To earn the M.S. Healthcare Management (MS HCM) degree, candidates are required to pass the Healthcare Management Comprehensive Examination.

**University Definition of a Comprehensive Exam.** "A comprehensive examination is an assessment of the students' ability to integrate the knowledge of the area, show critical and independent thinking and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter. The results of the examination evidence independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. A record of the examination questions and responses shall be maintained in accordance with the records retention policy of the California State University." You are further encouraged to consult the University Requirements for Master’s Degree policies online in the University Catalog.

**Eligibility.** Candidates for the MS HCM degree are eligible to take the examination after they have Advanced to Candidacy. The minimum requirements for Advancement to Candidacy are:

1. Satisfaction of the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (e.g., UNIV 4000, 4010).
2. Basic Proficiency with spreadsheet and presentation software.
3. An approved course program on file in the Student Service (Advisement) Center (SH 256B).
4. Completion of all but two required courses (or approved substitutes) with a grade of C or higher.
5. An overall GPA of B (3.0) or better in all courses taken toward the MS HCM degree and in all courses taken as a graduate student at CSULA.
6. A petition form signed by the student and graduate advisor.

**Advancement to Candidacy** is not automatic and must be petitioned by the student using the GS-10 form, which can be obtained from the Student Service Center.

**Petition to Take Comprehensive Examinations Early.** If a student is eligible, there is no need to petition to take the Comprehensive Examination. Students who have not fulfilled all eligibility requirements, yet have a compelling reason for taking the exam, may submit a petition to the MS HCM Program Coordinator. A sample petition form is included in the document “Guidelines for Graduate Students.”

**Registration Procedure.** To take the comprehensive exam, students must register for the course **BUS 5960 – Comprehensive Examination (0 units)** by the add deadline in the term in which they intend to take the exam. The College’s Director of Graduate Studies will be able to assist with this registration.

**Frequency / Date / Location / Time of the Comprehensive Examination.** Candidates registered for BUS 5960 will receive a letter from the office of the Associate Dean of the College of Business and Economics (or designee), informing them of the date, location, and time of the examination. Typically, the examination is administered...
in a four-hour session on a Friday during the Fall and Spring semesters, in a computer classroom in Salazar Hall. Dates and times of comprehensive exams are posted on the College of Business and Economics website under the CBE Graduate Programs. If for any reason a candidate who has registered for BUS 5960 does not receive a letter, the student should contact the Student Service/Advisement Center, College of Business and Economics, Salazar Hall C 256B, Tel. (323) 343 2808.

**Notification of Grades.** Students are informed of their overall grade “Credit” or “No Credit” at the end of the semester in which they took the examination, through regular university procedures of posting grades. They may also inquire about the unofficial report of grade distribution across the exam’s sections with the MS HCM Program Coordinator at least six weeks after the date of the exam they attempted. Any such unofficial information is given (upon request) at the discretion of MS HCM Program Coordinator and, normally, only to the students who have not passed the exam.

**Content of the Exam.** The exam consists of a short write-up of a scenario or case study about one or more healthcare organizations, typically with exhibits. Exhibits may include charts, tables, and financial statements. Five parts with one or more questions each follow. All questions refer to the same case/scenario, and therefore students must be able to understand and interpret the case/scenario and exhibits in order to answer the questions. The five content areas are:

1. Healthcare information systems (primarily covered in CIS 5810 or MGMT 5340)
2. Healthcare strategy/marketing management (primarily covered in MGMT 5350)
3. Financial management of healthcare organizations (primarily covered in MGMT 5335)
4. Healthcare law, compliance, and ethics (primarily covered in MGMT 5330)
5. Organization and management of healthcare organizations (primarily covered in MGMT 5300)

Examination questions are developed by, and examination responses graded by, the faculty of the required courses in the program. However, examination questions are not necessarily course-specific or instructor-specific. They are designed to ensure that candidates are current in the field in which they will be awarded a Master’s degree and require the integration of knowledge and skills gained from all courses and assignments completed and synthesis of that knowledge with current healthcare management trends.

**Comprehensive Examination Format.** Candidates type their answers to the examination questions using word processors supplied by the College, normally in one of the computerized classrooms. It is expected that someone who earns a Master of Science degree in the College of Business and Economics has minimal typing proficiency and computer literacy required to complete the exam in this format.

