

VERTICAL LEARNING CURVE

Comprehensive Master's Examination Review

Preparation Course Description

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INTRODUCTION

THIS COURSE HAS SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGES over alternative methods for acquiring business knowledge, skills, and credentials. It has been carefully engineered by a team of qualified university professors and experienced business executives to meet the needs of busy working professionals who need maximum flexibility in a market-relevant, academically rigorous education. It is offered by a fully accredited university with a strong reputation for academic excellence and practical professional education. The university has a well-recognized track record in distance learning and a commitment to the kind of innovation that makes quality business education more affordable and accessible.

Major advantages to the course design are the Marketplace Interface (mentoring) and networking opportunities. In addition to the standard academic content, you will have the opportunity to learn from practicing professionals through required “mentoring” sessions. Using advanced technologies you will be engaged in an online community where you will network with other course participants around the world.

THIS COURSE IS NOT FOR EVERYONE. This course has little in common with classroom or traditional on-line courses with which you may be familiar. Like other forms of distance learning, it does place a significantly greater burden on the student to manage the study schedule and to master concepts, principles, practices, and tools. Self-discipline and time management are therefore essential to successful completion of this course. However, in this course your learning takes place in a **virtual reality** marketplace where you will develop your knowledge and skills “on the job.” You will be assigned to a department in a simulated (but very real) American company and will acquire and apply your skills as you interact with company executives, employees, customers, vendors and competitors. **Your preparation and performance will be continuously evaluated by company management and reported in real time to you and to the university course supervisor (see grading section below).**

THE COURSE IS FOR UPPER DIVISION AND GRADUATE LEVELS. This means that **you** are responsible for mastering the knowledge and skills required to certify your competency in this course. In some ways, this course will be **more** demanding and academically rigorous than a traditional classroom or on-line course. There are no lectures to attend. You will not “have a quiz at the end of the week.” You cannot hide in a classroom full of other students. Your professor will expect you to know the material and complete work assigned. **Even if a particular source the professor or company manager provides proves to be unavailable**, or if you lose internet access or power, you will be expected to find other sources. Just as on the job, there are no acceptable excuses for not completing an assignment on time or not being prepared for an impromptu question from your manager or professor.

THIS COURSE IS DESIGNED TO WORK ON A HIGH-TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM. Therefore, a well-equipped computer and basic computer skills are assumed. Access to “always-on” high speed internet (400 kbps or higher recommended) is essential. Your computer must be sound- and video-capable and able to open and manipulate basic word-processing, spreadsheet, and presentation documents¹ (Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint®), PDF files, and to play Flash® videos (free reader and player downloads from Adobe™).

THIS COURSE TAKES PLACE IN AN AMERICAN COMPANY within the context of the American culture. The course setting is a simulated company, industry, and marketplace carefully modeled after a very real American firm. You will meet individuals with a variety of world views, educational backgrounds, races, religions, business ethics, values, and priorities; all of which are typical of what a trainee in such an American company could expect.

You will not be able to enroll in this course if you have not completed the Executive Orientation Course, available via the VLC site. Go to www.VLCglobal.com to register for and complete the Executive Orientation course.

¹ Free alternatives are available via <http://www.openoffice.org> and <http://www.google.com/google-d-s/b1.html>.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

To receive your degree, most universities offering this program will require that you pass the **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**. This Comprehensive Examination, taken when you have completed all of the regular coursework, will be an approximately four-hour, written pass/fail exam, with a combination of essay questions, multiple choice, case studies, and calculations derived from required and elective MBA courses. The exam committee is likely to include the MBA program director, fulltime and adjunct professors, and anyone appointed by the Graduate and Distance Learning programs. If necessary, the student may retake the examination after a prescribed period.

THIS COURSE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER'S EXAMINATION. A comprehensive examination gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your competency in all subject areas included in your Master's studies. Your university may assign two or more credit hours to this course (see your university course catalogue).

The purpose of this course is somewhat similar to commercially available courses that prepare people for the CPA, CFA, or other professional certification examinations. If you are familiar with those kinds of courses, you know that they are typically priced at \$2500 or more. Your university has elected to include this course as part of its commitment to provide you a premier Master's program. Including a comprehensive exam adds significant credibility to your Master's degree when it is compared to other distance learning programs. Providing you with a course to help you prepare for that exam further illustrates a commitment to the quality of your training.

To be sure, this course has significant value to you as it helps prepare you for the Comprehensive Examination. In addition, this course has other important benefits. It is a great review of concepts, principles, tools, and practices you may have acquired a year or more ago. Furthermore, if you managed to get this far through your program relying on short-term memory, this course will help make the most important parts of your training more readily accessible for use in your career. This course, and the examination, also help to further integrate your knowledge and skills by requiring you to apply them unsorted by subject area.

This **COMPREHENSIVE MASTER'S EXAMINATION REVIEW** course is divided in much the same way as the Master's Examination will be:

PART A will address issues of theory and practice related to History of Management Thought, Management for Results, Marketing for Results, and Human Resources & Organization Behavior.

PART B will address issues of theory and practice related to Financial Accountability, Quantitative Methods, and Management Information Systems & e-Business.

PART C will address issues of theory and practice related to International Business and Organizational Strategy.

PART D will address issues of theory and practice acquired through the Marketplace Mentoring sessions (may be called Business & Society or Business Ethics by your university).

This course will review your understanding of many of the most important concepts and skills in your master's program using the same types of evaluation methods you will encounter in the Examination. Those will include objective questions such as true/false, agree/disagree, multiple choice, listing, matching, short answer, and essay.

