

## **Public Administration Comprehensive Exam Summary:**

### ***Masters 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 master's academic degree level.**

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 academic program manager selects topics that align with their learning outcomes and the program curriculum (usually 6-10 topics per exam).

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**

- 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*)
- Lawmaking (*Questions related to the pre-lawmaking process, the influence of public opinion, legislative response, and the generation of legislation*)
- The Organization of Law (*Questions related to the steps of criminal proceedings, the legislative process, and the characteristics of court systems*)
- Theoretical Perspectives (*Questions related to legal systems, law and society theories, socio-legal theories, and the law of measurement*)

### **Example Questions**

Which of the following is a type of law which resists codification and is based on precedent?

- A. Napoleonic law
- B. Executive orders
- C. Constitutional law
- D. Common law

**Correct Response: D**

\_\_\_\_\_ of U.S. senators are up for election every two years.

- A. 1/5
- B. 2/3
- C. 1/3
- D. 100

**Correct Response: C**

## **Topic: Budgets and Public Finance**

### **Subjects**

- Financing and Budgeting Governments (*Questions related to cutback management, taxes, federal revenues, and the various types of budgets*)
- Public Budgeting and Finance (*Questions related to taxes, the various types of budgets, state revenues, expenditures, and the four phases of the budget cycle*)
- Public Financial Management (*Questions related to expenses, revenues, budgeting authority, and the principles of the American system of public financial management*)

### **Example Questions**

An income tax that taxes all incomes at the same rate is referred to as a \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. proportional income tax
- B. progressive income tax
- C. regressive income tax
- D. minimal income tax

**Correct Response: A**

Zero-based budgeting refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a tax where the ratio of tax to income increases as a taxpayer's income rises
- B. numeric codes used by governments to classify expenditures by categories
- C. a selective sales tax imposed on certain items, in part, to regulate consumption
- D. a type of budgeting where a program's continued existence is not assumed and all expenditures, not just new ones, must be justified every year
- E. a type of budgeting that reports the items to be purchased by a government, and the amount of money that will be spent on each item

**Correct Response: D**

## **Topic: Ethics and Social Responsibility**

### **Subjects**

- 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*)
- Individual and Organizational Ethics and Culture (*Questions related to the code of ethics, ethical culture, types of leaders, and the role of leadership in developing an ethics program*)
- International Ethical Standards (*Questions related to discrimination in international business, international ethics code, and multinational corporations*)
- Social Responsibility (*Questions related to human rights, pollution control, and ethical issues*)
- Stakeholder Relations (*Questions related to value and principle based decision making, and the six spheres of influence*)

### **Example Questions**

A salesperson is given public recognition and a large bonus for making a valuable sale that he or she obtained using unethical tactics. This is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. creating a prospect for reward for unethical behavior
- B. creating a prospect for reward for ethical behavior
- C. failing to erect barriers against ethical behavior
- D. failing to erect barriers against unethical behavior
- E. obedience to authority

**Correct Response: A**

Those who believe in internal control (i.e., internals) believe that they control the events in their lives by \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. going with the flow, because that's all they can do
- B. their own effort and skill, viewing themselves as masters of their destinies and trusting in their capacity to influence their environment
- C. going against the flow, because that's what they should do
- D. nonverbal communication
- E. purely verbal communication

**Correct Response: B**

## **Topic: Intergovernmental Relations**

### **Subjects**

- Congress (*Questions related to House rules, congressional leaders, the budgetary process, federal statutes, and congressional districts*)
- Federalism (*Questions related to preemption, categorical grants, federal economic intervention, enumerated powers, and national laws*)
- 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 Executive Branch and the Federal Bureaucracy (*Questions related to the civil service system, the size of bureaucracy, due process, and governmental agencies*)
- The Judiciary (*Questions related to the strategic model of judicial behavior, district courts, the Supreme Court, and the Senate Judiciary Committee*)
- The Presidency (*Questions related to powers of the president, presidential constitutional qualifications, the executive branch, and the Executive Office of the President*)

### **Example Questions**

The main organizational vehicle in the House and Senate is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the two major political parties
- B. the committee chairs
- C. the two major political parties plus independents
- D. the strong party leaders
- E. the subcommittees

**Correct Response: A**

Iron triangles \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. by design exacerbate inefficiencies of the bureaucratic system
- B. are not as powerful as they once were
- C. illustrate the competition that exists within different government agencies
- D. became illegal after the Federal Employees Political Activities Act of 1993 was passed
- E. are synonymous with issue networks

