

United States Sports Academy

America's Sports University®

Writer's Guide for the Qualifying Essay

Doctor of Education
in
Sports Management

The United States Sports Academy accepts students regardless of race, religion, gender, age, disability, or national origin.

The Doctoral Program Qualifying Essay

An acceptable Qualifying Essay must be completed before admission may be granted to doctoral study at the United States Sports Academy, for either the doctor of education in sports management degree (Ed.D.) or doctor of education in sports management degree with emphasis in sports medicine. Admission to these programs depends significantly on the Qualifying Essay's adequacy.

The Qualifying Essay takes the form of a narrative presenting the applicant's **biography, career plan, and goals in pursuing the doctorate** at the United States Sports Academy. It is evaluated by the Doctoral Admissions Committee. Committee members seek evidence in the essay of five requisite qualities and abilities of the applicant:

- motivation, maturity, judgment, and creativity, reflected in essay content
- possession of sound personal and professional objectives, reflected in content
- awareness of intellectual strengths as well as skills needing development, reflected in content
- ability to express concepts and communicate meaning in concise writing
- proficiency with standard written English

The Three Components of the Qualifying Essay

1. Biographical Component

The applicant's earlier learning experiences, both formal and informal, should be described in a concise narrative. The nature and general outcome of all prior study, sports management-related work experience, and participation in scholarly research (if any) should be briefly set forth for the admissions committee's consideration.

2. Career Plan Component

The need for doctoral-level education should be explained in terms of the applicant's goals for his or her career in sports management. This component of the essay should specify how doctoral study, in conjunction with the applicant's background and interests, will further those goals.

3. Goals in Pursuing the Doctorate

In this part of the essay, the applicant should briefly discuss why he or she wishes to enroll in doctoral study at the United States Sports Academy, including but not limited to (a) the applicant's reasons for selecting the Academy program rather than another doctoral program; (b) how doctoral study reflects, and may affect, the applicant's personal and professional interests, concerns, and choices; and (c) the particular goals anticipated to be attained through completion of the doctoral curriculum.

The Format and Editorial Style of the Qualifying Essay

The Qualifying Essay must be typewritten or prepared with word-processing software and printed with a letter-quality printer. It must employ a readable, **12-point font**, and it must be **double-spaced**. The essay must include a **title page**; Appendix A is a template for the title page.

The editorial style employed in the Qualifying Essay should be that presented in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.)*, published in 2001 by the American Psychological Association (APA). The *Publication Manual* represents the standard for most scholarly writing in the social sciences. Per the *Publication Manual*, the standard spelling reference at the United States Sports Academy is *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.

(All students at the United States Sports Academy must learn the *Publication Manual's* rules pertaining to editorial style, citation of sources, organization of manuscripts, preparation of statistical copy and tables, reduction of bias in language, and related topics. The *Publication Manual* is available for purchase at www.apastyle.org. This Web site also informs readers of corrections and updates to content of the manual and has a helpful FAQ section.)

The *Publication Manual's* third chapter (which is 137 pages long) concerns editorial style, or “the rules or guidelines a publisher observes to ensure clear, consistent presentation of the printed word” (*Publication Manual*, 2001, p. 77). An editorial style dictates the writer's use of punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, italic type, numerals, headings and subheadings, and other conventions.

The *Publication Manual*, however, does not address “general rules explained in widely available style books . . . [or] usage with little relevance to APA journals” (*Publication Manual*, 2001, p. 77). It “provides some specific rules of usage and grammar . . . [but] does not address general problems of writing and language, which are adequately dealt with elsewhere” (*Publication Manual*, 2001, p. XXVI). Broad matters of written expression are covered, for example, in the APA-recommended *Words into Type* (Skillin & Gay, 1974) and *Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Assessment of the Qualifying Essay

In assessing the Qualifying Essay, the admissions committee will check to see that all three components of the essay are present, that the prescribed format and editorial style are employed, and that the applicant has mastered standard written English. Committee members furthermore use a detailed assessment rubric (Appendix B) to guide the assessment process. Apart from assessing aspects of the applicant's writing, the essay will also suggest to the committee how well suited to the program are the applicant's personal qualities: motivation, maturity, judgment, creativity, personal and professional objectives, awareness of intellectual strengths and weaknesses.

