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Purpose of the Comprehensive Examination

The United States Sports Academy is an independent, non-profit, accredited, special mission sports university created to serve the nation and the world with programs in instruction, research and service. The role of the Academy is to prepare men and women for careers in the profession of sports.

To achieve this end, the Academy must maintain and deliver quality education in sports management. To ensure quality programs, the Academy must constantly assess itself. The assessment of student learning is critical in determining how the Academy is achieving and maintaining quality. To improve programs, teaching, and delivery systems, the faculty and administration must assess the extent to which students have achieved the goals and objectives established by the Academy.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to confirm that students have met the goals of the doctoral program. Five goals are outlined in the Doctor of Education in Sports Management Academic Catalog, as well as specific competencies formulated to meet those goals. When students are able to demonstrate knowledge of sports management and a specific knowledge in their field of expertise, students, faculty, and administration can be assured that the goals have been met.
Eligibility

To be able to register for the comprehensive examination, a student must be in good academic standing, have paid the comprehensive examination fee, and completed 54 semester hours, including the mentorship and cognate course requirements. The examination is administered over a two-day period. Dates are published on the Academy’s website (www.usaa.edu) and in the Academic Catalog. Students must register for the comprehensive examination through the Registrar’s Office at least 30 days prior to the examination.

If a student does not attend the comprehensive examination session for which he/she has registered, the examination fee is forfeited.
Preparing for the Examination

1. Comprehensive examination questions are generally phrased to holistically measure the student’s ability to **analyze, synthesize, and evaluate concepts and material pertinent to his/her discipline**; therefore, the student should emphasize those abilities in his/her study.

2. Review all course textbooks, class notes, assignments, discussions, and papers prepared for each course. **Concentrate on key concepts rather than minute details.** Remember this is a “comprehensive” examination; therefore, your responses should be comprehensive and demonstrate overall program objectives, not individual course objectives.

3. Prepare practice comprehensive examination questions. Answer in writing. Ensure that the response answers the question and that it is well-written. Remember, **comprehensive examinations are a reflection of writing ability.** Edit responses for misspellings, poor grammar, and faulty sentence and paragraph construction.

4. If possible, **study in a group.** Ask questions of one another. Help each person in the group develop better writing skills. Studying in a group can be done electronically; use the available technology to study in virtual groups.

5. Start studying at least **three months in advance.**

6. **Prepare thoroughly.** Being well-prepared will result in a confident attitude which, in turn, is likely to translate into a good performance.
Taking the Exam

1. If you are taking your examination at a testing center, plan to arrive at the site at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the examination. If you are taking the examination with ProctorU, then log onto their site at least 20 minutes prior to the start of your examination. Organize yourself. Do not feel rushed.

2. After you’ve opened the examination course shell, read the questions carefully, deciding which questions you definitely want to answer. When you return to a section in which you were not able to make an instantaneous decision, you can then concentrate further upon what is the best selection. DO NOT PANIC over questions to which an answer does not come readily to mind. Experience tells us that many times when you are answering one question, ideas will come to you for answers to other questions.

3. **Budget your time.** You have three (3) hours per examination session. You do not have to take all sessions in one day; you may take two sessions one day and one session the next, however once you begin a session, you must finish it, (e.g., if you take Session II Area of Specialization and Session II General Area Sports Management the first day, you must finish both sessions; you cannot start one session the first day and finish it the next.)

   As you budget your time, remember you have sixty minutes (60) to spend on each question. A suggested time allocation is:

   - Carefully read the question: 2 minutes
   - Analyze the question and outline your response: 8 minutes
   - Write a clear, concise, and detailed answer: 45 minutes
   - Review the answer to ensure the question is completely and properly answered: 5 minutes
   - Total time spent: 60 minutes

4. Read each question carefully. **Identify the elements of the question.** Before writing, outline your response, checking that all points of the outline answer all elements of the
question. This is very important; for example, if a question asks for three elements of three specific marketing strategies, your answer should have nine parts.

5. **Review your answer** to make sure it answers all parts of the question and that it is well-written. Correct misspellings and grammatical errors.

6. **When pertinent, include studies and data to support your response.** These should be mentioned in a concise manner. Your answer should be as brief as possible and to the point, do not ramble.

7. **Take a brief rest between questions.** Take a deep breath and relax.

