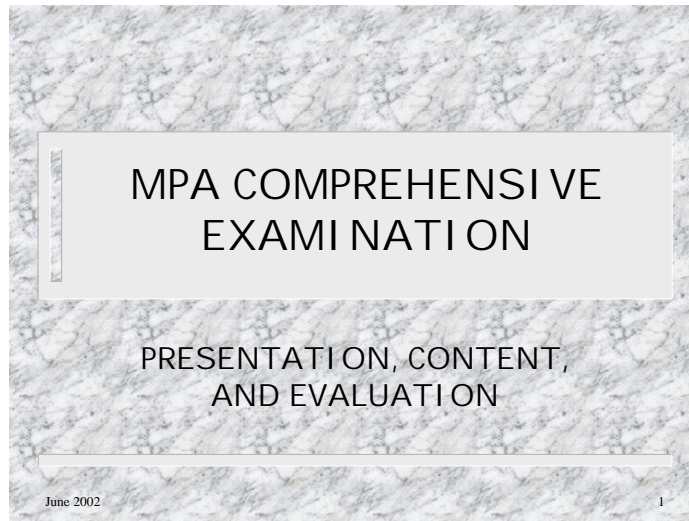


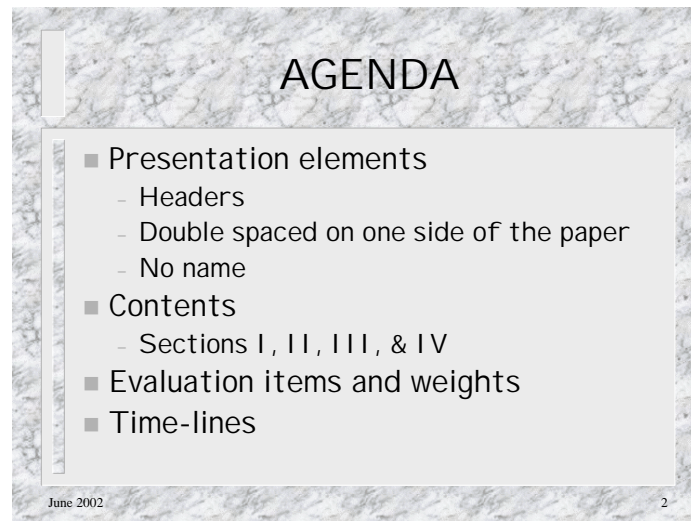
KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION



The purpose of this presentation is to guide you in your preparation for taking the MPA Comprehensive Examination. Three distinct items will be addressed – first, comments will be made about the **FORMAT**, followed by additional attention to the **CONTENT**, and finally, a discussion of the **EVALUATION PROCESS**. Obviously, the more important of these elements for you is content. The MPA Comprehensive Exam requires that you accomplish a case analysis. The purpose of this case analysis is to afford you an opportunity to prove that you are a master of public administration. This will require you to follow a rational problem solving process supported with referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. from your MPA core courses.

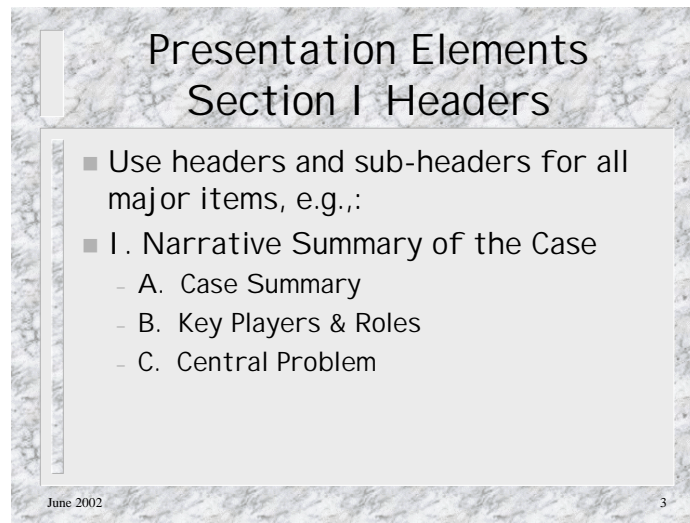
AGENDA



As has been stated, we will first discuss how to format your MPA comprehensive exam response. Then attention will be directed towards the content of the four areas you will address in your case analysis. Third, we will explain the evaluation process and related elements. Finally, there will be a brief discussion of how to budget your time during your completion of the MPA comprehensive examination.

