

Public Administration Comprehensive Exam Summary:

Undergraduate Level

Peregrine Academic Services (PAS) provides assessment services for performing direct assessment of learning outcomes in a range of academic disciplines. The online exams are used to evaluate retained student knowledge in relation to the academic program's learning outcomes.

This document outlines the Public Administration assessment service for the associate and bachelor's academic degree levels.

The assessment service is designed for use by US-based schools and programs.

PAS places a high priority on ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment services. These practices begin at the design stage and continue through beta-testing, and with ongoing regularly scheduled quality reviews. A description of the approach used to ensure ongoing validity and reliability is provided at the end of this document.

The undergraduate test bank of questions is used for both associate and bachelor's levels because:

- a) The questions are associated with foundational knowledge levels.
- b) Using the same test bank for both associate and bachelor's level testing is an accreditation/articulation requirement for undergraduate transfer students completing a degree program at the associate level and continuing forward with a bachelor's program.

When used for the associate and bachelor's degree exams, the academic program manager selects topics that align with their learning outcomes and the program curriculum (usually 4-6 topics per exam for the associate degree and 8-10 topics for the bachelor's).

The exams include 10 questions for each topic and each exam is unique as questions are selected at random from the test bank with 50-200 questions per topic.

This document provides information on:

- Topics and the subjects covered within each topic.
- Example questions.
- Assessment Service Validity and Reliability.

The Topics are:

1. Administrative Law
2. Budgets and Public Finance
3. Ethics and Social Responsibility
4. Intergovernmental Relations
5. Leadership in Public Administration
6. Macroeconomics
7. Public Administration Management
8. Public Administration Principles and Foundations
9. Public Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis
10. Research Methods and Statistics in Public Administration
11. Urban and Community Management and Planning

Topic: Administrative Law

Subjects

- Agency Rule Making (*Questions related to agency adjudication, the Federal Register, informal and formal rulemaking, and statutes*)
- Bureaucracy and Democracy (*Questions related to state authority, state and local laws, power of the president, and agency creation*)
- Crime (*Questions related to intent, status crimes, elements of crime, and mens rea*)
- Criminal Law (*Questions related to common law, the schools of jurisprudence, judicial precedent, and the branches of government*)
- Fundamentals of Administrative Law (*Questions related to the administration of law, the study of law and legal philosophy, legal systems, and the forms of social control*)
- The American Constitution (*Questions related to the separation of powers, types of government, and forms of government*)

Example Questions

Ex parte communications are expressly prohibited with regard to _____ hearings.

- A. formal rulemaking
- B. informal rulemaking
- C. exempted rulemaking
- D. negotiated rulemaking

Correct Response: A

Did the framers of the Constitution believe that all policy decisions should be made by majority vote of the people?

- A. Yes, because they were advocates of direct democracy.
- B. Yes, because they believed that most policy decisions should be made by wealthier, better-educated people.
- C. Yes, because they thought that the citizens would not support policy decisions unless they were made by majority choice.
- D. No, because they feared that the majority would make policy decisions that would silence, disadvantage, or harm the minority point of view, thus producing a tyranny of the majority.
- E. No, because they believed the minority was in a better position to make major policy decisions.

Correct Response: D

Topic: Budgets and Public Finance

Subjects

- Analysis of Financial Statements and Financial Condition (*Questions related to information learned from financial statements*)
- Budgetary Consideration in Government Accounting (*Questions related to revenue sources, approaches to budgeting, influences of the budget, and budget classifications*)
- Federal Government Accounting and Reporting (*Questions related to the activities within the federal budgetary accounting cycle, and accounting standards for the federal government*)
- Fundamentals of Accounting (*Questions related to control accounts, journal entries, the accounting equation, and accounting effects*)
- The Use of Funds in Governmental Accounting (*Questions related to financial and capital resources, and the three broad categories of funds*)

Example Questions

Which of the following ratios is a good measure of the liquidity of a city's resources?