Appendix A

Template for Title Page of Doctoral Program Qualifying Essay

The following exemplifies the proper format for a Qualifying Essay's title page. (There is no need, however, to add a border to the Qualifying Essay title page; it appears here simply to distinguish the title page template from the text of the appendix.) Please note that, because the essay is an administrative document, the format diverges from *APA Publication Manual* guidelines for preparation of title pages.

QUALIFYING ESSAY

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM
OF THE UNITED STATES SPORTS ACADEMY

by

FIRSTNAME LASTNAME

Daphne, Alabama

DATE MONTH YEAR

Appendix B

Assessment Rubric for the Doctoral Program Qualifying Essay

Aspects of a submitted Qualifying Essay will be graded Level 4 Exceptional, Level 3 Proficient, Level 2 Adequate, or Level 1 Weak. Five such aspects will be assessed: the essay's beginning (the introduction), its middle (the body; sequential development of ideas), its ending (conclusion), its use of standard written English, and its use of the prescribed format and editorial style, as follows:

Criterion	Level 4 Exceptional	Level 3 Proficient	Level 2 Adequate	Level 1 Weak
Beginning of the Qualifying Essay (introduction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an exceptionally interesting lead that “hooks” the reader, is well-ordered, and presents a compelling thesis ▪ an exceptional beginning that incorporates one or more of the three essay components (biography, career plan, goals in pursuing the doctorate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an interesting, orderly, proficient introduction with an effective thesis ▪ a proficient beginning that incorporates one or more of the three essay components (biography, career plan, goals in pursuing the doctorate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an adequate beginning showing a clear enough progression and an adequate thesis ▪ adequately incorporates one or more of the three essay components (biography, career plan, goals in pursuing the doctorate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a weak, unfocused beginning without a thesis ▪ a beginning that seems not to address any of the three essay components (biography, career plan, goals in pursuing the doctorate)
Middle of the Qualifying Essay (body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an exceptionally illustrative, convincing series of examples supporting the thesis, through which ideas are developed in a firmly logical sequence ▪ exceptionally skillful use of transitions between topics and paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a pertinent series of examples supporting the thesis, through which ideas are proficiently developed in logical sequence ▪ proficient use of transitions between topics and paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adequate examples are provided that tend to support the thesis ▪ ideas proceed logically, overall, but some gaps in logic are present ▪ transitions between topics and paragraphs are used adequately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supporting ideas or examples are weak and fail to create a logical argument for any thesis that is offered
End of the Qualifying Essay (conclusion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an effective summary and at the same time an exceptionally skillful furthering of the thesis that advances the discussion into a new and perhaps broader context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a proficient summary of the entire essay that meaningfully links the final paragraph to the first paragraph or suggests some implication of the argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an adequate summary of much of the essay that reiterates the thesis or suggests some implication of the argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ absent or weak summary of the essay creating an overly abrupt cessation of discussion
Use of standard written English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ each sentence is exceptionally well-composed: grammatical, utterly clear, properly punctuated, and characterized by economy of expression ▪ a strong variety of apt sentence structures is used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ most sentences are proficient: grammatical, clear, properly punctuated, and usually concise ▪ a variety of sentence structures is evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sentences include occasional grammatical and/or punctuation errors but remain adequately clear ▪ some variation of sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ numerous grammatical and punctuation errors and misuse of words make comprehension difficult ▪ command of sentence structure is absent
Use of prescribed format and editorial style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all spelling is correct per <i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary</i> ▪ exceptional command of APA editorial style is evident ▪ essay is double-spaced in 12-point font and includes the prescribed title page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all spelling is correct per <i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary</i> ▪ proficient command of APA editorial style is evident, with only minor errors ▪ essay is double-spaced in 12-point font and includes the prescribed title page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ occasional spelling errors per <i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary</i> ▪ command of APA editorial style is adequate but imperfect ▪ essay is double-spaced in 12-point font and includes the prescribed title page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ weak command of spelling ▪ use of capitalization, punctuation, abbreviations, italics, numerals, headings, and other conventions flouts guidelines in <i>APA Publication Manual</i> ▪ incorrect format and/or lack of proper title page