FORMAT

SECTION I

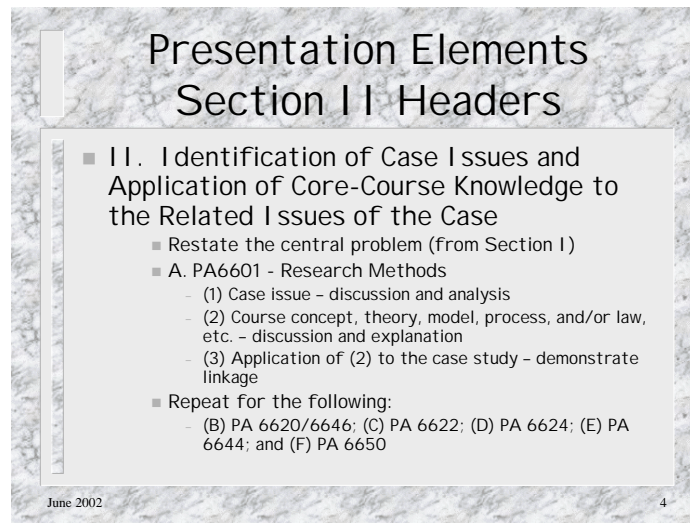


Proper formatting can favorably impact the evaluation process. It helps ensure that the writer and evaluator are "in the same pew in the same church!" It is important that you are explicit and comprehensive in your treatment of each element related to the case analysis – formatting will help you organize your thoughts and satisfy these criteria.

You must use the formatting shown above; that is, for the first section of your case analysis work, use the Roman numeral I and the terms, NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF THE CASE. Then it is suggested that you use the capital letters A, B, and C, with the terms, Case Summary, Key Players and Roles, and Central Problem. Using this formatting will help you address the salient elements of Section I of your case analysis.

FORMAT

SECTION II

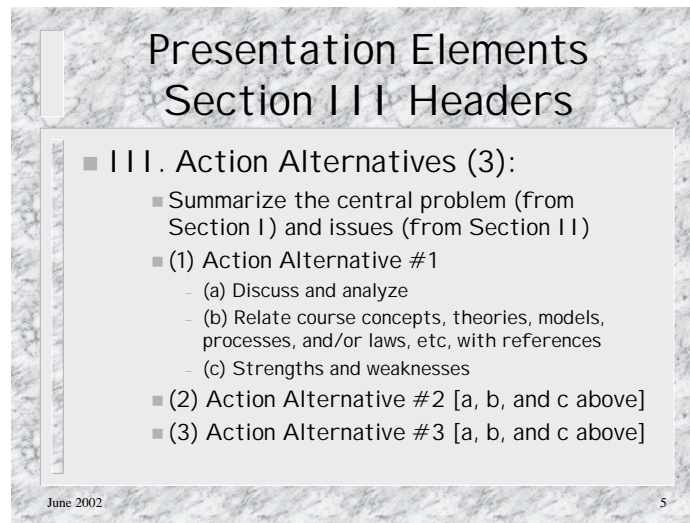


For the second major section of your case analysis, you must use the Roman numeral II with the terms IDENTIFICATION OF CASE ISSUES AND APPLICATION OF CORE-COURSE KNOWLEDGE TO THE RELATED ISSUES OF THE CASE. It is recommended you begin this section by restating the central problem you identified in Section I. Experience has shown that this will help you stay focused on solving what you identified as the central problem in this case.

Following this opening paragraph, you must address the following items for each of your core courses (in succession): PA 6601 Research Methods, PA 6620/6646 Organizational Theory or Behavior, PA 6622 Public Policy Analysis, PA 6624 Public Personnel Administration, PA 6644 Administrative Law, and PA 6650 Budgeting. You do not have to memorize the numbers or titles for your core courses, as this information will be presented in the instruction sheet. Use the letters "A" through "F" and the course number and the course title (for example, PA 6601 Research Methods) to identify the course you are addressing. Then use numbers, for example (1), (2), and (3) to address first the case issue, then related and referenced course concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc., and finally, the application of the elements of course knowledge to the identified case issue.

