1. Consider the polynomial \( p(x) = -2x^2 - x^3 - x - 3 \).
   
   (a) What is the degree of \( p(x) \)?
   
   The degree is the largest exponent the occurs, which is 3.
   
   (b) What is the leading coefficient of \( p(x) \)?

   The leading coefficient in the coefficient of the \( x^3 \) term. Since there is no number written in front, and the \( x^3 \) term is being subtracted, the coefficient is \(-1\).

2. Simplify
   
   \[ (3x^2 - 4x - 3) + (x^3 - 2x + 1) \]

   To simplify, first eliminate the parenthesis and then combine like terms.

   \[ (3x^2 - 4x - 3) + (x^3 - 2x + 1) = 3x^2 - 4x - 3 + x^3 - 2x + 1 \]

   \[ = x^3 + 3x^2 - 6x - 2 \]