

Reflections from one who took the Comprehensive Exam Twice

Myles Barter took the comprehensive exam in Winter quarter 2013 and failed to pass. He took the exam in Spring 2013 and achieved a High Pass, which is not easily achieved. This is an amazing turnaround. I asked Myles if he would write up a bit of a summary concerning how he managed this, and he presented me with the following chart. This isn't the only way to study but it is a success story worth reading.

Items	First Time Fail	Second Time – HIGH PASS
Units Taken	Took exam along with 4 classes	Took one elective and the exam
Study Group	No Group	Group of 3 people
Hours spent studying / day	Five hours	10 hours / 6 days a week
Weeks spent prior to test studying	1 week	5 weeks prior to test
Organization	Cluttered due to taking 4 classes	Very organized
Clarity of Notes	Cluttered and not enough detail	Very specific and detailed orientated.
Answered Question on Exam	No. Was too vague	Specific & articulated answer to question.
Understood Question	Not enough.	Knew exactly what question wanted. Provided articulated response w/ real world issues.
Essay Drafts Before EXAM	Did not do prep essays. Focused on bulleted outlines.	4 drafts of each question. Until draft was tight and straightforward. Based draft after time limit!
Time Breakdowns of Time Frame for EXAM	Did not realize time breakdowns during the test. Went too long on the first core question (1hr 40min). 2 nd Core (1hr 20min). Integrative (50 min).	Exactly broke down the test time for the 4 hours. Included review time for all three questions, bathroom break, five min rest break, time to eat a snack, etc.... broke down to Core for 55 min x 2 questions & Integrative 1hr 20 min.
Diet before & during	Before – Rockstar & 1Banana During – Kellogg's Bar I should have eaten a proper meal. No sugars because of crashing.	Before – Breakfast Sandwich and protein smoothie During – Almonds & PB&J sandwich. 2 bottles of water

Feelings during test	Rushed and not enough time	Prepared. Organized. Preset time limits helped in not being stressed. It also made me see how much time I needed to write & how much information I could include (realistically based on time limits)
Consolidation of notes Before & day of.	Before – multiple pages, too many outlines to remember made it difficult. Day of – Had many sheets of paper studying for test	Before – Organized & simplified. Had all information prepped way in advanced, which helped studying for the test Day of – had all notes for each question broken down on 13 separate sheets of paper. Made studying simple and easy for the mind to remember.
Books & articles	Heavily utilized books from MPA program	Heavily Utilized Books from MPA program. Articles – remembered important contributors to PA literature and used that in Comp Exam.