Candidates with disabilities should contact the CSULA Office for Students with Disabilities (SA 115, tel. 323-343-3140) in order to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided.
Candidates will be assigned a random number to include in their examination papers, rather than using their names. The faculty grading the exam will only see the number and the answer and will not know who the student is. This will allow for blind grading.

**Number of Attempts Allowed.** Candidates may enroll in BUS 5960 and attempt to pass the examination or a part thereof a maximum of three (3) times. A candidate must pass the comprehensive exam on the third try in order to remain in the program.

**Grading.** Students will receive an overall grade of “Credit” or “No Credit” on the exam (exam result). The overall grade is determined by the following procedure: Each of the five questions is given a grade of “Strong Pass,” “Pass,” “Weak,” or “Fail.” A grade of “Strong Pass” or “Pass” means that the student has passed the question. A grade of “Weak” or “Fail” means that a student has not passed the question. However, on a given examination, a grade of “Strong Pass” on one question may mitigate a grade of “Weak” on another. A grade of “Fail” cannot be mitigated. Examples follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M.S. HCM Candidate “A”</th>
<th>M.S. HCM Candidate “B”</th>
<th>M.S. HCM Candidate “C”</th>
<th>M.S. HCM Candidate “D”</th>
<th>M.S. HCM Candidate “E”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 HC Information Systems</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 HC Marketing Management</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Financial Mgmt of HC Organizations</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 HC Law/Ethics or Human Resources Mgmt of HC Organizations</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong Pass</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Organization and Mgmt of HC Organizations</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Weak</td>
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**EXAM RESULT**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CREDIT</th>
<th>NO CREDIT Must repeat 4 and 5.</th>
<th>NO CREDIT Must repeat 4 and 5.</th>
<th>NO CREDIT Must repeat 5.</th>
<th>NO CREDIT Must repeat all parts.</th>
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**Appeals.** A student may appeal any aspect of the examining procedure and grade. Before a student may initiate a formal Grade Appeal or other Academic Grievance, he or she must attempt to resolve the issue informally by meeting with the MS HCM Program Coordinator. A formal appeal of a course grade or another academic decision must be made within sixty (60) days of formal notification to the student of the decision or grade (e.g., official grade posting at the end of term). A formal appeal should be filed...
in the office of the Dean of the College of Business and Economics, and must include (1) the Grade Appeal/Academic Grievance Form; (2) a written statement clearly presenting the basis for the appeal; and (3) any documentation that supports the claim. For any further information, please consult the student handbook or get advice from a graduate advisor (Salazar Hall 256B).

**Study Guide/Tips.** While the exam is not the same every term, it is designed to assess students’ integration of knowledge from the material covered in the MS HCM courses, its application in HCM practice, coupled with the students’ ability to think creatively, independently, and critically in demonstrating currency in the field. It is, therefore, should not be assumed that receiving good grades in individual courses necessarily leads to passing the Comprehensive Exam. This culminating experience is designed to go above and beyond the testing of individual course content.

The content of the exam is outlined above, and the content areas are too voluminous and diverse to produce a definitive list of their evolving components. With up to seven years allowed for students to complete the MS HCM professional degree, the students are expected to stay current with the field’s key developments and should not answer exam questions based on substantially outdated content, even if that was what they studied at the time of taking a required course. If they studied healthcare systems or insurance markets, for example, prior to the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA), they should not answer associated exam questions as though the ACA was never implemented.

Additionally, given the contextual nature and diversity of content application in HCM, the students should be mindful that there might be several correct answers to a given question on the exam. This does not mean that the students are expected to list all plausible answers. It is the student’s mastery of content synthesis, case application, and associated decision making that will have to be demonstrated in a persuasive argument for his or her answer of choice.

Students are encouraged to:
- review their notes and textbooks from the primary courses linked to the content areas above and consult current sources for any key changes (e.g., the ACA);
- draw integrative links within the content areas (e.g., between the readings and applications in a given course) and between the content areas (e.g., financing a CIS project), to enhance their appreciation of HCM complexity and understand how to respond to it;
- show an understanding of the core mission and ethics in HCM as they relate to the scenario/case evidence;
- organize peer-review groups and attend faculty-led review sessions, if any;
- during the exam, support the answers with evidence (e.g., scenario/case financials) and **build concise, logical arguments for choosing a particular answer**.