- A. cash and investments divided by current liabilities
- B. fund balance as a percentage of revenues
- C. debt service expenditures as a percentage of revenues
- D. sales taxes as a percentage of total taxes

Correct Response: A

Which of the following is an appropriate objective of an Internal Service Fund?

- A. Accounting for the full costs of services, including depreciation of capital assets, to provide a basis for charging governmental users.
- B. Providing services to other governmental agencies without charge.
- C. Temporarily holding tax resources on behalf of another government.
- D. Accounting for the full costs of providing services to the general public.

Correct Response: A

Topic: Ethics and Social Responsibility

Subjects

- Conflict of Interest (*Questions related to situations surrounding conflicts of interest*)
- Discrimination (*Questions related to addressing discrimination issues, and the types of discrimination*)
- Ethical Decision-Making (*Questions related to ethical issues, the ethical decision-making framework, business ethics, and the ethical decision-making framework*)
- Ethical Issues (*Questions related to bullying in the workplace, issues related to fairness and honesty, and fraudulent activities*)
- Ethical Standards (*Questions related to codes of conduct, legal and ethical issues, and ethical issues related to communication*)
- Ethics and Climate (*Questions related to the five bases of power, the implementation of an ethics program, and changing the ethical culture of an organization*)

Example Questions

_____ expose an employer's wrongdoing to outsiders, such as the media or government regulatory agencies.

- A. Private investigators
- B. Whistleblowers
- C. Secret shoppers
- D. Malcontents
- E. Fraud-finders

Correct Response: B

A behavioral simulation, or role play exercise, is a relatively new ethics training device that _____.

- A. requires the use of technology, including video and the computer
- B. has been found to be less effective than traditional lecture training methods
- C. can only be used in small organizations
- D. focuses on legal issues in the workplace and the skills that employees need to resolve legal concerns
- E. recreates the complexities of organizational relationships and aids the development of analytical skills for resolving ethical issues

Correct Response: E

Topic: Intergovernmental Relations

Subjects

- Congress (*Questions related to House rules, congressional leaders, the budgetary process, federal statutes, and congressional districts*)
- State and Local Governments (*Questions that related to municipalities, federal and state revenues, term-limit laws, intergovernmental associations, and responsibilities of state and local governments*)
- The Chief Executive (*Questions related to the strength of the president, the power of the chief executive, and pardon power*)
- The Federal Bureaucracy (*Questions related to the formation of agencies, independent regulatory commissions, and actions of the bureaucracy*)
- The Federal System (*Questions related to*
- The Judiciary (*Questions related to the strategic model of judicial behavior, district courts, the Supreme Court, and the Senate Judiciary Committee*)

Example Questions

The 2002 investigation into terrorist threats to the United States by the joint intelligence committees of Congress is an example of what constitutional function?

- A. oversight
- B. appointment
- C. impeachment
- D. electoral
- E. casework

Correct Response: A

In addition to the "natural born" requirement under the Constitution, presidents also must _____.

- A. be 40 years old and have lived in the United States their whole lives
- B. be 45 years old, be a lawyer, and have lived in the United States for 15 years
- C. be 35 years old, have served as a governor, and have lived in the United States for 30 years
- D. be 35 years old only
- E. be 35 years old and a 14-year resident of the United States

Correct Response: E

Topic: Leadership in Public Administration

Subjects

- Assessing Leadership Styles (*Questions related to the three process motivation theories, Leader-Member Exchange, and the categories of needs*)
- Building and Leading Teams (*Questions related to the stages of evolution in the dyadic approach, follower performance, and the goals of team building*)
- Control and Types of Leader Power (*Questions related to determinants of follower influence, locus of control, and leadership styles*)
- Employee Development (*Questions related to leadership feedback, the four major assumptions of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and delegation*)
- Employee Motivation and Rewards (*Questions related to motives and motivation theories, the motivation process, and reinforcement theories*)
- Leader Expectations (*Questions related to content, process and reinforcement theories, the Pygmalion effect, and pragmatic followers*)
- Leader Traits and Attributes (*Questions related to components of leadership styles, types of power, delegation, and motivators*)
- Models of Leadership (*Questions related to process motivation theories, leadership style components, and the three factors that distinguish influential followers from their peers*)

Example Questions

One possible approach to minimizing the bias in LMX (Leader-Member Exchange) relationship is to _____.

