

# Divisors and Riemann-Roch Spaces

## Unit 10

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# Overview

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## Definition 1

Let  $F/K$  be a function field. A **prime divisor**  $\mathfrak{p}$  of  $F/K$  is a congruence class of places of  $F/K$ .

We denote

$$\mathbb{P} = \mathbb{P}_{F/K} = \{\mathfrak{p} \mid \mathfrak{p} \text{ is a prime divisor of } F/K\}.$$

So

$$\mathfrak{p} = [\varphi] \iff \mathcal{O}_{\mathfrak{p}} \iff \mathfrak{m}_{\mathfrak{p}} \iff [v]_{\mathfrak{p}}.$$

We proved that all valuations in  $[v]_{\mathfrak{p}}$  are discrete. Further, every  $v_1, v_2 \in [v]_{\mathfrak{p}}$  are equal up to a proper normalization. Thus, we pick the unique valuation in  $[v]_{\mathfrak{p}}$  that is onto and denote it by

$$v_{\mathfrak{p}} : F \rightarrow \mathbb{Z} \cup \{\infty\}.$$

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## Definition 2

Let  $F/K$  be a function field. We denote by  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}_{F/K}$  the set of formal expressions of the form

$$\sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}_{F/K}} n_{\mathfrak{p}} \mathfrak{p},$$

where  $n_{\mathfrak{p}} \in \mathbb{Z}$  for all  $\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}_{F/K}$ .

Alternatively,  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  is the set of functions  $\mathbb{P} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ .

The elements of  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  are called **pseudo divisors**.

In some parts of the literature, one writes this in multiplicative form

$$\prod_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} \mathfrak{p}^{n_{\mathfrak{p}}}$$

to make the resemblance to factorization more explicit.

# Pseudo divisors

Note that  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  is a group via the component-wise addition rule

$$\sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} n_{\mathfrak{p}} \mathfrak{p} + \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} m_{\mathfrak{p}} \mathfrak{p} = \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} (n_{\mathfrak{p}} + m_{\mathfrak{p}}) \mathfrak{p}.$$

For  $\mathfrak{q} \in \mathbb{P}$  we define  $v_{\mathfrak{q}} : \tilde{\mathcal{D}} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  by

$$v_{\mathfrak{q}} \left( \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} n_{\mathfrak{p}} \mathfrak{p} \right) = n_{\mathfrak{q}}.$$

Note that  $v_{\mathfrak{q}}$  is a group homomorphism.

# Partial order on pseudo divisors

We define a partial order on  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  by

$$\mathbf{a} \leq \mathbf{b} \iff \forall \mathbf{p} \in \mathbb{P} \quad v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{a}) \leq v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{b}).$$

We define

$$\max(\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}) = \sum_{\mathbf{p} \in \mathbb{P}} \max(v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{a}), v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{b})) \mathbf{p} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}},$$

$$\min(\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}) = \sum_{\mathbf{p} \in \mathbb{P}} \min(v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{a}), v_{\mathbf{p}}(\mathbf{b})) \mathbf{p} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}.$$

We further note that

$$\mathbf{a} \leq \mathbf{b} \implies \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{c} \leq \mathbf{b} + \mathbf{c}.$$

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## Definition 3 (Divisors)

Let  $F/K$  be a function field, and  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}} = \tilde{\mathcal{D}}_{F/K}$ . An element  $\mathfrak{a} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  is called a **divisor** if  $v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) = 0$  for all but finitely many  $\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}$ . In this case, we say that  $v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) = 0$  **almost always**.

The set of divisors of  $F/K$  is denoted by  $\mathcal{D} = \mathcal{D}_{F/K}$ .

Note that  $\mathcal{D}$  is a subgroup of  $\tilde{\mathcal{D}}$ .

# Degree of divisors

## Definition 4

Let  $F/K$  be a function field. The **degree** of a prime divisor  $\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}$ , denoted  $\deg \mathfrak{p}$ , is defined to be  $\deg \varphi$  where  $\varphi : F \rightarrow L \cup \{\infty\}$  is any place that corresponds to  $\mathfrak{p}$ . That is,

$$\deg \mathfrak{p} = [\mathcal{O}_{\mathfrak{p}} / \mathfrak{m} : K].$$

We extend this definition to a general divisor  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$  by setting

$$\deg(\mathfrak{a}) = \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \deg \mathfrak{p}.$$

Observe that  $\deg : \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$  is a group homomorphism that preserves the partial order, that is,

$$\mathfrak{a} \leq \mathfrak{b} \quad \implies \quad \deg \mathfrak{a} \leq \deg \mathfrak{b}.$$

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# Principal divisors

For  $x \in F^\times$  we define

$$(x) = \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}} v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) \mathfrak{p}.$$

