PPA 510 Public Administrative Processes

Question 1

The Federal government has given the State of California funding to build a new medium-security prison in a county in the interior of the state. The citizens of Centerville are upset that their community has been selected to host the prison. A group of concerned citizens turn to you, the local City Manager, for help.

A. Develop a list of the three different branches of government at each of the different levels of government in the United States, and explain how each may become involved in such a project.

B. Discuss in general the types of problems and opportunities this complex structure of American government can present to the City Manager.

Grading Criteria, Question 1

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must demonstrate excellent writing skills.
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments.
5. You must correctly identify the list of the three branches at the Federal (President/ Congress/Federal Courts), State (Governor/Legislature/State Courts), and Local (Mayor/Council/Municipal Courts) levels.
6. You must correctly identify how each may become involved in such a project.

A. Federal level: often makes policy that must be implemented by the states; that the federal level makes loans and/or grants to the lower levels of government; and that the federal judicial system is the court of last resort for appeals by citizens.

B. State level: serves as policy makers for lower governmental levels (e.g., county and local governments); and that states, too, makes loans and grants to lower levels of government. Municipal courts are the courts of first resort for citizens.

Question 2

In 1887, Woodrow Wilson published his famous article, “The Study of Administration.” In that piece, he advanced what came to be known as the “politics-administration dichotomy” or the “politics-administration split.” He observed that public administration is “removed from the hurry and strife of politics,” and that politics is different from administration. Today, we struggle still with the conflict between politics and administration.

A. Select any public policy issue with which you are familiar and discuss whether you agree or disagree with Wilson’s assessment.

B. If you agree with Wilson, state your reasons, and include discussion of what that might imply for public administrators.

C. If you disagree with Wilson, state your reasons, and include discussion of what that might imply for public administrators.

Grading Criteria, Question 2

Part A. There is no genuinely “right” or “wrong” answer to this question. It requires that you think critically, and to present a convincing argument. Hence, a successful response to this part of the question requires that you, first, lucidly present your public policy issue; and, second, present a logical, well-written and well-reasoned argument about your reasons for either agreeing or disagreeing with Wilson.

Part B/C. As with Part A, there is no right or wrong answer here. A successful response to these parts of the question (whichever you choose) requires that you present a logical, well-written and well-reasoned argument about the implications for your agreement or disagreement with Wilson relative to contemporary public administration.
With almost every state running a budget deficit, lawmakers in at least thirty of them are looking to garner additional revenue by raising tobacco or alcohol taxes—the so-called “sin taxes.” In most cases, state lawmakers are doing so in lieu of increasing broader sales or income taxes, fearing the reprisals of voters in the major election year.

Using the evaluation criteria for tax policy, assess the use of “sin taxes” in California.

A. Identify, define, and apply the definition of the evaluation criteria to “sin taxes.”

B. Based on the application of the evaluation criteria, make recommendation, and include the rationale for your decision.

Grading Criteria, Question 1

a. The first of the criteria is economic efficiency. The definition of this criterion states that efficient taxes are “neutral” or do not distort economic decisions. In other words, the imposition of the tax or any change in the tax structure including rates does not alter the behavior of consumers or firms. Most taxes are not economically neutral however so the primary policy issue, from an efficiency perspective, is designing and adopting taxes that minimize economic distortions. ‘Sin taxes’ are taxes on goods such as tobacco and alcohol. Again in practice no tax is perfectly efficient but taxes on goods such as alcohol and tobacco tend to be more efficient since imposing or increasing the tax will not cause most consumers of this type of good to reduce their consumption significantly.

b. The second of the criteria is equity. This criterion has two perspectives on what is considered an equitable or fair tax. The first perspective is the benefit principle, which states that a fair tax is one in which tax payment is proportional to benefits received from services financed with the tax. If taxes on tobacco or alcohol were earmarked for treatment programs for ailments associated with tobacco or alcohol consumption then the benefit principle could be applied. However, this is generally not the case in California. The other perspective is the ability to pay principle, which states that a fair tax is one in which tax payment as a proportion of some measure of wealth such as income varies with changes in wealth. ‘Sin taxes’ tend to be regressive; that is, the tax burden tends to decrease with an increase in income.