- A. use a different instrument to measure the quality of the relationship other than the LMX-7 scale
- B. train and encourage leaders to maintain high-quality LMX relationships with all followers, not just a few
- C. promote those who consistently score high in their performance evaluations
- D. pay less attention to in-group members and more attention to out-group members

Correct Response: B

The Leadership Grid is based on two leadership dimensions called _____.

- A. concern for production and concern for people
- B. concern for profit and concern for productivity
- C. concern for motivation and concern productivity
- D. concern for operations and concern for profit

Correct Response: A

Topic: Macroeconomics

Subjects

- Consumer Spending and Price Indexing (*Questions related to spending categories, consumption expenditures, price level, and the price of consumer goods and services*)
- Economic Trends and Forecasting (*national saving, economic fluctuations, benefits of economic growth, the average rate of growth, and inflation*)
- Employment and Labor Supply (*Questions related to the unemployment rate, the labor component of Gross Domestic Product, and the theory of economic fluctuations*)
- Gross Domestic Product (*Questions related to consumption expenditures, the three methods of measuring Gross Domestic Product, and economic growth*)
- Inflation and Recession (*Questions related to inflation and interest rates, recession, and economic expansions*)
- Interest Rates, Investment, and Fiscal Policy (*Questions related to investment expenditures, and the effects of fiscal policy on economic growth*)
- International Trade (*Questions related to net exports, investment expenditures, and import spending*)

Example Questions

If a computer dealer has 20 computers at the beginning of the month, receives an additional 35 computers during the month, and sells no computers during the month, the dealer's inventory investment for that month would be _____.

- A. minus 35 computers
- B. plus 20 computers
- C. minus 20 computers
- D. plus 35 computers

Correct Response: D

The negative correlation that occurs between inflation and economic growth can best be explained by _____.

- A. inflation increasing uncertainty
- B. inflation decreasing uncertainty
- C. inflation making everything cheaper
- D. inflation making everything too expensive

Correct Response: A

Topic: Public Administration Management

Subjects

- Environmental Management (*Questions related to the Environmental Protection Agency, environmental policy, public-choice theory, and the Kyoto Protocol*)
- Management and Organization (*Questions related to modern structural organization theory, scientific management, and types of bureaucracy*)
- Organizational Behavior (*Questions related to organizational development, the bureaucratic paradigm, group cohesion, and groupthink*)
- Personnel Management and Labor Relations (*Questions related to civil service, the principle of codetermination, fair labor practices, and the five basic types of appraisals*)

Example Questions

The most common ways of dealing with solid wastes are _____.

- A. landfills, chlorine, and recycling
- B. landfills, incineration, and recycling
- C. chlorine, incineration, and recycling
- D. closing off the polluted area to the public

Correct Response: B

The five basic types of appraisals are _____.

- A. supervisory ratings, self-ratings, peer ratings, subordinated ratings, and group ratings
- B. centralization ratings, decentralization ratings, peer ratings, group ratings, and individual ratings
- C. quality ratings, quantity ratings, supervising ratings, peer ratings, subordinated ratings
- D. supervisory ratings, self-ratings, community ratings, political ratings, and hierarchical ratings

Correct Response: A

Topic: Public Administration Principles and Foundations

Subjects

- Defining Public Administration (*Questions related to the legal definition of public administration, administrative law, governance, and the reform of public administration*)
- The Continuous Reinventing of the Machinery of Government (*Questions related to the Congressional Budget Office, federal government corporations, and the term "reinventing the government"*)
- The Political and Cultural Environment (*Questions related to decision making processes, organizational cultural issues, policymaking phases, and public policy*)

Example Questions

To be defined as a profession, public administration must meet three criteria. Which of the following statements does NOT represent one of these criteria?

