

POLICY ON COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION M.S. HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Revised March 23, 2018

BUS 5960 - Comprehensive Examination

To earn the M.S. Healthcare Management (MS HCM) degree, candidates are required to pass the Healthcare Management Comprehensive Examination, BUS 5960.

Comprehensive Exam and University Policies. *"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" (Title 5).* You are further encouraged to consult and follow the University Requirements for Master's Degree policies in the University Catalog.

Eligibility. Candidates for the MS HCM degree are eligible to take the examination after they have petitioned for (via GS-10 form available online from the University Office of Graduate Studies) and advanced to candidacy. **Advancement to Candidacy** is not automatic, and the minimum requirements are:

- (1) Satisfaction of the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (e.g., during admission or via UNIV 4000 exam or via UNIV 4010 course).
- (2) Basic proficiency with spreadsheet and presentation software (e.g., a grade of "B" or better in MGMT 5310; independent certification; or any other means acceptable to advisor).
- (3) An approved study plan 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. Elective courses do not have to be completed to satisfy this requirement.
- (5) An overall GPA of B (3.0) or higher in all courses taken toward the MS HCM degree.
- (6) Approval of the college graduate dean (or designee) upon recommendation from the department advisor.

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.

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 (e.g., via CSULA email) 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 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, he or she must contact the Student Service/Advisement Center, College of Business and Economics, Salazar Hall C 256B, Tel. (323) 343-2808, at least two weeks prior to the exam date and obtain information about the exam logistics.

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 three weeks after the date of the exam they attempted. Any such information may be obtained (upon request) from the MS HCM Program Coordinator and, normally, only by the students who have not passed the exam.

Contents of the Exam. The exam paper starts with some of the rules and guidelines as well as a short write-up of a scenario or case study about one or more healthcare organizations, typically with exhibits. Exhibits may include charts, tables, financial statements, etc. Five test sections 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 any associated exhibits in order to answer the questions. The five sections (i.e., 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 workplaces (primarily covered in MGMT 5300).

Examination questions are developed by, and examination responses graded by, the MS HCM program faculty. 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 and the 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) well in advance of the exam date in order to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided.

Exam takers will be assigned a number to include in their examination papers, rather than using their names. The faculty grading the exam must not know who the student is while grading the exam, to enable blind grading.

Number of Attempts Allowed. Candidates may enroll in BUS 5960 and attempt to pass the examination or a section thereof a maximum of three (3) times. A candidate must pass the comprehensive exam no later than 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 sections is given a grade of “Strong Pass,” “Pass,” “Weak,” or “Fail.” A grade of “Strong Pass” or “Pass” means that the student has passed that section. A grade of “Weak” or “Fail” means that a student has not passed that section. However, on a given examination, a grade of “Strong Pass” in one section may mitigate a grade of “Weak” on another. A grade of “Fail” cannot be mitigated. Examples follow.

		M.S. HCM Candidate “A”	M.S. HCM Candidate “B”	M.S. HCM Candidate “C”	M.S. HCM Candidate “D”	M.S. HCM Candidate “E”
1	HC Information Systems	Strong Pass	Pass	Strong Pass	Strong Pass	Weak
2	HC Marketing Management	Strong Pass	Pass	Pass	Strong Pass	Weak
3	Financial Mgmt of HC Organizations	Pass	Pass	Pass	Strong Pass	Weak
4	HC Law/Ethics	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong Pass	Weak
5	Organization and Mgmt of HC Organizations	Weak	Weak	Weak	Fail	Weak
EXAM RESULT		CREDIT	NO CREDIT (Must repeat 4 and 5)	NO CREDIT (Must repeat 4 and 5)	NO CREDIT (Must repeat 5)	NO CREDIT (Must repeat all sections)

Appeals. A student may appeal the overall grade, the examining procedure, or any other academic decision. Before a student may initiate a formal Grade Appeal or other Academic Grievance, he or she must attempt to resolve the issue informally with the MS HCM Program Coordinator. A formal appeal of a course grade or another academic

decision must be made within sixty (60) calendar 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 appeal. For any further information, please consult the Graduate Student Handbook or University policies and get advice from a graduate dean/advisor.

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' abilities 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 contents of the exam are 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 full 2014 implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), they should not answer associated exam questions in 2018 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, evidence-based 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., ACA changes);
- draw integrative links within the content areas (e.g., legal aspects of ACA and EMTALA as applied to DACA recipients) and between the content areas (e.g., EMTALA considerations in 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 facts;
- organize peer-review groups and attend faculty-led review sessions, if any;
- during the exam, **proofread** and support all answers with evidence (e.g., case financials) and build concise, logical arguments for choosing a particular answer.