c. The third of the criteria is adequacy and stability. This relates to the yield of the tax and how sensitive it is to economic cycles such as changes in income. Broad-based taxes such as taxes on all forms of consumption generate more revenues and they are generally more stable than narrow-based taxes such as on one type of consumption. Nevertheless, ‘sin tax’ yields do not vary drastically during economic fluctuations and are not as sensitive to relative price changes through taxation as some other taxes. Thus, ‘sin taxes’ can generate a substantial amount of revenues and the yield will not change dramatically with changes in economic conditions.

d. The forth of the criteria is cost of administration. The administrative costs include collection, compliance, and enforcement. With ‘sin taxes’ collection costs are shifted to the seller of the good and thus are relatively small for the government. Collecting the ‘sin tax’ does require the retailer to conduct some additional calculations and required paperwork. The cost of compliance is not overly burdensome since retailers must currently collect and remit the state retail sales tax. Cost of enforcement is borne by the government who should periodically conduct audits of retailers to insure compliance with the law. Even with the above in mind, the marginal administrative costs are minimal since the tax is already in place and the proposal is to increase the tax rate only.

e. The last of the criteria is political feasibility. This criterion is simply defined as the likelihood that policy-makers and/or the public will approve the tax proposal. There are many factors associated with political feasibility. Some of these are visibility and understandability of the tax, political culture, traditions and history, distribution of wealth and income, fiscal health and overall economic conditions. For ‘sin taxes’ those affected most are the consumers of the goods being taxed, in this case, alcohol and tobacco. This group is a relatively small portion of the population. Another way of viewing this issue would be to state that those people who consume large amounts of alcohol and tobacco and thus will pay substantially more are likely to be a very small portion of the populace. Even with citizen’s anti-tax sentiment in the State, the current fiscal crisis may be permit passage of an increase in ‘sin taxes’ here in California.

2. Your answer depends on what you value and the knowledge you have acquired. In evaluating tax policy, thus, you can argue for or against the increase. A passing answer will clearly articulate your position and be supported with the application of the criteria stated above.
Question 2

A city is considering the construction of a new recreation center. The Mayor and City Council are committed to building the center, but need to identify the proper financing mechanism to complete the project, taking into account the following:

- The city is undergoing a period of fiscal stress, but still maintains a relatively strong credit rating.
- The tax base of the city has been growing gradually over the past five years and the city has a significant amount of room under the state-mandated debt ceiling.
- The recreation center is expected to generate enough revenue to cover annual operating expenditures, but will not generate a sufficient stream of revenue to retire the debt incurred by constructing the center.

The center will cost $5 million to construct and the life expectancy of the structure is thirty years.

Given this information:

a. What type of bond would you suggest using, and what are the features of this bond?

b. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of this type of debt financing mechanism to other alternatives.

Grading Criteria, Question 2

An acceptable answer will demonstrate the following:

- An identification of a General Obligation bond as the appropriate debt-financing tool.
- A comprehensive justification of the appropriateness of G.O. bonds in this given situation. This justification must include a recognition of the following factors:
  - G.O. bonds provide lower interest rates.
  - G.O. bonds do not require repayment with revenues derived from the operation of an enterprise.
  - G.O. bonds are more marketable and easier to sell to investors.
- A comparison of the strengths of G.O. bonds with the weaknesses of more than one alternative approach. For example,
  - Revenue bonds are inappropriate since the enterprise will not generate sufficient revenue to cover debt service.
  - A well reasoned, logical, and well-written answer.

Given the fact that the city is constructing a recreation center that will not generate a sufficient amount of revenue to cover debt service, a revenue bond is not feasible.

The characteristics of the city identified in the scenario are conducive to the use of a G.O. bond. Specifically, the increase in the city’s tax base indicates that the city will have sufficient revenues to retire the debt. Since G.O. bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the city, the increase in tax revenue would provide the city with the needed flexibility to retire the debt. The flexibility the city enjoys under the state mandated debt ceiling also supports the use of a G.O. bond. The city is not concerned with violating the debt ceiling, therefore a revenue bond is not necessary.

A General Obligation bond would also provide a lower interest rate than revenue bonds. This would make the G.O. bond less expensive for the city and also make the issue much more marketable than a higher interest alternative.