**Correct Response: B**

## **Topic: Leadership in Public Administration**

### **Subjects**

- Coaching and Mentoring (*Questions related to executive coaching, online mentoring, mentoring relationships, and leadership development*)
- Leader Traits and Effectiveness (*Questions related to emotional intelligence, tenacity, authentic leaders, the achievement motive, and leadership effectiveness*)
- Leadership Development (*Questions related to multifunctional managerial development, outcomes of training and development programs, and succession planning*)
- Leadership Styles and Approaches (*Questions related to application of insight, challenges of being a new leader, behavioral role modeling, authentic leaders, and emotional intelligence*)
- Power and Legitimacy (*Questions related to position power, socialized power motive, and the acquisition of power*)

### **Example Questions**

Executive coaching can be part of leadership development because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. management is really a team sport
- B. most managers have severe emotional problems
- C. most coaches are former CEOs
- D. managers receive advice and encouragement about leadership skills

**Correct Response: D**

The most effective type of humor for an organizational leader to use is directed at \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the competition
- B. group members
- C. other departments
- D. himself/herself

**Correct Response: D**

## **Topic: Macroeconomics**

### **Subjects**

- Employment and Unemployment (*Questions related to classifications of unemployment, categories of unemployment, the unemployment rate, and capital consumption*)
- Gross Domestic Product (*Questions related to consumption expenditures, the three methods of measuring Gross Domestic Product, and economic growth*)
- Income, Debt, and Investment (*Questions related to national income, types of investments, and the phases of a business cycle*)
- Inflation and Interest Rates (*Questions related to the measure of the inflation rate, the Federal Reserve, economic data, and recession*)
- International Trade (*Questions related to net exports, and import spending*)
- Pricing and Price Indexing (*Questions related to base year, depreciation, the Consumer Price Index, the business cycle, and the cost of living*)

### **Example Questions**

The cyclical unemployment rate is defined as the \_\_\_\_\_ unemployment rates.

- A. sum of the structural and the frictional
- B. difference between the structural and the frictional
- C. difference between the existing (actual) and the natural
- D. sum of the natural and the frictional

**Correct Response: C**

If in the process of calculating GDP, the market value of all intermediate goods is added to the market value of all final goods, this would \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. overstate the actual value of GDP
- B. produce the correct value of GDP
- C. understate the actual value of GDP
- D. avoid the possible error of double counting

**Correct Response: A**

## **Topic: Public Administration Management**

### **Subjects**

- Communication and Strategy (*Questions related to intrapersonal communications, communication styles, and managing communication*)
- Human Resource Administration in Public Organizations (*Questions related to general schedule, pay comparability, position classification systems, and labor relations*)
- Managing Information Systems and Policy in Public Organizations (*Questions related to the freedom of information, information resources management, and the digital divide*)
- Organizational Environment (*Questions related to decentralization, organizational power, standard operating procedures, and organic organization*)
- Theories of Organization and Public Administration (*Questions related to classical organizational theory, public choice, and redistribution*)

### **Example Questions**

Glass ceiling refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a practice to collapse pay grades by reducing a large number of job classifications into a smaller, more manageable number
- B. the system in which employees are hired or promoted based on the quality of their work, education, and experience
- C. an attempt to equalize the difference in compensation levels between men and women who do jobs of comparable value
- D. the concept that individuals reach a certain level in an organization and are not able to rise above it
- E. the standard federal government pay scale and position classification system

**Correct Response: D**

Informal organization refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. term coined by Luther Gulick as a way to draw attention to the essential management functions of the chief executive
- B. the structure in an organization that establishes the authority relationships among the different roles and functions
- C. aspects of organization such as interpersonal relations that exist alongside the formal structures and roles. They do not show up on the organization chart
- D. a term originated by Herbert Simon for decisions that are less than optimal
- E. the limited number of subordinates a manager can effectively supervise

**Correct Response: C**



## **Topic: Public Administration Principles and Foundations**

### **Subjects**

- Civil Society (*Questions related to the characteristics of social capital, the policy making process, civil engagement, and democracy*)
- Ethics and Public Administration (*Questions related to technical rationality, regime values, utilitarianism, and the various approaches to ethics*)
- Federalism (*Questions related to interstate relations, the federal grant system, federal forms of government, and federal requirements of program areas*)
- Public Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (*Questions related to civil society, public policy, interest groups, and public administration*)
- The Environment of Public Administration (*Questions related to executive departments, performance audits, governmental reorganization, and administrative action*)
- The Growth of Administration (*Questions related to gross domestic product, the growth of government, market failure, and mixed economy*)

### **Example Questions**

Civic engagement refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the process by which citizens participate in civil society and democratic politics
- B. organizations formed by individuals to advance their joint goals by influencing government
- C. a term used by James Madison to refer to voluntary associations formed to pursue their own interests often to the harm of society
- D. a person working for an interest group or groups who attempts to influence the policy-making process
- E. term that refers to the tendency of individuals to join fewer groups than earlier generations

**Correct Response: A**

Preemption refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a grant with a narrowly defined purpose used to achieve specific goals
- B. the 14 governmental powers that are given to the national government by the U.S. Constitution
- C. the financial relations among different units of government
- D. a federal requirement that supersedes state laws in a particular program area
- E. the granting of considerable decision making powers to local governments by state legislatures or state constitutions