Recall that a valuation of  $F/K$  is trivial on  $K$  and is non-trivial on  $F$ . Thus,

$$x \in K^\times \iff (x) = 0.$$

In the rational function field  $K(x)/K$ ,

$$(x) = \mathfrak{p}_0 - \mathfrak{p}_\infty,$$
$$\left( \frac{x^3}{x-1} \right) = 3\mathfrak{p}_0 - \mathfrak{p}_1 - 2\mathfrak{p}_\infty.$$

# Principal divisors

In our ongoing example  $y^2 = x^3 - x$ , for characteristic  $\neq 2$ ,

$$(x) = 2p_{0,0} - 2p_{\infty},$$

$$(y) = p_{0,0} + p_{1,0} + p_{-1,0} - 3p_{\infty},$$

$$\left(\frac{x}{y}\right) = p_{0,0} + p_{\infty} - p_{1,0} - p_{-1,0},$$

whereas in characteristic 2,

$$(y) = p_{0,0} + 2p_{1,0} - 3p_{\infty}.$$

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# Riemann-Roch spaces

Let  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$ . For  $\mathfrak{a} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  we define  $\mathfrak{a}_S \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  by

$$v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}_S) = \begin{cases} v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}), & \mathfrak{p} \in S; \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Further define

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) &= \{x \in F \mid \forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \ v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0\} \\ &= \{x \in F^\times \mid (x)_S + \mathfrak{a}_S \geq 0\} \cup \{0\}, \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) &= \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, \mathbb{P}) = \{x \in F \mid \forall \mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P} \ v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0\} \\ &= \{x \in F^\times \mid (x) + \mathfrak{a} \geq 0\} \cup \{0\}. \end{aligned}$$

## Definition 5

If  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$  we call  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a})$  a **Riemann-Roch space**.

## Claim 6

Let  $F/K$  be a function field. Let  $\mathfrak{a} \in \widetilde{\mathcal{D}}$  and  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$ . Then,  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$  is a  $K$ -vector space, a subspace of  $F$ .

## Proof.

$0 \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$  by definition.

Now, if  $x, y \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$  then

$$\forall \mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P} \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x), v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y) \geq -v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}),$$

and so

$$\forall \mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P} \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x + y) \geq \min(v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x), v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y)) \geq -v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}).$$

Thus,  $x + y \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$ .

Since  $v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) = 0$  for every  $x \in K^{\times}$ ,  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$  is closed under multiplication by a scalar. □



## Definition 7

For a divisor  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$  we denote

$$\dim \mathfrak{a} = \dim_{\mathbb{K}} \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}).$$

## Claim 8

For every  $\mathfrak{a} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  and  $S_1, S_2 \subseteq \mathbb{P}$ ,

$$S_1 \subseteq S_2 \implies \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S_2) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S_1).$$

In particular,  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$ .

The proof is straightforward by the definitions.

# Riemann-Roch spaces

Note that for every  $x \in F^\times$ , the map  $F \rightarrow F$  mapping  $y \mapsto xy$  is  $K$ -linear.

## Claim 9

For every  $\mathfrak{a} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$ ,  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$ , and  $x \in F^\times$ ,

$$x\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) = \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} - (x), S).$$

## Proof.

$$\begin{aligned} y \in x\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) &\iff \frac{y}{x} \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) \\ &\iff \forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y/x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0 \\ &\iff \forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y) - v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0 \\ &\iff \forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y) - v_{\mathfrak{p}}((x)) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0 \\ &\iff \forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(y) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a} - (x)) \geq 0 \\ &\iff y \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} - (x), S). \end{aligned}$$



# Riemann-Roch spaces

## Lemma 10

Let  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$  finite and  $\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b} \in \tilde{\mathcal{D}}$  s.t.  $\mathfrak{a} \leq \mathfrak{b}$  ( $\implies \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b}, S)$ ). Then,

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b}, S) / \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) = \deg \mathfrak{b}_S - \deg \mathfrak{a}_S.$$

## Proof.

First, we may assume that  $\mathfrak{a} = \mathfrak{a}_S$ ,  $\mathfrak{b} = \mathfrak{b}_S$  since  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) = \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}_S, S)$ .

It suffices to consider the case  $\mathfrak{b} = \mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p}$  for some prime divisor  $\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}$ .

To see this, recall that by the third isomorphism theorem, if

$V_1 \subseteq V_2 \subseteq V_3$  are  $K$ -vector spaces then

$$\dim_K V_3 / V_1 = \dim_K V_3 / V_2 + \dim_K V_2 / V_1.$$

Thus, it suffices to prove that for  $\mathfrak{p} \in S$  s.t.  $\mathfrak{a} \leq \mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p} \leq \mathfrak{b}$  we have

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p}, S) / \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) = \deg \mathfrak{p}.$$

Proof.