FORMAT

SECTION III

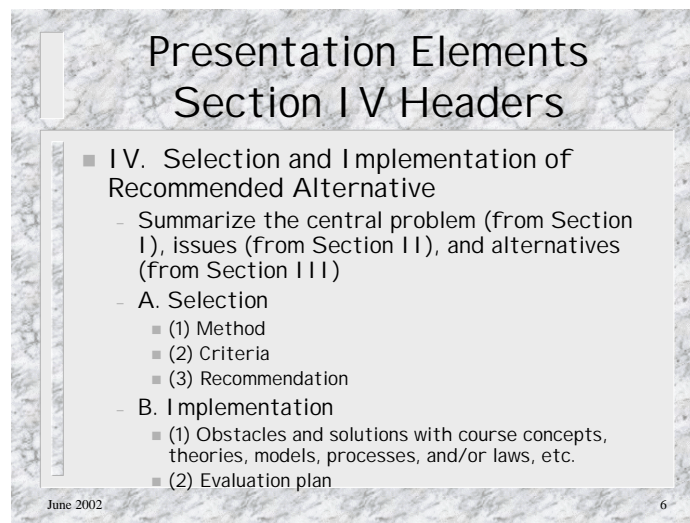


For the third major section of your case analysis, you must use the Roman numeral III with the terms ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION. It is recommended you begin Section III with a summary of the central problem you identified in Section I and a summary of your issues from Section II. This will keep you focused on your central problem and related issues.

Next use the numbers (1) through (3) to identify your three action-oriented alternatives. Then use the alphabet, that is, (a), (b), and (c), to identify your discussion of each alternative, its related and referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc., and its strengths and weaknesses.

FORMAT

SECTION IV



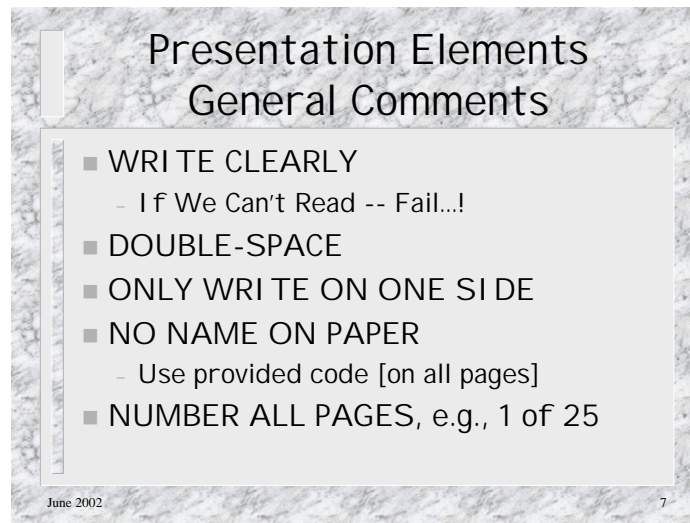
For the final major section of your case analysis, you must use the Roman numeral IV with the terms **SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**. It is recommended you begin Section IV with summaries of your central problem from Section I, your issues from Section II, and your alternatives from Section III. This will help maintain your focus on solving your central problem.

Use explicit headers to identify the two major components of Section IV, that is, **SELECTION** and **IMPLEMENTATION**, using the letters "A" and "B". Use the numbers (1) through (3), to identify the key components of the **SELECTION** process that is method, criteria, and recommendation. In your discussion of the **IMPLEMENTATION** process use numbers (1) through (3) and headers to identify obstacles to implementation, solutions to these obstacles, and your recommended evaluation plan.

KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION

FORMAT

GENERAL PRESENTATION COMMENTS



For legibility purposes, we recommend you take time to write clearly, use black ink, double-space your writing, and write on only one side of the paper. Be sure to number all pages using the format, e.g., "1 of 25, 2 of 25", and so on. Do not place your name on any of the pages; place your comprehensive examination identification number at the top of all pages under the page number. This ends our discussion on how to **format** your comprehensive examination. Now we turn our attention to the area of **content**.