While a G.O. bond is certainly superior to a revenue bond, a lease-rental or sale-leaseback bond may also be feasible. A lease-rental bond would indicate that the city is not planning on operating the recreation facility. If a private sector entity was charged with running the facility, the bond may become a private-activity bond, which may threaten its tax-exempt status. A sale-leaseback bond would require that the city sell the facility to a private sector entity and then lease the facility. This would partially mitigate risks for the city but it would also risk the tax-exempt status of the bond. A loss of tax-exempt status would make the issue more expensive for the city and also...
Question 1

Should the performance of groups be taken into account in evaluating the performance of individuals? If so, how should the two be related? What are the implications of your answer for decisions regarding contingent pay, disciplinary actions, and employee development?

General Criteria

1. You must answer the question presented, not the one you wish had been presented
2. You must respond to all parts of the question
3. Your answer must demonstrate excellent writing skills
4. Your answer must be well organized and logical

In addition to meeting these general criteria, a successful answer will discuss the following:

A. Should group evaluations be used when evaluating individuals?
   1. The use of quality circles, task forces, group planning approaches (nominal group technique, Delphi), and the Total quality management movement have all focused increased attention on the performance of work groups within organizations.
   2. Effectiveness in this new environment consists of more than individual performance of personal tasks. Supportive and contributory behaviors are increasingly valued.
   3. In such an environment, an exclusive focus on individual performance can actually be self-defeating for the organization, hindering the development of teamwork.
   4. Also, peers in working groups are often better sources of information regarding the performance of team members than are team leaders or more distant superiors.
   5. Furthermore, informal appraisals by fellow team members or team leaders can be more timely and may enhance performance more than formal procedures focused exclusively on individual activity.

B. How should group and individual evaluations be related?
   1. Team rating procedures are probably inevitable where work teams are used extensively.

C. What are the implications?
   1. Contingent pay – contingent pay based on team performance raises a number of questions.
      a. same size reward for each member or different amounts (based on contribution, current pay, experience, skill level, etc).
      b. frequency of payout – greater frequency provides more immediate incentives.
      c. Contingent pay decisions made by group, leader, or outsider?

   2. Two basic approaches.
      d. Work-team results – rewards all members equally on the basis of group output, cost savings, or quality improvement.
      e. Gainsharing – sharing with employees (on the basis of some formula) of the greater-than-expected gains in productivity. Often difficult to do in the public sector as improved performance seldom leads to increased resources.

   3. Disciplinary actions
      Employee discipline problems can be complicated by group factors. Counseling and other approaches designed to modify behavior will often involve more than one person. Written documentation must carefully distinguish between issues that are within the employees control and those that are not (often difficult). Progressive discipline steps may have adverse effects on other team members who are dependent on the cooperation of the employee being disciplined. The culture of a team-oriented organization may not support discipline of any sort. In that environment, responsibility for problems in the workplace may be too widely shared to allow for discipline of individuals. Interpersonal consequences of disciplinary action may be too severe to justify the effort.

   4. Employee development
      Employee development will be complicated by group performance appraisal. Where the employee’s performance is view as an individual matter, personal goals can be set and skills development can be
pursued in a relatively straightforward manner. Evaluations based on group performance would not always offer obvious strategies for individual employee development. OD interventions and other collective responses will be more often indicated. Incentives for employee development may also be weakened by the emphasis on group performance.

Question 2

What differences are there likely to be between human resources planning for an agency that is downsizing as opposed to one that is expanding its workforce? What challenges do various approaches to downsizing pose for HRM?

General Criteria

1. You must answer the question presented, not the one you wish had been presented
2. You must respond to all parts of the question
3. Your answer must demonstrate excellent writing skills
4. Your answer must be well organized and logical

In addition to meeting these general criteria, a successful answer will discuss the following:

A. Differences between HR planning in downsizing and expanding
   1. Downsizing poses serious morale problems among the “survivors” not involved in expansions
   2. Expansions involve increased task load matched by increased resources, whereas cutbacks in staff often involve no reduction in workload, leading to increased stress on remaining employees, reduced organizational effectiveness, and often continued turnover.
   3. Employee unions often have legal and contractual grounds for challenging any approach to downsizing that is adopted. This is rarely the case with expansion plans.
   4. Managers find downsizing stressful in ways that expansions are not.