By the weak approximation theorem (WAT),  $\exists x \in F$  s.t.

$$\forall q \in S \quad v_q(x) = v_q(\mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p}).$$

Equivalently,

$$(x)_S = (\mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p})_S.$$

By Claim 9,

$$\begin{aligned} x\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p}, S) &= \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} + \mathfrak{p} - (x), S) = \mathcal{L}(0, S), \\ x\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) &= \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a} - (x), S) = \mathcal{L}(-\mathfrak{p}, S). \end{aligned}$$

Thus, it suffices to prove that

$$\dim_{\mathbb{K}} \mathcal{L}(0, S) / \mathcal{L}(-\mathfrak{p}, S) = \deg \mathfrak{p}.$$

# Riemann-Roch spaces

Proof.

To summarize, we wish to prove

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(0, S) / \mathcal{L}(-p, S) = \deg p.$$

Note that as  $p \in S$ ,

$$\mathcal{L}(0, S) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(0, \{p\}) = \mathcal{O}_p.$$

Denote  $F_p = \mathcal{O}_p / \mathfrak{m}_p$ . We will show that restricting the projection map  $\mathcal{O}_p \rightarrow F_p$  to  $\mathcal{L}(0, S)$ , namely,

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi : \mathcal{L}(0, S) &\rightarrow F_p \\ x &\mapsto x + \mathfrak{m}_p \end{aligned}$$

is onto with  $\ker \varphi = \mathcal{L}(-p, S)$ . This will complete the proof as, recall,

$$\deg p = [F_p : K] = \dim_K F_p.$$

Proof.

We start by proving that

$$\begin{aligned}\varphi : \mathcal{L}(0, S) &\rightarrow F_p \\ x &\mapsto x + \mathfrak{m}_p\end{aligned}$$

is onto. Take  $\bar{x} \in F_p$  and  $x \in \mathcal{O}_p$  s.t.  $\varphi(x) = \bar{x}$ . By WAT,  $\exists y \in F$  s.t.

$$\begin{aligned}v_p(y - x) &> 0, \\ v_q(y) &\geq 0 \quad \forall q \in S \setminus \{p\}.\end{aligned}$$

Thus,

$$v_p(y) \geq \min(v_p(x), v_p(y - x)) \geq 0,$$

and so  $y \in \mathcal{L}(0, S)$ . As  $\varphi(y - x) = 0$ ,

$$\varphi(y) = \varphi(x) = \bar{x}.$$

$\varphi$  is therefore onto.

Proof.

$$\begin{aligned}\varphi : \mathcal{L}(0, S) &\rightarrow F_p \\ x &\mapsto x + \mathfrak{m}_p\end{aligned}$$

We turn to prove that  $\ker \varphi = \mathcal{L}(-p, S)$ .

To see this, take  $x \in \mathcal{L}(0, S)$  and note that

$$\begin{aligned}\varphi(x) = 0 &\iff v_p(x) > 0 \\ &\iff x \in \mathcal{L}(-p, S).\end{aligned}$$

## Claim 11

Let  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$ ,  $\mathfrak{a} < 0$ . Then,  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) = 0$ .

## Proof.

To prove the claim, recall that for every  $x \in F \setminus K$  there are valuations  $v, v'$  of  $F/K$  s.t.  $v(x) > 0$  yet  $v'(x) < 0$ .

Take  $x \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a})$ . Then,

$$\forall \mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P} \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) \geq -v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0 \quad \implies \quad x \in K.$$

However,  $\mathfrak{a} < 0$  and so  $\exists \mathfrak{q} \in \mathbb{P}$  s.t.  $v_{\mathfrak{q}}(\mathfrak{a}) < 0$  and so  $v_{\mathfrak{q}}(x) > 0$ , whereas  $v_{\mathfrak{q}}(K^{\times}) = 0$ . Thus,  $x = 0$ .



## Claim 12

$$\mathcal{L}(0) = K.$$

## Proof.

All valuations of  $F/K$  are trivial on  $K$  and so  $K \subseteq \mathcal{L}(0)$ .

On the other hand, if  $x \in \mathcal{L}(0)$  then  $v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) \geq 0$  for all  $\mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P}$ , and so  $x \in K$ .

## Claim 13

Let  $\mathfrak{a} \leq \mathfrak{b}$  be divisors, and let  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$  be the set of all prime divisors appearing in  $\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b}$ . Then,

$$\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S) = \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}).$$

## Proof.

Clearly,  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b})$  and  $\mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$ .