- A. A body of academic and practical knowledge that is applied to the service of society.
- B. A standard of success theoretically measured by serving the needs of society rather than seeking purely personal gain.
- C. A system of control over professional practice that regulates the education of new members and maintains a code of ethics and appropriate sanctions.
- D. A system of promotions based on merit that allows for individual growth over a set duration of time.

Correct Response: D

Which of the following is NOT true about the process of public policymaking?

- A. It is cyclical.
- B. It is constrained by the very nature of republican institutions.
- C. It takes place within an overarching political jurisdiction.
- D. It takes place primarily at the highest level of government

Correct Response: D

Topic: Public Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis

Subjects

- A Comparative Analysis of Approaches (*Questions related to best evaluation approaches, and expertise-oriented and consumer-oriented approaches*)
- Agenda Setting (*Questions related to policy agenda setting, the impact of elections on agenda setting, and public interest groups*)
- Data Sources and Methods, Analysis and Interpretation (*Questions related to the guidelines for interpreting findings, and the data sources and methods used in evaluations*)
- Planning How to Conduct the Evaluation (*Questions related to policy impact, symbolic policy impact, the goals of program evaluations, and research designs*)
- Policy Analysis (*Questions related to governmental functions and priorities, the consequences of public policy, and the work of policy analysts*)
- Policy and Visions of Governance (*Questions related to the scope of government, public policy, the philosophy of government, and equal representation*)
- Policy Evaluation (*Questions related to pre and post-policy evaluations, covert and overt evaluations, and evaluation teams*)
- Policy Formulation (*Questions related to the courts in policy formulation, interest groups, long-term policy planning efforts, and globalism*)
- Policy Implementation (*Questions related to administrative and symbolic implementation, policy networks, and policy compliance*)
- Policy Termination (*Questions related to how to achieve successful termination, the power to terminate policies, and the reasons for terminating policies*)
- Political, Interpersonal, and Ethical Issues in Evaluation (*Questions related to the implications of evaluation as a political activity, and evaluation standards*)
- Reporting Evaluation Results (*Questions related to the timing of evaluation reports, the purposes of evaluation reporting, and the types of use for evaluations*)
- Theories of Public Policy (*Questions related to public choice theory, elite theory, and the nationalization of politics and policy*)

Example Questions

In the comparison between expertise-oriented and consumer-oriented approaches, which is considered a true statement?

- A. Expertise-oriented approach has the contribution because it articulates criteria using checklists.
- B. Consumer-oriented approach uses checklists and formative-summative methods.
- C. Scriven is a researcher who is associated with expertise-oriented approach.
- D. Eisner is a researcher who is associated with consumer-oriented approach.

Correct Response: B

One of the major differences between covert and overt evaluation is _____.

- A. Covert evaluation is for military purposes only.
- B. Overt evaluation is planned in advanced while covert occurs spontaneously.
- C. Overt evaluation is "above the board."
- D. Covert evaluation is more typical in a non-democratic society.