B. Challenges posed by various approaches to downsizing
   1. Attrition – relatively painless to those leaving. However, you can never be sure how the results will be distributed in the organization. Will attrition lead to reductions in the areas and functions that can most easily absorb them?
   2. Hiring freezes – not guaranteed to reduce force rapidly enough. Can freeze staff inadequacies in place, resulting in ineffective distribution of resources.
   3. Early retirements – another approach that is difficult to aim properly. Effects can fall on any part of the organization with unpredictable results and it is open equally to those who the organization needs and those it can do without.
   4. Layoffs – More easily targeted. However, how are decision made about whom to layoff, how callbacks are to be made, what benefits should be extended during layoff, whether workers who find other employment lose callback rights.
   5. Permanent reductions in force – Most simple and direct method. However, the morale implications are most severe. Also, it results in a permanent loss of skills to the organization (unlike a layoff). Also it may be impossible for statutory reason to realign work routines and functions in ways that are called for by new staffing circumstances.
Grading Criteria, Comprehensive Examinations (Spring, 2005)
PPA 650 Contemporary Issues

QUESTION 1

Faced with a sudden decline in the economy in the Fall of 2001, many local governments are seeking to control costs by layoffs and a shortened work week. This raises questions for both public employees and the public they serve. Explain and illustrate your understanding of these developments as they are faced by both the internal audience (employees) and external audience (citizens/voters).

A. Describe and discuss at least two implications for public employment
B. Describe and discuss at least two implications for service provision.

Grading Criteria Question 1

At minimum:
1. You must answer the question
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments.

Minimally acceptable (pass) answer – must include:

Description of strategies adopted by government to cut costs and increase efficiency can include:
- downsizing
- rightsizing
- contracting out
- devolution of responsibilities to lower levels
- joint ventures
- and others

Impacts on public employment can include:
- unions
- morale
- recruitment and retention
- early retirement packages
- and others

Impacts on service provision can include:
- quality of service
- contract enforcement and monitoring
- citizen satisfaction
- equity for disadvantaged groups
- and others

QUESTION 2

California legislators are limited in the number of years they can serve. A recent measure on the ballot would have weakened the term limits placed on California legislators.

A. What are the positive effects of term limits for the public bureaucracy?
B. What are the negative effects of term limits for the public bureaucracy?
C. How can the negative effects for the bureaucracy be mitigated?

Grading Criteria Question 2

At minimum:
1. You must answer the question
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments.

Minimally acceptable (pass) answer – must include:

The positive effects of term limits for the bureaucracy revolve around the higher status that career public employees attain, since they provide the continuity between administrations and have specialized knowledge that elected official are likely to lack; the advantages of bureaucracy over politics; and others.

The negative effects of term limits for the bureaucracy include the possibility of frequent shifts in policy as new politicians are elected; a lack of carefully constructed working relationships between politicians and career public servants; and others.

Any reasonable suggestions about how to mitigate the negative effects on the bureaucracy will be accepted as long as they are logical and well written.
Grading Criteria, Comprehensive Examinations (Spring, 2005)
PPA 660 (Organization Theory and Behavior)

Question 1

The organization behavior literature identifies several factors that seem to affect work group behavior, performance and decision making. Your responses to the following two parts of the question should be very specific.

a. Identify and define at least two such factors; and
b. Discuss a situation in your organizational experience when those factors, either positively or negatively, affected work group behavior in an organization. For the situation you describe, you can use any organization with which you are familiar.

Grading Criteria, Question 1

Minimally Acceptable (Pass)

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. Your response must be well-written, logical and persuasive.
4. Your response must be, according the grading criteria below, clearly correct.

1. A correct response to Part “a” of the question will include identification and discussion of at least two of the following:

a. Group Size: “Small” is usually defined as fewer and twelve members; and “large”, as few as twelve, and as many as can interact with, and influence, one another.

Some differences between them which can affect work group behavior, performance, an decision-making with regard to size are: small groups, which are better for accomplishing well-defined tasks, generally tend to get decisions made and finish tasks more quickly; while large groups are better at problem-solving because more ideas are presented and discussed. Small groups tend to be less formal; while larger ones, more formal, will tend to follow some kind of agenda, Roberts Rules of Order, and the like. Larger groups can prevent participation, simply because too many people may be competing for the floor. Larger groups also can promote a kind of “free rider” problem. That is, some group members fail to carry their fair share of the workload.

b. Group Composition: This refers to group demographics. A group can be “homogeneous”, meaning members share one or several characteristics (e.g., age, work experience, education, technical specialty, cultural background). A homogeneous group works best for simple and/or sequential tasks, when cooperation is needed, and if something must be accomplished quickly.