For the other direction, take  $x \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b}) \cap \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}, S)$ . Then,

$$\forall \mathfrak{p} \in S \quad v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) \geq 0.$$

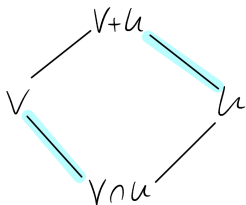
It remains to argue about  $\mathfrak{p} \notin S$ . But, then  $v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) = v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{b}) = 0$  and since  $x \in \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b})$  we have

$$v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{a}) = v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + 0 = v_{\mathfrak{p}}(x) + v_{\mathfrak{p}}(\mathfrak{b}) \geq 0.$$

# Recall: the second isomorphism theorem for vector spaces

Let  $U, V$  be  $K$ -vector spaces. Then,  $U + V$  and  $U \cap V$  are also  $K$ -vector spaces, and

$$(V + U)/U \cong V/V \cap U.$$



## Lemma 14

For divisors  $a \leq b$ ,

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(b) / \mathcal{L}(a) \leq \deg b - \deg a.$$

Proof.

Let  $S \subseteq \mathbb{P}$  be the set of all prime divisors appearing in  $a, b$ . Note  $|S| < \infty$ .

By Lemma 10,

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(b, S) / \mathcal{L}(a, S) = \deg b_S - \deg a_S.$$

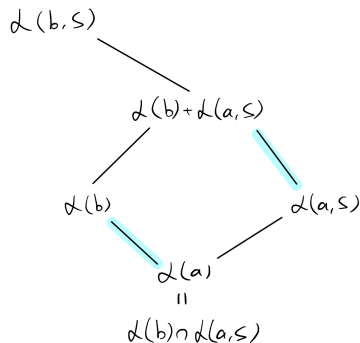
# Riemann-Roch spaces

Proof.

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(b, S) / \mathcal{L}(a, S) = \deg b_S - \deg a_S.$$

The proof then follows as the diagram shows that

$$\mathcal{L}(b) / \mathcal{L}(a) \leq \mathcal{L}(b, S) / \mathcal{L}(a, S).$$



# Riemann-Roch spaces

We are now in a position to prove that Riemann-Roch spaces are of finite dimension as  $K$ -vector spaces.

## Corollary 15

For every  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$ ,  $\dim \mathfrak{a} < \infty$ .

## Proof.

Let  $\mathfrak{b} < 0$  a divisor. By Lemma 14,

$$\dim_K \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) / \mathcal{L}(\min(\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b})) \leq \deg \mathfrak{a} - \deg \min(\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b}).$$

But Claim 11 implies

$$\mathcal{L}(\min(\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b})) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{b}) = 0.$$

Thus,

$$\dim \mathfrak{a} = \dim_K \mathcal{L}(\mathfrak{a}) \leq \deg \mathfrak{a} - \deg \min(\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b}) < \infty.$$



Another corollaries of Lemma 14 is

## Corollary 16

For every  $\mathfrak{a}, \mathfrak{b} \in \mathcal{D}$ ,

$$\mathfrak{a} \leq \mathfrak{b} \implies \deg \mathfrak{a} - \dim \mathfrak{a} \leq \deg \mathfrak{b} - \dim \mathfrak{b}.$$

We will soon prove that

$$\sup_{\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}_{F/K}} (\deg \mathfrak{a} - \dim \mathfrak{a}) < \infty.$$

This will lead to the definition of the **genus** of a function field.

Based on Lemma 14 we can strengthen Corollary 15 for non-negative divisors.

## Corollary 17

*For every  $\alpha \in \mathcal{D}$ ,  $\alpha \geq 0$  we have*

$$\dim \alpha \leq \deg \alpha + 1.$$

The proof is left as an exercise.



# Example

Consider the rational function field  $F = \mathbb{F}_q(x)/\mathbb{F}_q$ .

For  $r \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  $\mathcal{L}(r\mathfrak{p}_\infty)$  consists of all  $f(x) \in \mathbb{F}_q(x)$  s.t.

$$\begin{aligned}v_\infty(f(x)) &\geq -r, \\v_{\mathfrak{p}}(f(x)) &\geq 0 \quad \forall \mathfrak{p} \in \mathbb{P} \setminus \{\mathfrak{p}_\infty\}.\end{aligned}$$

The second condition implies that  $f(x) \in \mathbb{F}_q[x]$ .

The first condition then implies  $\deg f(x) \leq r$ .

Hence,  $\mathcal{L}(r\mathfrak{p}_\infty)$  is the  $\mathbb{F}_q$ -vector space of polynomials of degree  $\leq r$ .

**Exercise.** Prove that for every  $\mathfrak{a} \in \mathcal{D}$ ,  $\mathfrak{a} \geq 0$ , and  $k \geq 1$  integer,

$$\dim((k-1)\mathfrak{a}) \leq \dim(k\mathfrak{a}) \leq \dim((k-1)\mathfrak{a}) + \deg \mathfrak{a}.$$