

Comprehensive Exam on the Ph.D. Core in Public Administration

**The Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
University at Albany — State University of New York**

June 19 through 22, 2001

INSTRUCTIONS: This exam is handed out at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 19, 2001, and is due back to the department secretary in Milne 103 by 4:00 p.m. Friday, June 22. Each question is intended to take about five hours to complete, and the entire exam is intended as two questions a day for each of three days, Tuesday through Friday, but you may allocate your time as you see fit. You may use published references or your own notes; however, you may not ask for or receive help on the exam from any person.

Please answer each question in a separate document, labeled to identify the question. It is expected that you will use a personal computer to prepare your answers.

Please use the number assigned at the top of this exam on all your answer sheets. Please return this cover sheet, signed, when you hand in your exam.

I am aware of existing program, school, and university policies on academic dishonesty. My work submitted on this examination is in compliance with those policies.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name:

Address:

Work phone: _____

Home phone: _____

University ID: _____

Please answer each question in a separate document, identified with your university ID.

PAD 702 - Politics and Administration

The reinvention movement of the 1990s in many respects rested on the premise that the problem of public administration in the United States is not that these administrators have too much discretion but rather that they have too little. This in part helps account for why Paul Light calls this reform tide “liberation management.” Briefly describe some of the major recommendations of those espousing reinvention. Based on your understanding of the United States and any other context that you consider relevant, do you think that the adoption of reinvention reforms would threaten democratic accountability? Why or why not? In preparing your response, take into account existing evidence on the degree to which the implementing agents of government are responsive to the preferences of their political master.

PAD 703 - Economic and Financial Theory

Part I. Use relevant economic theory to explain why each of the following statements is true, false, or something in between. Limit your answer to one page for each statement. In your answer please be specific and precise. For example, when you use an economic model to bolster your argument, clearly state its assumptions.

1. A pressure group seeking a beneficial regulatory program is indifferent to the deadweight costs the program imposes upon others.
2. According to Peltzman’s theory of regulation, competitive industries are not regulated.
3. The fact that voters have incomplete knowledge of the costs and benefits of most public policies is inconsistent with a theory of regulation that assumes that all actors in the political arena act rationally (maximize their respective utilities.)
4. An employer can buy fidelity in an employee without increasing her lifetime compensation above the compensation of an employee for whom no fidelity is required.
5. In the nineteenth century perhaps the largest expenditure of states that redistributed income was for internal improvements (roads, canals, etc.). These expenditures violate Director’s law.

Part II. Write brief essay (a page or less) on the following.

Zoning of land in cities is explained by some people as an attempt to control external effects of land use, and by other people as a device to protect one's land use from competitive use without having to pay as much as would be necessary to bid the land away from these uses. How would you design a study to determine which was the better explanation?

Part III. Elementary school teachers perform not one but many socially productive tasks in the classroom. Consider a (linear) compensation scheme for elementary school teachers that encourage them to optimally allocate their effort across these multiple tasks. Assume that you can only imperfectly observe effort devoted to each task. Be admirably brief in answering each of the following.

1. Describe at least five tasks/objectives that you believe a good elementary school teacher must perform/meet.
2. Describe the optimal incentive scheme for workers who perform multiple tasks. Under the optimal incentive scheme, how will the performance outcomes for the different tasks be weighted? Explain and be precise.
3. Undoubtedly some tasks that the teacher performs are (imperfectly) measurable and others are not measurable, even imperfectly. Give at least two examples of tasks and goals where teacher effort might be measurable. With each example suggest ways in which the effort could be approximately measured. Describe at least two tasks or goals for which effort is impossible, or at least extremely costly, to measure.
4. Suppose that for some tasks no suitable explicit, objective performance measures can be found. In this case, what should the incentive contract look like? If the compensation scheme imposes positive weights for those tasks that the supervisor can (imperfectly) measure, how much effort will the teachers devote to the other tasks? Explain.
5. Knowing that for some tasks effort can be approximately measured and for others it cannot, explain how an employer might reallocate tasks across jobs and structure compensation to make the most of the power of performance incentives. Discuss conceptually and also using the example of teaching in elementary schools.