A group also can be “heterogeneous”, meaning that members differ in one, or many, of the characteristics listed above. A heterogeneous group is useful for complex tasks, collective tasks, when you need creativity, and when speed is not a big factor.

c. Group norms: A “norm” is defined as a standard or rule we use to judge whether a person’s behavior is appropriate. Norms can be formal (e.g., policy manuals, employee handbooks); or, more often, informal (e.g., “it’s the way we do things around here”). Group norms are important to group behavior because they simplify things. With norms, peoples’ behavior tends to be predictable, and when group members behave the way they are expected to behave, the group can turn to more productive efforts (i.e., the task/project at hand).

d. Group cohesiveness: This refers to the forces at work on individual members to remain in the group. Cohesion arises from a number of sources: severity of initiation (the more difficult it is to get into a group, the more cohesive the group tends to be); group size (the larger the group, the less cohesive, because it is difficult for people to interact with one another); external threats (members can band together in an effort to thwart a common, clearly-identified “enemy”); previous successes (when the group is seen as successful, competent, a winning combination, others want to be associated with it. This, in turn, cause the group to be more cohesive).

2. A minimally acceptable response to part “b” of the question will hinge on well you described and explained the situation in your organizational experience, and how well you linked that description and explanation to what you said in the first part of the question about the factors that affect group performance and functioning.

Unacceptable (Fail)

1. You did not answer the question.
2. You did not answer all parts of the question.
3. Your response was not well-written, logical and persuasive.
4. Your response was not, according the grading criteria, clearly correct.
Question 2

You have been Chief Executive Officer of your organization for many years and have always believed in, and practiced, an authoritarian “rule from the top” style of management. The Board of Directors, led by a vocal majority, want to see more participatory management throughout the organization.

a. Prepare a comprehensive report to the Board in which you detail the various steps you will take to introduce a participatory management strategy. Support your position by citing at least two relevant theories; and

b. Discuss the important element of each of the two (or more) relevant theories; and

c. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks that might result from this change in management style.

Minimally Acceptable (Pass)

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. Your response must be well-written, logical and persuasive.
4. Your response must be, according the grading criteria below, clearly correct.

1. At minimum, the following points must be included in an acceptable response:
   1. Participation and involvement lead to commitment.
   2. People will support of that which they feel a part.
   3. An employee’s “higher-level” needs can be met through meaningful work.
   4. “Job satisfaction” helps to motivate people toward greater productivity.

Unacceptable (Fail)

1. You did not answer the question.
2. You did not answer all parts of the question.
3. Your response was not well-written, logical and persuasive.
4. Your response was not, according the grading criteria, clearly correct.

Grading Criteria Comprehensive Examinations, Spring, 2005
PPA 670 Policy Issue Analysis

At minimum:
1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments

Core Concepts—Question 1

Question #1

Your city is considering the construction of a new performing arts center. Some members of the city council are arguing that the whole project should be turned over to a private company, others want the city to develop and manage the center. To complicate matters, a local philanthropic organization has indicated an interest in funding a sizable portion of the construction costs. Unfortunately, they have a deadline for submission of proposals that occurs within 30 days.

a. If you are to meet this deadline, what procedures should be used to produce a report on the feasibility of the project? Why?

b. Beyond the possible grant, the city needs to develop a comprehensive analysis of the policy issues involved in this project within the next year to meet its capital improvements planning cycle. The council has instructed you to prepare a thorough analysis of the policy issue. Prepare a preliminary report to council that details your proposal for analyzing this issue. Be specific on the tools, techniques and approaches you are recommending. Be sure to justify your choices.