CONTENT

SECTION I

Content
Section I

- Clearly state: "The central problem in this case is..." (Must flow from the case)
- Discussion of key players and roles -- not a listing...! Impacts...! In Case!
- Summary of key aspects of case -- not a listing and not a repeat of case...!
- Needs to be a narrative -- graduate work...! However, don't overdo!

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It is appropriate to restate that the purpose of case analysis is to solve a problem. Consequently, to be successful in your case analysis work, you must clearly state what specific problem you are addressing. It is recommended that you provide a sentence in Section I, which clearly states what specific problem you have identified after you read the case. For example, "the central problem in this case is a lack of strategic management." Then go on to support this sentence by using related and referenced concepts from your MPA program. For example,

"Dr. John M. Bryson (1995) in his book on *Strategic Planning*, and reinforced by the Government Performance and Results Act (1993), points out that the elements of strategic management are strategic planning, annual performance plans, performance measures, program evaluations, and Performance-Based Budgeting. Some elements of this process are not apparent in this case. These deficiencies will be addressed in the following sections of this case analysis."

It might be helpful to reflect on the purpose of your MPA program, which is to provide skills for managers in the public and nonprofit sectors. Consequently, a common thread running through your MPA core and elective courses is the management process. Hopefully, you comprehend the salient elements of this process and are now prepared to apply these elements in an analytical framework.

KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION

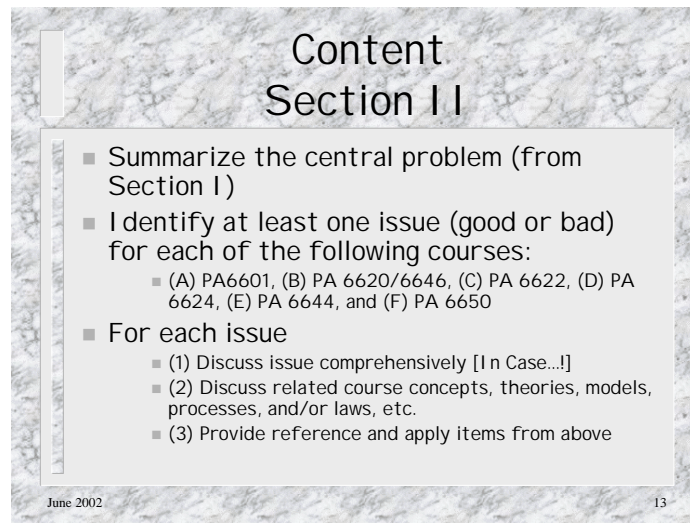
After you have clearly stated your central problem, it is appropriate to turn your attention to the **key players and their related roles**. This should not be a "laundry list" of players. Rather, identify players who have major roles in this case. After you have identified the player, clearly state what the player's role is and the impacts this player has had in the case. It is also appropriate to identify a player who should have played a major role but did not contribute.

Provide a **narrative summary** of the case, which someone could read and which will help in understanding the salient concepts of the case, without actually reading the entire case. Include any elements of the case that are important in developing the foundation for your ensuing analysis. In your professional writing, if you write "Executive Summaries", this type of treatment would satisfy this criterion.

All of the above needs to be in a narrative form and must represent a graduate level product. Make sure you satisfy all of the criteria noted. However, do not dedicate the majority of your available time to this section. Budget your time wisely.

CONTENT

SECTION II



To maintain your focus on the central problem, begin this section by restating the case problem, which you have identified in Section I. You do not have to restate all the aspects of the central problem as you did in Section I. Rather, just summarize your central problem. For example, the central problem in this case is that “there are deficiencies in the strategic management process.”

After you have restated your central problem, it is appropriate to turn your attention to issues that flow from the case context and that are related to your central problem. Your issues can either be deficiencies and/or problems or positive actions and/or activities that are present in the case.

If possible, identify at least one issue for each of the required core courses. However, there is a possibility that an issue could be related to two core courses. For example, the two courses of Organizational Behavior (PA6646) and Public Personnel Administration (PA6624) are closely related and an issue related to human resource management could be linked to concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. in both of these courses. If you do decide to use an issue for two courses, identify this issue again as you address each core course.

KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION

You must identify and discuss at least one issue for each of the six core courses listed in the instruction sheets. For each of these core courses, complete each of the following three tasks:

- 1) Clearly and comprehensively identify and discuss the case-related issue. Make sure you link this issue to the case context. For example,

“There is no mention in this case of proper training for the staff. On pages 8 & 10 of the case, there are indications that the staff is in need of ‘real time training.’ These indications are...”

- 2) Identify and comprehensively discuss course concepts or theories, which are related to your identified case issue. For example,

“A key element of Taylor's Scientific Management (1910s) was the proper training of the employee. [Provide a discussion of Taylor's Scientific Management and link it to this issue.] Today's dynamic environment demands professional public administrator, who are properly training... This heritage of a professional public administrator can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson's article of 1887. [Provide some discussion of Wilson's article elements and relate them to this case issue.]”

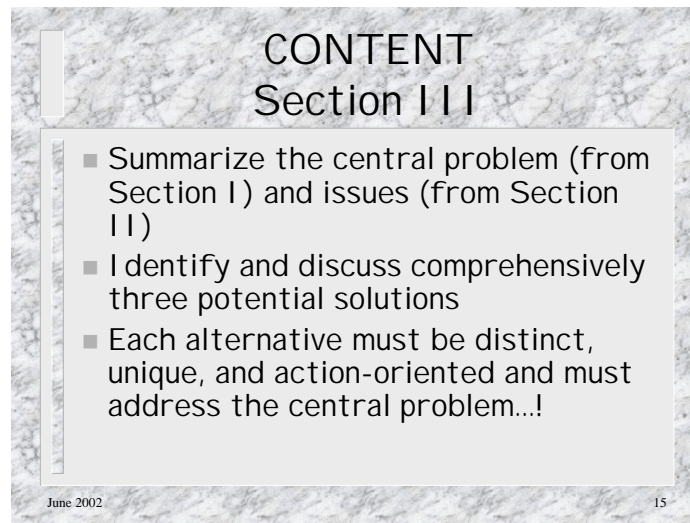
- 3) Ensure your course concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. are applied to your case issue. Remember that the object is to link the core course material to the case study.

Make sure you accomplish the above for each of the six core courses, that is the following:

- PA6601 – Research Methods
- PA6620/6646 – Organizational Theory/Behavior
- PA6622 – Public Policy Analysis
- PA6624 – Public Personnel Administration
- PA6644 – Administrative Law
- PA6650 – Governmental Budgeting

CONTENT

SECTION III



Begin Section III by restating a summary of your central problem and related issues. Then turn your attention to the identification of three action alternatives. All of these alternatives must satisfy the following criteria:

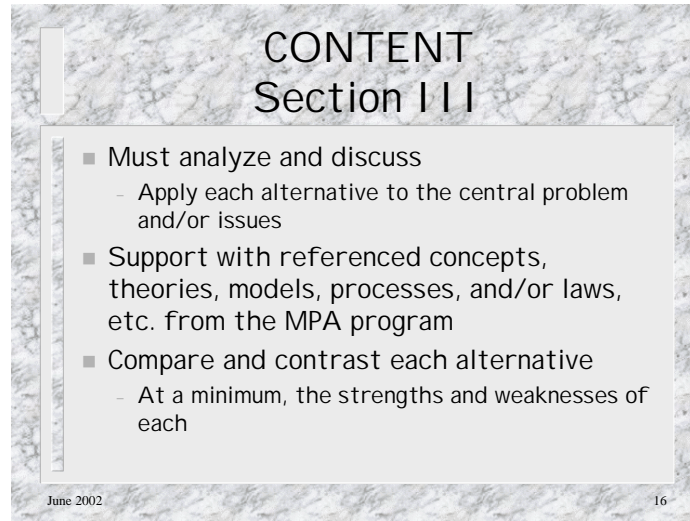
- 1) They must be **action oriented**.
- 2) They must be **unique**.
- 3) They must have the potential of **solving your central problem**, which you identified in Section I.

Your discussion of the three alternatives must be **comprehensive and specific**.

Use headers to identify each alternative. For example, ACTION ALTERNATIVE NUMBER ONE, ACTION ALTERNATIVE NUMBER TWO, and ACTION ALTERNATIVE NUMBER THREE.