Correct Response: C

Topic: Research Methods and Statistics in Public Administration

Subjects

- Building Theories and Hypothesis (*Questions related to the purpose of the study, scientific hypothesis, and the development of research ideas*)
- Comparative Research (*Questions related to comparative focus groups, the goal of most different systems design, and system-level traits*)
- Content Analysis (*Questions related to structural and substantive content analysis, pair-comparison scaling, and inter-coder reliability*)
- Data Coding (*Questions related to the process of coding, the forms of codes in a codebook, and the purpose of coding*)
- Describing the Data (*Questions related to date ranges, types of data, geographic parameters, table data, and charts*)
- Direct Observation (*Questions related to field notes, observation schedules, bias in relation to observation, and structured and unstructured observation*)
- Examining Relationships Among Several Variables (*Questions related to multivariate analysis, multiple regression, multicollinearity, and partial regression coefficient*)
- Examining Relationships Between Two Variables (*Questions related to associations, independent and dependent variables, coefficient of association*)
- Experimental Research Methods (*Questions related to time-series designs, basic experimental designs, and the goal of frequency distribution control*)
- Operationalization and Measurement (*Questions related to reliability and validity, types of measurements, measurement theory, and the steps for making observation*)
- Research as a Process (*Questions related to reactivity, theory formulation, characteristics of research, analyzing data, and types of analysis*)
- Research Design and Methods (*Questions related to quantitative and qualitative research, types of research, and sampling*)
- Sampling (*Questions related to sampling methods, measurement scales, representative samples, and sampling techniques*)
- Scaling Techniques (*Questions related to scale construction, measurements of scales, reliability of scales, and the role of judges*)
- Studying Groups with Aggregate Data (*Questions related to index construction, histograms, coding manuals, and organizational statistics*)
- Summarizing Distributions on One Variable (*Questions related to central tendency, interval/ration data, dispersion, and types of distributions*)
- Survey Research (*Questions related to interview methods, sampling errors, closed questions, longitudinal designs, rating scales, and characteristics of surveys*)

Example Questions

In which of the following examples is voter participation an independent variable?

- A. In rural areas, voter participation is higher.
- B. Campaigning seems to have no effect on voter participation.
- C. Voter participation has a direct effect on spending on the next cycle of elections.
- D. Charitable donations by candidates have a negative effect on voter participation.

Correct Response: C

In political science research, "confidence in findings" refers to the _____.

- A. relationship between the sample and the larger population
- B. tabulation of data
- C. choice of subjects
- D. reporting of data

Correct Response: A

Topic: Urban and Community Management and Planning

Subjects

- Economic Development Planning (*Questions related to the approaches of economic development planning, economic growth, and urban planning*)
- Environmental and Energy Planning (*Questions related to the National Environmental Protection Act, environmental problems, and local planning*)
- Growth Management and Sustainable Development (*Questions related to residential and commercial development, sustainable development, smart growth, and state-level growth management*)
- Land-Use Planning Tools (*Questions related to land-use controls, zoning, subdivision regulations, public capital investment, and the pattern of development*)
- Legal Basis for Planning (*Questions related to responsibilities of municipalities, urban planning, eminent domain, zoning, and the influence of the federal government over the local planning process*)
- Metropolitan Regional Planning (*Questions related to the regional planning agency, councils of government, planning issues, and metropolitan-area problems*)
- Need for Planning (*Questions related to urban planning, complexity, interconnectedness, and need for urban planning*)
- Planning and Politics (*Questions related to the politics of urban planning, urban planning styles, urban planners, the effects of urban planning decisions*)
- Social Issues in Urban Planning (*Questions related to physical planning decisions, economic development, and the implications of planning decisions*)
- The Comprehensive Plan (*Questions related to planning documents, comprehensive urban plans, capital investments, and the five stages for the development of the comprehensive plan*)
- Transportation Planning (*Questions related to the Four-Step Transportation Process, land use planning, public transportation, and the infrastructure of transportation*)
- Urban Design (*Questions related to the neighborhood planning unit, and the four phases of urban design*)
- Urban Renewal and Community Development (*Questions related to the considerations of community development, issues of urban planning, and Urban Renewal*)
- Urbanization (*Questions related to growth within cities and metropolitan areas, urban renewal, and urban planning*)

Example Questions

Sustainable development concerns _____.

- A. protection of factories for workers
- B. preservation of education services
- C. longer lasting roads and infrastructure
- D. preservation of the natural environment

Correct Response: D

In this step of the Four-Step Transportation Process for evaluating alternatives, you estimate how many trips a given place will generate regardless of where those trips are destined.