8. If you do not feel comfortable with an answer, do not let it bother you on subsequent questions. **Attempt to save 5-15 minutes** at the end of the three (3) hour examination period to go back to those questions and address the rough spots.
Examination Format

The exam questions will be taken from the following areas:

Session I: Research Area
Four questions – student must answer three.
The research area questions are taken from the research core courses: SAR 674 Research Statistics in Sports, SAR 776 Research Methodologies, and SAR 790 Selected Readings in Sports.

Session II: Area of Specialization
Four questions – student must answer three.
The questions in this section are taken from coursework completed for the student’s chosen Area of Specialization: Leadership in Sports, Sports Marketing, or Human Resource Management in Sports.

Session III: General Area: Sports Management
Six questions – student must answer three.
The General Area Sports Management examines knowledge and understanding of the doctoral general core requirements including Contemporary Issues in Sports, Financial Aspects of Sports, Ethics in Sports, Sports Leadership Principles, and Legal Aspects of Sports. (Olympism is substituted for Legal Aspects of Sports for international students.)
Session I: Research Area Questions

The student will be required to answer three (3) of the four (4) questions provided on the examination in the Research Area. The four comprehensive examination questions will come from the required Research Core Courses:

- SAR 674 Research Statistics in Sports
- SAR 776 Research Methodologies
- SAR 790 Selected Readings in Sports

The Research Area comprehensive examination questions may come from the following topics:

- Nature and characteristics of research
- Ethical issues in research
- Normal bell curve theory
- Types of research designs
- Basic and applied research
- Objectivity, reliability, and validity
- Identifying the specific variables of a study
- Inductive and deductive reasoning
- Alpha and beta errors in hypothesis testing (the truth table)
- The steps used in developing a methodology
- Literature searching and review in context of developing and delimiting a problem
- Comparison of the types of research (e.g., historical, descriptive, experimental, etc.)
- Research and null hypotheses and how they are tested
- Types of statistical tests and what test to use in a given situation.

Sample Question:
Describe the five characteristics of research in detail. What characteristics are the most vital? Substantiate your response.
Session II: Area of Specialization Questions

The student will be required to answer three (3) of the four (4) questions presented in his/her Area of Specialization: Leadership in Sports, Sports Marketing, OR Human Resource Management in Sports.

A. Leadership in Sports

For students who have chosen Leadership in Sports as their specialization, the four comprehensive examination questions will come from any of the required Leadership courses:

- SAM 735 Strategic Planning for Sports Organization
- SAM 736 Communication for Leadership
- SAM 737 Leadership: Theory and Practice

Questions may also be taken from any of the Doctoral General Management Core Courses.

Sample topics for comprehensive examination questions in the Leadership in Sports Area of Specialization may include, but are not limited to:

- Strategic planning
- Organization behavior and culture
- Organizational effectiveness
- Tactical planning
- Leadership theories
- Leadership, followership, and the situation (LFS)
- Employee communication
- Training and orientation programs for employees
- Leadership case studies
- Leadership aptitude and skills

Sample Question:

Identify and describe several distinctive theories of leadership. Is there any overlap between these theories? To what extent (if any) can these theories assist in the formation of a code of ethics for a sports organization?
B. Sports Marketing

For students who have chosen Sports Marketing as their specialization, the four comprehensive examination questions will come from any of the required Marketing courses:

- SAM 644 Sports Marketing Research
- SAM 662 Sports Entrepreneurship

Questions may also be taken from any of the Doctoral General Management Core Courses.

Sample topics for the examination questions in the Sports Marketing Area of Specialization may include, but are not limited to:

- Definitions of marketing, sport, and sport marketing
- The marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, and public relations related to sport
- Marketing management process
- Sport consumer behavior, life-styling, demographics, psychographics, and sociographics
- Positioning, perceptual maps, and image
- Pricing strategies, elasticity of demand
- The steps in the marketing plan
- Marketing segmentation, target markets, and the role of research in sport marketing.