Question 1 – Grading Criteria

Minimally acceptable answer (pass)—must include 1-6 below

1. Addresses the question that was asked
2. Addresses all parts of the question (a, b)
3. Identifies appropriate approaches for part a of the question — “quick and dirty” methods.
Quick-and-dirty methods of analysis are used when information is uncertain or the time-frame is too short to allow a more comprehensive analysis. Specific techniques might include back-of-the-envelope calculations, force-field analysis, and quick decision analysis. The objective is to provide enough of a quick-cut analysis to allow an informed decision on proceeding with the full issue analysis.

4. Identifies appropriate approaches for part b of the question – systematic analysis.

Systematic analysis is a thorough investigation of the policy issue. It may include techniques such as extrapolation, forecasting, or modeling. The issue paper is the desired product – a complete report on whether to conduct fully "researched" analysis of the issue.

5. Provides a complete discussion of analytical approaches used and justifies choices.

In answering this question, it is important to understand the different demands being made in each part of the question. The answer should clearly identify those differences and correctly apply the appropriate analytical techniques for each of the parts of the question. Since a number of techniques are available for use, the answer must discuss the appropriateness of the selected techniques and justify the choice.

6. Answer is logical, well-written, persuasive

Unacceptable answer (fail)—any of the following is a fail:

1. Does not address the question that was asked
2. Does not address all parts of the question (a, b)
3. Does not identify quick-and-dirty methods as the appropriate approach for part a.
4. Does not identify systematic methods as the appropriate approach for part b.
5. Does not select appropriate analytical techniques for the situation presented.
6. Does not recognize the different approaches required for each part of the question.
7. Does not fully justify selected analytical techniques.
8. Answer is not logical, or not well-written, or not persuasive

Core Concepts—Question 2

At minimum:

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments

Core Concepts—Question 2

Evaluation Concepts:
- Traditional approaches/models
- Innovative approaches
- Role of politics
- Insuring utilization

Question #2

For the past three years, your city has offered rental housing assistance for low-income families. The purpose of the program was to reduce the number of homeless families in the city. The City Manager wants you to conduct an evaluation of this program: how effective has it been in reducing homelessness?

a. Suggest one evaluation strategy which makes use of traditional evaluation methods. What technique(s) and methods will you use? What are the strength and weaknesses of this strategy?

b. Suggest one evaluation strategy which applies a more innovative approach. What technique(s) and methods will you use? What are the strength and weaknesses of this strategy?

c. Which strategy would you prefer to use, and why?

Grading Criteria—Question 2

Minimally acceptable answer (pass) – must include 1-7 below

1. Addresses the question that was asked
2. Addresses all parts of the question (a, b, c)
3. Discusses an evaluation strategy that makes use of a traditional approach (eg. site visits, public hearings, output measures) and discusses an evaluation strategy that makes use of an innovative approach (eg. before/after program comparisons, time-trend projections, systems-based evaluation.)
4. Discusses appropriate techniques and methods for each evaluation strategy:

a. Traditional approaches tend to focus on output measures and not actual measures of performance. Importance given to efficiency, exclusive of equity and effectiveness. Techniques and methods for
traditional approaches include public meetings, surveys, establishing workload measures, counting complaints, site visits, etc.

b. Innovative evaluation approaches utilize more analytic rigor. Focus is on actual performance measures and effectiveness. Techniques and methods for these approaches include quasi-scientific experimental designs, group comparisons, matrix assessment methods, quantitative assessment of objectives/performance, time-series analysis, etc.

5. Discusses strengths and weaknesses of traditional and innovative evaluation strategies:

a. Traditional approaches are usually easier to conduct, quick, simple to understand and provide a "bottom line" result. They are also methodologically invalid, poor indicators of effectiveness, easy to manipulate and prone to emphasizing negative aspects of the program.

b. Innovative approaches are scientifically rigorous, both internally and externally valid, more comprehensive and produce true assessments of program effectiveness. They are also complex to design, expensive, time-consuming and require substantial expertise to conduct.

6. Discusses strategy choice and justifies strategy choice in the context of the problem situation presented.

7. Answer is logical, well-written, persuasive

Unacceptable answer (fail)—any of the following is a fail:

1. Does not address the question that was asked
2. Does not address all parts of the question (a, b, c)
3. Does not identify at least one traditional and one innovative evaluation strategy or incorrectly identifies a strategy.
4. Does not discuss appropriate techniques and methods for each evaluation strategy or associates techniques and methods discussed with the incorrect strategy.
5. Does not address strengths and weaknesses of each strategy or inappropriately identifies strengths and weaknesses with a strategy.
6. Fails to choose an evaluation strategy or fails to adequately and appropriately justify the strategy selection.
7. Answer is not logical, or not well-written, or not persuasive

Grading Criteria Comprehensive Examinations, Spring, 2005
PPA 696 Research Methods

At a Minimum:

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills.
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments.