- A. Estimating trip generation.
- B. Estimating trip distribution.
- C. Estimating modal split.
- D. Trip assignment.

Correct Response: A

Assessment Service Validity and Reliability

Introduction

The programmatic assessment services provided by Peregrine Academic Services (PAS) are used to assess retained knowledge of students at various academic degree levels. Schools deploy these services to evaluate the effectiveness of their academic programs, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate program outcomes to external stakeholders.

PAS places a high priority on ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment services. These practices begin at the design stage and continue through beta-testing, and with ongoing regularly scheduled quality reviews. The following outlines the approaches used to ensure ongoing validity and reliability.

Validity refers to the extent to which the test banks and the services measure the phenomena under consideration.

Reliability refers to the extent to which the exam results are repeatable and therefore data sets can be compared over time.

Design Features that Impact Validity and Reliability

The following features apply to all assessment services.

- Exam scoring is 100% objective using automated marking.
- Each exam viewed by a student is unique using a random selection of questions from the test bank in random topic order.
- Timed response periods for questions. When the user navigates away from the exam screen, the screen fades, a message appears informing the user that he/she has left the exam window and the questions are timed.
- Students are unable to copy/paste from the exam window.
- The exam services meet the security requirements for Management of Information Technology (MIS) Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) compliant organizations.
- Abandoned exams are excluded from summary reports.

Ensuring Ongoing Validity and Reliability

Validity

To ensure test bank validity, the following measures were adopted when the initial test banks were created. The same principles are used with subsequent changes to the test banks.

- The specific accreditation or certification requirements related to learning outcomes evaluation were used to determine the topics and subjects for the test banks.
- Current teachings for each topic were considered regarding the foundational level of each test bank.
- Exam questions were written and reviewed by academic professionals within each discipline. Similar subject matter experts are used with subsequent editing and for new questions.
- Each topic has questions designated for 4-8 subjects per topic to help ensure appropriate breadth of coverage and allow for specific learning outcomes measurement.
- Exam responses are either correct or incorrect with only one possible correct choice. Scores are determined by summarizing the percent correct: per subject, per topic, and by total score.

Reliability

PAS contracted with external experts to design a comprehensive and statistically sound approach to measuring assessment service reliability. The result is that each year, a *Reliability Report* is generated for each assessment service. The report generates data for several reliability metrics and the data for each are compared with acceptability criteria to determine which test questions should be modified or replaced. Subject matter experts in the field are then contracted to modify/replace the targeted questions. Hence, the assessment service is regularly reviewed and improved to ensure ongoing reliability.

Reliability is determined by measuring *Item Difficulty*, *Item Discrimination* and *Question Interchangeability*.

Item Difficulty refers to percentage of students who answer questions correctly. Data are generated by topic and for each individual question. The target Item Difficulty is 60 percent correct with an acceptable range of 35 – 80 percent.

Item Discrimination refers to how well a question distinguishes between those students with more knowledge (higher overall exam scores) from those with less knowledge. Two measures are used: *Discrimination Index* and *Point-Biserial Correlation*.

For a given question, the Discrimination Index compares the scores of students with high overall test scores with students with low overall test scores. The scale is -1 to +1, with higher values indicating that a given question better distinguishes between high and low performing students. A value of ≥ 0.20 is considered acceptable.

Point-Biserial Correlation is equal to the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between the scores on the entire exam and the scores on a specific question. A score of ≥ 0.10 is considered acceptable.

When assessing the quality of questions, both the Discrimination Index and the Point-Biserial Correlation Coefficient are reviewed.

Question Interchangeability refers to the ability to substitute a question in the test bank with another without significantly affecting the total score that an individual would receive on the exam. This is determined using Cohen's Effect Size d calculated based on a two-tailed t -test comparing the total score for all students who had that question in their exam versus the total score of the students who did not have that question in their exam. The scale is 0-1.0 and a score of < 0.20 is considered acceptable.