Your discussion of the three action alternatives should not just be a listing. Provide enough information so the reader knows exactly what you are proposing. In other words, be **explicit and detailed**.

KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION



CONTENT
Section III

- Must analyze and discuss
 - Apply each alternative to the central problem and/or issues
- Support with referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. from the MPA program
- Compare and contrast each alternative
 - At a minimum, the strengths and weaknesses of each

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In your treatment of each action alternative, show the relationship between the alternative and your central problem (as identified in Section I). If appropriate, also show the relationships/potential interactions between each alternative and any of the issues you have discussed in Section II.

Support your selection of each alternative with referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. from your MPA program. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative against the other alternatives.

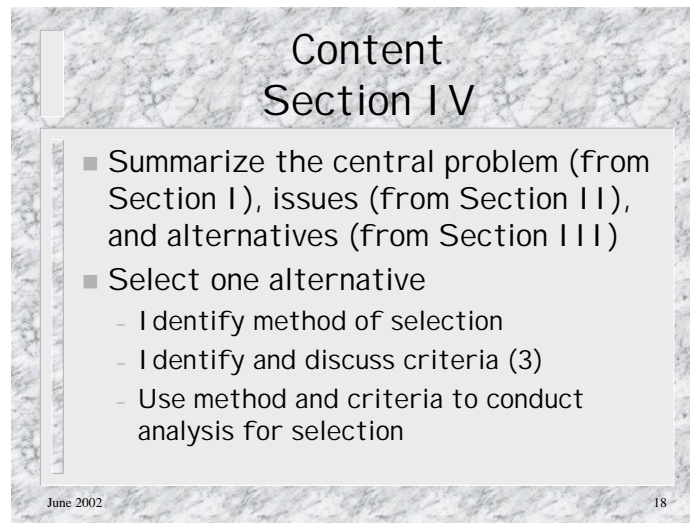
Following are some salient elements of an example action alternative for you to consider. If you have stated in Section I that your central problem is faulty strategic management, you could recommend the implementation of strategic planning. You would then discuss the fact that strategic planning is the initial element in strategic management. You would go on to state that Bryson in his textbook *Strategic Planning For Public Organizations* (1995) summarizes strategic planning as an "ABC" process; that is, A defines where the organization is today; B determines where the organization wants to go tomorrow; and C uses a strategic plan to move from A to B. You could also support your recommendation of a strategic plan by discussing the elements (one being a mandated strategic plan) of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

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After you have discussed in detail all three of the action alternatives, you need to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these alternatives.

CONTENT

SECTION IV



Begin Section IV with a summary of your central problem (as identified in Section I), your related issues (as discussed in Section II), and your action alternatives (as developed in Section III). Then turn your attention to the two key requirements of Section IV, that is SELECTION and IMPLEMENTATION. First we will discuss SELECTION.

SELECTION

Your selection process must include two key ingredients. First, you must identify a method you will use for selection. Then you'll identify at least three criteria you'll use in conjunction with your selection method. There are a variety of selection methods available. For example, you could use any of the following methods: comparing and contrasting, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats), matrix analyses (e.g., MAUT), and a host of others. Make sure that you clearly identify which method you are applying.

Before you select the criteria you'll use, reflect on the fact that the purpose of this case analysis is to solve the central problem you have identified in Section I. Then refer to the context of the case and select the criteria that will help you determine the

KEYS TO HELP WITH MPA COMP PREPARATION

action alternative that has the highest potential for solving your central problem, within the context of this case.

Now identify at least three criteria, which will be used with your selection method to make a recommendation. You must evaluate each of your recommended action alternatives from Section III against your stated criteria.

Your identification and discussion of three criteria must link the criteria to the case context and provide explicit and detailed treatment of each criterion. The reader must understand what specifically you're using as criteria - in other words, be comprehensive and specific.