Like the other courses in this program, this one takes place in a virtual reality simulation context at Central Products. You have completed your training, rotating through the various departments of the company. Now you are being asked to contribute to one of the most critical challenges Central faces as it continues its rapid growth strategy. That challenge is evaluating and selecting the best-trained and most capable people from among those who apply for important positions at Central. Many will come with résumés that include MBAs or other master's degrees. Your ability to evaluate these applicants will reveal the degree to which you have mastered your own training.

The method will be interactive. You will have access to your program notes, tools, and other resources. As in the other courses, you will receive feedback from your professors and Central management.

HOW THIS COURSE IS GRADED

THIS COURSE IS GRADED ON A PASS/FAIL BASIS, though you will be able to see your percentage score on the Performance Gauge in the upper right of your screen, just as in your other courses. You must **PASS** each of the four parts of the course with a minimum required score to **PASS** this course. **SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE DOES NOT GUARANTEE YOU WILL PASS THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER'S EXAMINATION, BUT YOU MUST PASS THIS COURSE BEFORE YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE EXAMINATION.** If your university requires a Master's Project or Thesis as part of your degree program, it is likely you will be required to take and pass the Comprehensive Examination before enrolling for those last parts of your degree program.

Grading standards for this course are established by your university and may vary by professor of record. All grades are assigned by your university. Please note that no schedule or weights are contained within this document because your university sets these requirements. As you progress through this course, your performance will be reported to you and the university in real-time (see your student "dashboard") in the form of your total point score out of points possible (% score). The university may modify the grading standards or may add grading criteria (assignments or tests).

The percentage (%) scores reported to the university will include the following areas:

1. A variety of assignments given at any time during the course by the virtual professor, company executives, or university professor. Evaluated for (a) completion, (b) timeliness, (c) understanding.
2. **Un-announced assessments by a variety of tests or interviews.** Evaluated for (a) preparation and (b) correct understanding of principles or practices.
3. Active Participation evaluates student response to the opportunity to ask questions or make comments (a) in the company training context and (b) in the peer blog forum.
4. Active Participation in Mentoring Center Sessions. Evaluated for (a) attendance and (b) quality of contribution to discussions.
5. Periodic Competency Hurdles (within each module of each course).
6. Final Examination.

Note that this course is composed of the several Modules described in the Course Description. **You must demonstrate professional competency in each module before you will be allowed to continue to the next.** If you fail to demonstrate competency at the high levels required, you will be required to repeat the module. You are allowed three (3) attempts to pass each module, but changes occur in the content along with a 20% penalty for each re-take attempt. Of course, having to repeat a module affects your performance rating, even if your performance is perfect the second or third attempt.

Example:

MODULE	POINTS POSSIBLE	1ST ATTEMPT SCORE (PASS ≥ 80%)	2ND ATTEMPT SCORE (PASS ≥ 85%)	3RD ATTEMPT SCORE (PASS ≥ 90%)	SCORE PENALTY (20%/FAILURE)	TOTAL MODULE SCORE
1	20	15/20 (fail)	18/20 (pass)	-	20%	18*.80 = 14.4
2	40	30/40 (fail)	31/40 (fail)	38/40 (pass)	40%	38*.60 = 22.8
3	25	23/25 (pass)	-	-	0%	23*1.00 = 23.0
	85					60.2

TOTAL RAW SCORE FOR THIS MODULE = 60.2 POINTS SCORED / 85 POINTS POSSIBLE = 70.8%.

THIS RAW SCORE IS REPORTED TO YOUR UNIVERSITY, AND IS USED ALONG WITH OTHER DATA TO ASSIGN GRADES.

This software is designed to detect all forms of cheating. All forms of cheating are taken seriously and any indications of cheating are reported immediately to the university. Penalties may be severe and may include being **permanently** expelled from the university resulting in a record that may prevent future admission to other accredited institutions. For more information, please see the [VLC policy on Academic Misconduct](#).

LEARNING METHODS

Each course module employs pedagogical techniques of observation, application, practical guidance, and testing.

Observation – see how

Each module introduces terms and concepts which are required to understand on-the-job functions and trainees are given the opportunity to see the practical utilization of these skill sets.

Application – experience how

Each module presents scenarios and/or questions relevant to the terms and concepts and their association with the practical setting. The understanding of these situations will help to ensure that the trainee has gained an appreciation of the skill sets presented.

Practical Guidance – get advice

Each module has opportunities to present additional information or aids to clarify terms and concepts, and to increase the learning capability and confidence of the trainee. This includes information regarding common questions/mistakes of application.

Testing – confirm competence

Each module has a final competency hurdle that replicates, to the extent possible, the practical skills developed regarding the terms and concepts presented in the module. Generally, scenarios or case study conditions are introduced to measure performance which would be as close to an on-the-job situation as possible. This is designed as a required opportunity to display content mastery and confidence.

CONTINUOUS REAL-TIME STUDENT COURSE ASSESSMENT

On an unannounced and unscheduled basis, students are asked questions by the professor, the company department manager, the personal guide, the Human Resources department, and other students about various aspects of the learning experience. **University representatives have access to student data and summary reports in real-time, on-demand.**

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Your notes from all your previous courses in this program
- Your notes from the Marketplace Mentoring Sessions
- Your Master's Toolbox
- www.quickMBA.com
- www.NetMBA.com
- <http://www.mba.com>
- www.howtowritearesume.net
- [Southwestern Publishers, Theory and Practice](#) for Core, Functional and Integrated business management fields.
- [Project Management Position Interview](#)
- [General Management Skills Interview](#)