PAD 704 - Research Methods I

The June 2001 issue of *Governing* magazine noted a trend for more public policy graduates from top-tier schools to take private-sector jobs. The article notes: “Especially at the top-tier graduate schools, more and more students are not only choosing careers with high-paying private firms but also with nonprofit organizations.” In support of this claim, the author provides the following table from Paul Light’s book *The New Public Service*.

First jobs for graduates of top-tier MPA programs

Sector	1973-74	1978-9	1983	1988	1993
Government	76%	62%	67%	55%	49%
Private	11%	21%	21%	21%	23%
Nonprofit	12%	15%	12%	23%	25%

Source: *The New Public Service*, by Paul C. Light (Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC), 1999. Survey conducted in 1998.

The article also notes, however, that some believe the crisis is “overblown,” and that, in fact, there is a trend away from the federal government, with “a lot more people going into [state and] local government.” Nevertheless, some schools and the National Association of Schools of

Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) itself are making efforts to highlight the various opportunities available through government careers. In addition, some government agencies are developing additional fellowship opportunities, the prestigious Presidential Management Internship program has raised its starting salaries, and some agencies are working closely with MPA programs to develop closer ties so that students who intern during their MPA program are more likely to seek employment in government agencies when they finish.

As an entrepreneurial doctoral student, you have decided to develop a proposal to do research for NASPAA to examine this trend. You would like to examine what will influence MPA students to choose careers in government.

1. Describe your research strategy to examine what approaches are most successful in influencing MPA students to choose a career in government. Discuss the design in some detail, including the data collection procedures and sampling procedures, where appropriate. Discuss also what procedures you will use to operationalize your variables.
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your research strategy in terms of threats to internal and external validity. Discuss also any other criteria that might be used to judge the research design.
3. Discuss any concerns you have about ethical issues that are raised by your research design.

PAD 705 - Research Methods II

The following pages (**IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS PAGE**) contain partial SPSS printout for an analysis of 1990 data on 97 countries. The variables include birth rates, death rates, infant death rates, life expectancies for males and females, and Gross National Product.

Write a memo describing these results. Use the following outline:

1. Brief overall summary of the results for a person not familiar with regression analysis.
2. Interpretation of descriptive statistics.
3. Interpretation of the boxplot.
4. Interpretation of correlation matrix. (Include a brief description of what you would expect to find if these data were factor analyzed.)
5. Interpretation of regression analysis
6. Cautions in the interpretation of these results, and other analyses or graphs (if any) you would like to see so that you could better judge the validity of the regression model.

VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS:

- Life expectancy at birth for males
- Life expectancy at birth for females
- Life expectancy (average of males and females)
- Live birth rate per 1,000 of population
- Death rate per 1,000 of population

Infant deaths per 1,000 of population under 1 year old
Gross National Product per capita in U.S. dollars
Country Group

1 = Eastern Europe

2 = South America and Mexico

3 = Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand

4 = Middle East

5 = Asia

6 = Africa

(These have been converted to dummy variables for each country group.)

SOURCES:

Day, A. (ed.) (1992), *The Annual Register* 1992, 234, London: Longmans.

U.N.E.S.C.O. *1990 Demographic Year Book* (1990), New York: United Nations.

Data extracted by: Mary Rouncefield, Mathematics Department, Chester College, Cheyney Road, Chester, CH1 4DF, U.K.

PAD 708 - Organization Behavior and Theory

The models of analysis we use, which may be implicit, shape our perceptions and analysis. The models flow from assumptions we make; attitudes and worldviews we have; variables we consider important and those we disregard, and other factors. Take four of the books you have encountered in PAD 708—two based in the period before 1950, and two based in the period after 1950—and articulate the central principles, worldviews, and assumptions that seem to underlie the analyses found in the books, and the resulting similarities or differences across the four books.

PAD 709 - Foundations of Public Administration

A series of articles in the March/April 2001 issue of *Public Administration Review* addressed significant issues for public administration, and more specifically, public management. Several authors, including Larry Lynn, David Rosenbloom and Norma Riccucci sought to address what is meant by the “old” public management versus the “new” public management. Based on your understanding of the issues, and the materials covered in PAD 709, write an essay discussing what public management is and how it fits with your view of public administration.