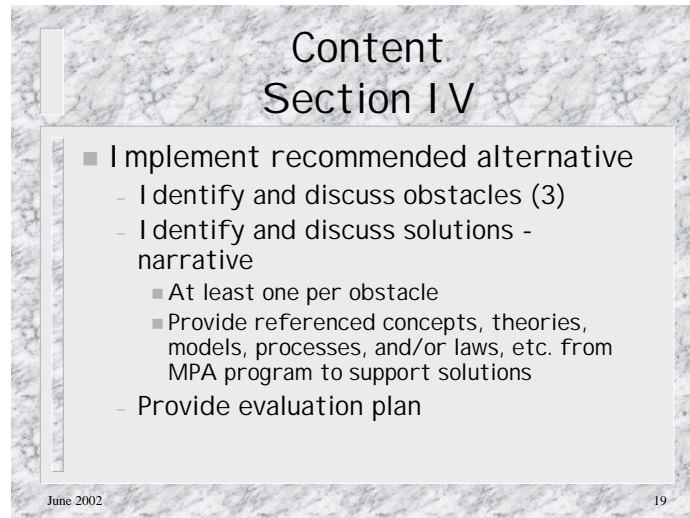
Following are examples of criteria (not all inclusive), which could prove useful in making a selection:

- 1) **EFFICIENCY:** First, define efficiency in your own words and then, discuss why it is appropriate as a criterion for making a determination in this specific case.
- 2) **MINIMUM COST TO IMPLEMENT:** First, define this criterion in your own words and then, discuss why it is appropriate as a criterion for making a determination in this specific case.
- 3) **MINIMUM TIME TO IMPLEMENT:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.
- 4) **MAXIMUM POLITICAL SUPPORT:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.
- 5) **EFFECTIVENESS:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.
- 6) **ORGANIZATION'S ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.
- 7) **ACCEPTANCE BY INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.
- 8) **ACCEPTANCE BY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:** Provide the same treatment as discussed in number 2 above.

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When you have selected your three criteria, use your selection method and evaluate each of your action alternatives against each of your criterion. Your selection process must be specific, comprehensive, and rigorous. Make it clear to the reader, which of the three action alternatives from Section III you are recommending.

IMPLEMENTATION



Now your focus should turn to implementing your recommended action alternative. Your first step in this implementation process is to identify and discuss in detail at least three potential obstacles you could anticipate facing in the implementation process. Be specific and detailed in your discussion of potential obstacles. These obstacles should flow from your reading of the case's context, your MPA program, and your professional experience. Obstacles such as resistance to change, abbreviated timelines, shortage of funds, etc. can be anticipated.

Once you have identified the obstacles, present at least one solution for each obstacle. Support your solutions with referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc. from your MPA program. Next, you should provide an evaluation plan to monitor your implementation process. This plan should be detailed enough to address generally who would be responsible for the evaluation plan, what the salient elements of the plan are, and what timelines you will recommend. Your final action is to summarize your case analysis.

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SUMMARY

Provided above are some recommendations for the format and content for your comprehensive examination. It is essential that you appreciate the fact case analysis is accomplished to **solve a problem**. Please, keep this forward in your thinking as you accomplish your comprehensive examination. It is essential you read the case carefully to determine the central problem. Once you have identified the central problem, your objective should be to solve it. It is also essential that you provide **referenced concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc.** from your MPA program to support your presentations.

The best preparation for this examination takes place as you take each course and you “collect” major concepts, theories, models, processes, and/or laws, etc., which have applicability in a problem-solving (case analysis) environment. Keep organized notes on these knowledge elements and those will be the basis for your preparation. Be sure that you can write up to at least a paragraph on each of them. Those paragraphs become the body for your discussion in Section II. Remember that these paragraphs are what differentiate you from the person who could conduct a “common sense” approach to analyzing the case. These paragraphs are what identify you as a **master of public administration**.

Now let's review how the comprehensive examination will be evaluated.

EVALUATION

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria

- Remember, this is a **COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**
 - So be comprehensive!
- Section I = 20% of your score
- Section II = 40% of your score
- Section III = 20% of your score
- Section IV = 20% of your score

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Your comprehensive examination will be evaluated by a minimum of two readers. They will each read your examination without any knowledge of the student's identity. Using the percentages shown above, they will determine whether the student has passed the exam, must remediate (the student must rewrite the same exam again), or failed the exam (the student must sit for a new exam). If the two readers agree on the outcome, you will be notified of those results at that time. If the two readers do not agree, a third reader will review it to determine the final outcome.

