course material and to hone one’s written communication skills. As more students contribute questions, an ever growing pool of diverse study questions becomes available. Consider, if 50 students in a class each contribute 2 questions a week, over a 13 week term there will be 1300 questions available to study from, far more than any practice exam can provide. Consequently this collection of questions can be a very valuable study resource. Clearly, if this is to be of benefit it is important for all students to participate by developing and answering questions. To encourage students to use PeerWise, participation marks, which contribute to the course’s final grade will be awarded as outlined in the course syllabus.

Getting Going with PeerWise

The following sections describe how to get the most out of using PeerWise and are taken from a document provided by Paul Denny and as a result the example refers to one of his courses. In particular, note that the participation marks for using PeerWise do not correspond to how marks are awarded in this course. Many thanks to Paul for providing this guide to using PeerWise.

* Please note that although information about question posters and answerers is anonymous to other users, the course instructor does have access to who wrote a particular question or comment along with general summary information.
Once everything is set-up you will be provided with link to the PeerWise website where you will be able to post and answer questions. The login ID you will use is the same one as your UBC CPSC account ID (i.e. something like a5g2). The initial password to use when accessing PeerWise will be emailed to you at your UBC CPSC account email address so one of the first things you should do is change the password.

Once you have logged in, the main menu is split into three areas:

- Questions you have contributed
- Questions you have answered
- All the questions you have not answered
Answering a question

You might like to start by answering a few of the questions that are already in the system. You can select a question to answer from the "Unanswered questions" table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>SUITABILITY</th>
<th>DIFFICULTY</th>
<th>CREATED</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>RATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>View OK</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>4:21pm, 01 Jun</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>4.6546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>View OK</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>1:36pm, 08 Jun</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3.6324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>View OK</td>
<td>easy/medium</td>
<td>4:26pm, 03 Jun</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.7377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you have answered a question, you will be given feedback on the response you selected, and you will be shown an explanation of the answer.

You will then be given an opportunity to select the difficulty level you think best matches the question and to give the question a rating, which you should think about very carefully.

When rating a question, you should be judging two things:

- whether you think the question is of a high enough quality that it could appear in the final exam
- whether you think the explanation provided with the question is sufficient so that if someone answered the question incorrectly the explanation would help them to understand what they have done wrong

Other things to keep in mind:

- you should not rate questions differently based on their difficulty – an easy question is just as useful and just as likely to appear in the exam as a hard question
- be fair with your ratings – you should justify a poor rating with a comment to the author of the question, or an endorsement of a previously written comment
- make sure any comments you provide are constructive – you are rating questions written by your peers so provide the kind of feedback that you would find useful and encouraging yourself
- to encourage everyone to participate equally, all activity on PeerWise is anonymous – don't abuse your anonymity (if you write anything deemed to be highly offensive or inappropriate you will lose your 7% for this assessment)
Endorsement of comments

When rating a question, you may provide a comment about the question, and you may also choose to endorse a previously written comment. If there is already a comment about a question which you particularly like, then you can endorse that comment by selecting the star in the "Endorse?" column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
<th>ENDORSE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:50pm, 26 May</td>
<td>good straightforward question.</td>
<td>🌟 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:12pm, 20 May</td>
<td>Good question</td>
<td>🌟 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:34am, 20 May</td>
<td>Good question, and good explanation, but I can't imagine something like this making it to the exam due to the fact that: (a) This sort of thing can be processor/compiler-specific; (b) While we are supposed to know that 0.1 + 0.1 does not necessarily equal 0.3, I don't believe we are required to know at what point it does not equal 0.3.</td>
<td>🌟 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:43pm, 19 May</td>
<td>very good question</td>
<td>🌟 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leaderboard

There is also a basic leaderboard, which includes tables such as the top rated questions, and the most popular contributors. While this is not relevant to the assessment, there will be some prizes awarded for making it into the leaderboard tables.