**Correct Response: D**

## **Topic: Public Program Evaluation and Policy Analysis**

### **Subjects**

- Analysis of Costs and Outcomes (*Questions related to program costs, indirect costs, cost-utility analyses, sunk costs, and cost-benefit analysis*)
- Ethics in Program Evaluation (*Questions related to the differences between evaluators and basic researchers, interviewing, program effectiveness, and statistical errors*)
- Models of Politics (*Questions related to group theory, public policy, elitism, and public choice theory*)
- Planning an Evaluation (*Questions related to the program evaluation project, the social science model for program evaluation, and evaluation activities*)
- Policy Analysis (*Questions related to governmental functions and priorities, the consequences of public policy, and the work of policy analysts*)
- Policy Evaluation (*Questions related to policy impact, symbolic policy impact, the goals of program evaluations, and research designs*)
- Program Evaluation Overview (*Questions related to the evaluators, formative evaluations, the purpose of program evaluation, and evaluations of process*)
- Qualitative Evaluation Methods (*Questions related to the differences between qualitative and quantitative evaluations, and the phases of qualitative evaluations*)
- The Policymaking Process (*Questions related to interest groups, policy evaluation, political action committees, and policy making in America*)

### **Example Questions**

Those that focus on the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) when studying public policy would be primarily interested in the \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. institutional model
- B. the game theory model
- C. public choice model
- D. rational model

**Correct Response: A**

The ultimate purposes of program evaluation includes \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the collection of data on the outcome of services
- B. an assessment of how program staff people spend their time so that ineffective staff members can be identified
- C. making decisions about the proper groups a program should serve
- D. the improvement of implemented programs and the wise selection among possible programs

**Correct Response: D**

## **Topic: Research Methods and Statistics in Public Administration**

### **Subjects**

- Control Techniques in Experimental Research (*Questions related to extraneous variables, the typical source of order effects, demand characteristics, and validity*)
- Descriptive Statistics (*Questions related to histograms, mean, median, mode, the use of graphs, normal distribution, and central tendency*)
- Ethics (*Questions related to research protocol, ethical principles, the concept of privacy, the principle of informed consent, and federal funding for research*)
- Experimental Research Design (*Questions relating to within-participant designs, factorial designs, control groups*)
- Inferential Statistics (*Questions related to hypothesis testing, probability, sampling distribution, and principles of statistical tests*)
- Measuring Variables and Sampling (*Questions related to sampling methods, measurement scales, representative samples, and sampling techniques*)
- Problem Identification and Hypothesis Formation (*Questions related to the purpose of the study, scientific hypothesis, and the development of research ideas*)
- Procedure for Conducting an Experiment (*Questions related to experimental interviews, random selection, internet based studies, and selection of participants*)
- Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research (*Questions related to the findings and interpretations of research, the various types of data, and qualitative researchers*)
- Quasi-Experimental Designs (*Questions related to time series designs, comparison group designs, interaction effects, and eliminating potential confounds*)
- Research Approaches and Methods of Data Collection (*Questions related to experimentation settings, experimental approaches, and outcomes of experiments*)
- Research Validity (*Questions related to the types of variables, rival hypotheses, the quality of experiments, and external validity*)
- Single-Case Research Designs (*Questions related to experimental criterion, interrupted time series, changing criterion design, multiple baseline designs, and interaction design*)
- Survey Research (*Questions related to interview methods, sampling errors, closed questions, longitudinal designs, rating scales, and characteristics of surveys*)

### **Example Questions**

There are many good reasons for pretesting participants before introducing the independent variable. Perhaps the most common of these is that pretesting \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. gives the experimenter direct evidence of change in performance
- B. is a prerequisite for post-testing
- C. eliminates the need for random assignment of participants to groups
- D. increases the sensitivity of the experiment

**Correct Response: A**

"External validity" of an experiment refers to the extent to which \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the operational definitions of variables really do represent the concepts they are meant to capture
- B. we can be confident that the experiment is testing the hypothesis we think it is testing
- C. we can make causative statements about the relationship between the dependent and independent variables
- D. the results of an experiment can be generalized across people, settings, and times, treatments, and outcomes

**Correct Response: D**

## **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**

The two main types of bonds issued to finance public capital investments are.

- A. General Obligation (GO) bonds and revenue bonds
- B. Revenue bonds and investment bonds
- C. General Obligation (GO) bonds and investment bonds
- D. Tax Bonds and Non-Tax Bonds

### **Correct Response: A**

Traditionally, the neighborhood planning unit is the area that would contain a population sufficient to supply \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. pupils for one elementary school
- B. employees for one factory
- C. students for one community college
- D. voters for one city ward district

### **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  $\geq 0.20$  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  $\geq 0.10$  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.