QUESTION 1

A Health Maintenance Organization conducts a study on which of two programs ("STOP" or "QUIT") is better for helping smokers to quit. The HMO concludes that the "STOP" program was more effective. Here are some facts about the HMO’s research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;STOP&quot; Program</th>
<th>&quot;QUIT&quot; Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants are volunteers</td>
<td>Participants are volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions offered Monday through Friday</td>
<td>Sessions offered on Saturdays and Sundays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collected at the end of nine months</td>
<td>Data collected at the end of six months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No control group</td>
<td>No control group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, during the course of the study, the state greatly increased the taxes on a pack of cigarettes.

a. Discuss the threats to the validity of the HMO’s research project.

b. Do you have confidence in the HMO’s findings?

Grading Criteria Question 1

a. An acceptable answer must, at a minimum, include the following observations. First, participants in both the STOP and QUIT program self-select. Subjects who work during the week would probably self-select the QUIT rather than the STOP program. Therefore, there is no random selection of subjects and that may produce a sample that is not representative of the target population. This will reduce the external validity of the research project.

Second, there is no random assignment of subjects to groups. Subjects are allowed to select which group they want to participate in leading to
a lack of equivalency between the groups. Since the groups are not equivalent, the researcher cannot assume that threats to validity such as history, maturation, mortality or selection bias are controlled.

Third, the primary history threat that is not controlled for in this study is the increase in cigarette taxes. Indeed, this cigarette tax increase may be the primary explanatory variable in smoking cessation rather than the individual programs.

Fourth, the data collection time frame is not equivalent. Since the data are collected immediately for the STOP program it is possible that some of these participants resumed smoking after the data collection period.

b. An acceptable answer must indicate a lack of confidence in the HMO’s findings and provide a comprehensive justification for this lack of confidence. Given the numerous threats to internal and external validity, the findings of the research program are suspect. In terms of internal validity, the existence of a cigarette tax rate increased diminishes any confidence the researchers may have in asserting that the programs led to smoking cessation. The non-equivalency of the groups and the non-representative nature of the sample also make it difficult to have any confidence in the HMO’s findings.

**QUESTION 2**

Two different polls were conducted prior to the recall of Governor Gray Davis to determine if the recall of Governor Davis would be successful. The results were quite different. One found that the Governor would definitely be recalled with a margin of 60% for recall to 40% against (with a margin of error of +/-3%). The other found that the Governor would definitely not be recalled by a margin of 40% for to 60% against (with a margin of error of +/-3%).

The first poll was a random sample of people who voted in the last presidential election, and only those people who said they were likely to vote in the recall election were reflected in the poll. The second poll used a simple random sample of all California adults over the age of 18, based on published telephone books.

a. Explain why, if both polls used probability-based (scientific random) sampling, the results could be so different.

b. What type of sampling technique would you have recommended to Governor Davis, if he wanted to know the most realistic estimate of if the recall would succeed?

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**Grading Criteria Question 2**

a. An acceptable answer must recognize and explain the differences between the sampling frames used in the two polls. The sample in the first poll was selected from likely voters who voted in the last presidential election. This sampling frame consisted of voters who voted in the last election and only those who indicated they would vote in the recall election were chosen. In the second poll, the sampling frame consisted of all California adults over the age of 18 irrespective of their voter participation in the last recall election. It is certainly possible that members of the first sample are much more likely to support the recall of Governor Davis than a broad sample of Californians. In short, the first sample represents the target population of most interest to Governor Davis, namely, likely voters.

b. An acceptable answer must identify the first sampling technique as the appropriate one for Governor Davis to use and provide a comprehensive justification for its use. The first sampling technique selects a random sample of likely voters from a sampling frame of individuals who voted in the last presidential election. This approach provides a sample that is representative of the target population (likely voters) of interest for this study. A representative sample will increase the accuracy of the estimates produced by the poll.