Evaluation Criteria and Weights for All Sections

- Analysis & Application = 40%
 - Focus on how well you use what you learned...
- Substantive Material = 30%
 - Focus on your display of what you learned...
- Proper Citing = 20%
 - Proper citing of theorists, authors...
- Writing Ability = 10%
 - Communicative skills...

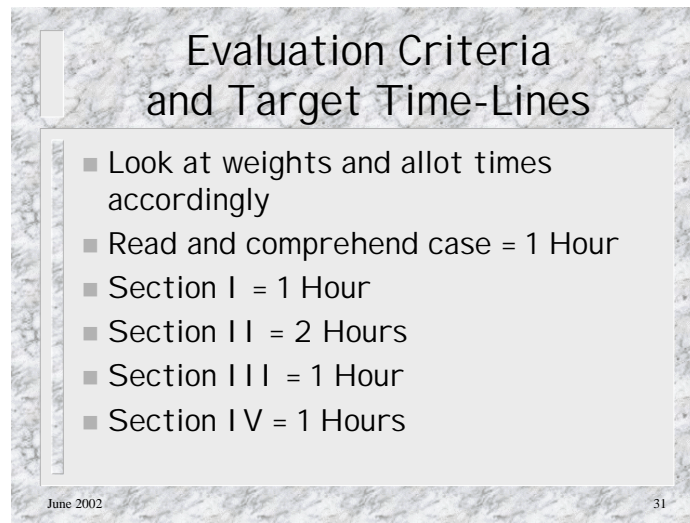
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It should be obvious that Section II must be handled really well

in order to have a realistic chance of passing the exam. Remember that in that section, you will demonstrate what you actually learned in your MPA core courses. This is what makes you a true master of public administration!

EVALUATION

TIME MANAGEMENT



The slide features a light gray background with a subtle marbled pattern. At the top, the title 'Evaluation Criteria and Target Time-Lines' is centered in a black serif font. Below the title is a white rectangular box containing a bulleted list of time allocations. The list items are: 'Look at weights and allot times accordingly', 'Read and comprehend case = 1 Hour', 'Section I = 1 Hour', 'Section II = 2 Hours', 'Section III = 1 Hour', and 'Section IV = 1 Hours'. At the bottom left of the slide, the text 'June 2002' is visible, and at the bottom right, the number '31' is displayed.

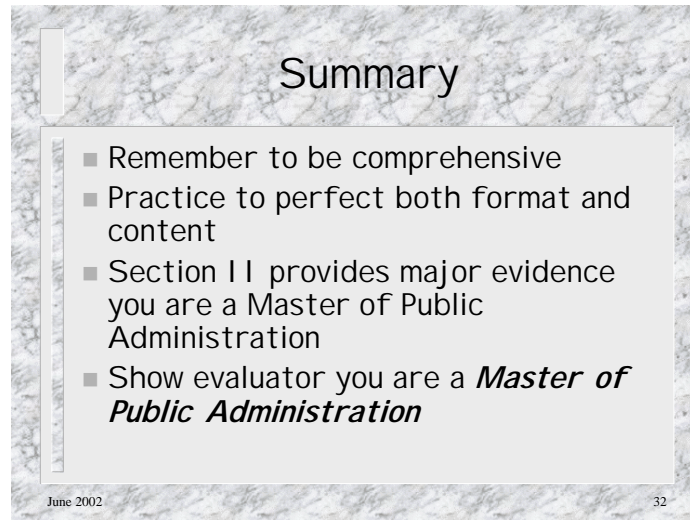
Evaluation Criteria
and Target Time-Lines

- Look at weights and allot times accordingly
- Read and comprehend case = 1 Hour
- Section I = 1 Hour
- Section II = 2 Hours
- Section III = 1 Hour
- Section IV = 1 Hours

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Time management is crucial to your success on the comprehensive exam. Everyone reads at a different rate, so absolutes are difficult to suggest. However, the time-line above will work for most students. Just remember that the case studies are of varying lengths and the time it takes to read and digest the material before you begin writing can vary based on that. But for actually writing your analysis, this timeline should help you to stay on task and finish within the allotted six hours for the exam.

FINAL WORDS



GOOD LUCK!!