Sample Question:

You have just accepted a position as Director of Marketing for a professional baseball team. How would you begin to build a Marketing Information System (MIS)? How and where will you obtain information needed to create an MIS?
C. **Human Resources Management**

For students who have chosen **Human Resources Management** as their specialization, the four comprehensive examination questions will come from any of the **required Human Resources courses:**

- SAM 640 Labor Relations in Sports
- SAM 672 Personnel Training and Development

Questions may also be taken from any of the **Doctoral General Management Core Courses.**

Sample topics for the examination questions in the **Human Resources Management** Area of Specialization area **may** include, but are not limited to:

- Organization effectiveness
- Equal Opportunity Employment and Affirmative Action issues
- Recruitment and selection of job candidates
- Training and performance appraisals
- Collective bargaining and labor relations in sports
- Human resource planning and recruitment
- Employee selection, interviewing, and testing
- Training and orientation programs for employees
- Improving performance and employee motivation
- Compensation programs.

**Sample Question:**

Discuss the importance of human resource planning and assess the impact of current global trends including growth of the labor force, immigration, average age of the work force, occupational shifts, and illiteracy.
Session III: General Area: Sports Management

Session III of the comprehensive examination is the General Area: Sports Management. The student will be required to answer three (3) of the six (6) questions provided. The six comprehensive examination questions will come from the General Sport Management Core Courses, which include:

- SAB 661 Contemporary Issues in Sports
- SAM 660 Financial Aspects in Sports
- SAB 634 Ethics in Sports
- SAM 743 Advanced Studies in Sports Management
- SAM 730 Sport Leadership Principles
- SAM 786 Legal Aspects of Sports*

(*SAB 667 Olympism is substituted for Legal Aspects of Sports for international students.)

Sample topics for the examination questions in the General Area: Sports Management may include, but are not limited to:

- Styles of management/leadership
- Strategic/tactical planning
- Sources of power
- Conflict resolution
- Planning and funding programs
- Functions of management
- Organizational control
- Decision-making
- Levels of management
- Types of budget and the budget process
- MBOs/Personnel/Evaluation
- Managerial ethics

Sample Question:

Briefly present the content of the Title IX legislation from 1972 and trace the effects of this legislation to intercollegiate athletics from inception to the present day. Address critical lawsuits that have influenced the interpretation of Title IX.
Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral comprehensive examination is administered as soon as possible after successful completion of the written comprehensive examination. Members of the faculty who graded the written comprehensive examination will serve on the oral comprehensive examination committee. The oral comprehensive examination will be conducted via web or video conferencing (e.g., Skype) and scheduled at a mutually convenient time for both student and faculty.

Students should expect the oral comprehensive examination to take 45 to 60 minutes. Students are required to dress in professional business attire.

The oral comprehensive examination is divided into three parts:

1. The first part consists of follow-up questions to each student based on their responses to the written questions.
2. The second part explores the career goals of the student and the topics which the student may explore for sports management-related dissertation research.
3. The third part of the oral comprehensive examination is used to administer the Oral Exit Interview. This exit interview provides the candidate with the opportunity of evaluating the doctoral program at the United States Sports Academy. Valuable information is received from the exit interview which is important to the institutional effectiveness of the Academy. While the faculty committee deliberates on the oral examination performance of the student, audio and video access will be turned off.

The written comprehensive examination is worth 80% of the total examination score; the oral comprehensive examination is worth 20% of the total examination score.

When a student has successfully passed the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination, he/she will be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Doctoral candidates may then begin their dissertation research.
Grading of Comprehensive Examinations

It generally takes one day for each particular written section of the doctoral comprehensive examination to be graded. The final score is reported to the Registrar and recorded on the student transcript. Examinations grades are recorded as “Pass” or “Fail.” Students will be notified in writing of examination results.

In order to receive a “Pass” students must obtain an AVERAGE TOTAL SCORE of 75% or higher. If a student does not achieve a 75% or higher, then those sections with lower scores must be retaken. The student will be notified in writing which section(s) must be retaken.

To retake the doctoral comprehensive examination, the student must request approval 30 days in advance of the examination date. The retake must be done within one (1) calendar year of the date of the first attempt. Dates for the doctoral comprehensive examinations are published in the Academic Catalogs and are posted on the Academy’s website (www.ussa.edu)

Doctoral Candidacy Status and Graduation

When the student has passed the doctoral comprehensive examination, he/she will be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Doctoral candidates are then permitted to begin their dissertation research. Once the dissertation has been proposed, completed, and successfully defended in a formal oral defense, the student must submit the Graduation Application which can be found on the Academy’s website.

Upon receipt of the Graduation Application and the graduation fees, a degree audit will be completed. Once the degree audit is completed and cleared the degree will be conferred. Graduates automatically receive a complimentary copy of their transcript confirming that the degree has been conferred.