



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS®

Candidate Handbook for National Certification

with the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE)

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NBCC and CCE value diversity.

There are no barriers to credentialing on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation or national origin.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

All questions and requests for information about **NBCC certification and the NCE** should be directed to:

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides information about the examination and registration process for the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE). It outlines the design and content of the examination and guides candidates through the examination process, from registration through test-taking. For your convenience, this handbook may be downloaded from www.nbcc.org.

ABOUT NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is internationally recognized as a leading provider of national counselor certification. Additionally, 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia administer NBCC examinations as part of their counselor credentialing requirements. Based on its reputation for excellence in the examination field, NBCC has provided consultation services for examination and credential development to many other organizations in the United States and abroad, including NBCC's affiliate the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE). NBCC has contracted with CCE to oversee the certification examination process.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

NBCC and CCE do not discriminate against candidates on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation or national origin.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Only applicants who have applied for certification are eligible to take the NCE for this purpose.

EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

The examination is delivered in a pencil and paper format at more than 75 national sites and 350 campuses located throughout the United States. The examination is administered twice a year, in April and October. The examination is usually held on the third Saturday of the month.

REGISTERING FOR AN EXAMINATION

FEES AND REFUND POLICY

Candidates must submit the appropriate fee with the registration form. Payment may be made by credit card (VISA, MasterCard or American Express). **Application fees are not refundable or transferable.**

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

NBCC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and strive to ensure that no individual with a disability is deprived of the opportunity to take an examination solely by reason of that disability. NBCC will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities.

Special examination accommodation can be provided for candidates with visual, sensory or physical disabilities that would prevent them from taking the examination under standard conditions; candidates with diagnosed learning or emotional challenges; and candidates for whom English is a second language. Candidates who are Sabbath-observant can also request a non-Saturday examination date. All special examination accommodation requests must be submitted at least 45 days before the exam date and must be on letterhead and signed by the appropriate authority.

EXAMINATION DEFERRALS

You may postpone or defer your examination date to the next available administration without penalty as long as you contact NBCC more than 30 days prior to the exam date. If your request is less than 30 days prior to the exam or if you do not take the exam on your scheduled date, you will pay a \$150 reregistration fee to take it on the next administration date. If an emergency (illness, accident, death in the family, etc.) prevents you from taking the exam on your scheduled date, you may be eligible for a waiver of the reregistration fee, depending on your specific circumstances.

INCLEMENT WEATHER, POWER FAILURE OR EMERGENCY

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies at the examination location, NBCC will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation and subsequent rescheduling of an examination. The examination will usually be rescheduled if the testing center personnel are unable to open the facility. If power to a testing location is temporarily interrupted during an administration, your examination will restart where you left off and you may continue the examination.

Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be cancelled at a testing location, all scheduled candidates will receive notification by e-mail or telephone regarding rescheduling or reregistration procedures.

EXAMINATION CONTENT

The National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) is a 200-question, multiple-choice, nonsectioned examination. The NCE represents each of the original eight CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs) content areas, with question content also emerging from the five work behaviors determined by NBCC's national job analysis. Thus, the content validity of the NCE is anchored on the five empirically validated work behaviors determined to be most relevant for competent counseling practice and the eight CACREP curriculum educational standards.

A different form (version) of the NCE is compiled for each administration of the examination. Each form's questions, which are drawn from the item pool for the NCE, have undergone extensive review and field-testing.

Although each form of the NCE contains different questions, the content areas and the respective numbers of questions representing those areas are consistent. Within the set of 200 questions on each form of the NCE, 160 of the questions are counted for the purpose of determining whether you surpass the minimum criterion (i.e., "passing") score for that form. Thus, the maximum possible score a respondent can achieve is 160.

The remaining 40 items are unscored field-test items. Field-test items are included on the exam to gather item statistics to evaluate their performance for use on future exams.

The following is an outline of the eight CACREP domains on which the examination questions are based:

1. **Human Growth and Development** — Studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels.
2. **Social and Cultural Diversity** — Studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society.
3. **Counseling and Helping Relationships** — Studies that provide an understanding of counseling and consultation processes.
4. **Group Counseling and Group Work** — Studies that provide an understanding of group development, dynamics, counseling theories, group counseling methods and skills, and other group work approaches.
5. **Career Counseling** — Studies that provide an understanding of career development.
6. **Assessment and Testing** — Studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.
7. **Research and Program Evaluation** — Studies that provide an understanding of types of research methods, basic statistics, and ethical and legal considerations in research.
8. **Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice** — Studies that provide an understanding of all aspects of professional functioning, including history, roles, organizational structures, ethics, standards and credentialing.

The following is an outline of the five work behavior domains derived from a job analysis of professional counselors. The descriptions of the work behaviors are intended to be broad examples and are not exhaustive.

1. **Fundamental Counseling Issues** — Theory and application of counseling clients with conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention, and clients with various disorders including but not limited to neurocognitive, personality, anxiety and depressive disorders.
2. **Counseling Process** — Assessing a client’s course of development or one’s appropriateness for working with a specific client. Conducting diagnostic interviews, distance counseling and school/community outreach.
3. **Diagnostic and Assessment Services** — Assessing clients’ educational preparation and potential for harm to self and others. Conducting biopsychosocial interviews, initial assessments and custody evaluations.
4. **Professional Practice** — Advocating for client needs and the profession of counseling. Applying career counseling interventions, current counseling and multicultural counseling models.
5. **Professional Development, Supervision and Consultation** — Communicating with credentialing boards and consulting with the justice system, peers or other professionals, prescribers of medications, and professional organizations.

NBCC has developed a preparation guide for the NCE that includes general information about the exam, a practice test, tips and strategies for test-taking, and additional references. This is the only guide that includes actual retired test items. This guide can be purchased for \$34.95 at www.nbcc.org.

NCE SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Following are sample questions in the same style and with similar content as will be on your examination. Use the sample questions to verify your understanding of the topics on the examination. Answers are provided for the sample questions.

1. In attempting to understand the life perspectives and characteristics of their clients, some counselors use Kohlberg’s theory of moral development as a theoretical framework. These counselors know that Kohlberg’s theory includes three progressive levels culminating in
 - A. self-actualization, wherein the individual is fully humanistic.
 - B. principled thought, wherein the individual adopts a self-accepted set of standards of behavior.
 - C. androgyny, wherein the individual exhibits both male and female stereotypic behaviors.
 - D. personhood, wherein the individual is free from moral dilemmas.
2. A professional counselor determines fees for monthly consultation services on a job- by-job basis. This is an example of which of the following types of reinforcement schedules?
 - A. Variable interval
 - B. Fixed interval
 - C. Variable ratio
 - D. Fixed ratio

3. Research on the development of a person in a so-called “humanistic life outlook” has shown that it is facilitated by what?
 - A. Formal educational experiences
 - B. Observational learning experiences
 - C. Diverse interpersonal interactions
 - D. All of the above

4. When persons who are characteristically shy and withdrawn participate in “assertiveness training,” initially they experience uncertainty and self-doubt. Counselors refer to this social psychological concept as
 - A. cognitive dissonance.
 - B. dissociation.
 - C. individuation.
 - D. acculturation.

5. “Men [used here to mean all people] are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them.” This quote, attributable to Epictetus, most closely describes the counseling theory developed by
 - A. Rogers.
 - B. Carkhuff.
 - C. Freud.
 - D. Ellis.

6. The counseling technique in which the counselor intensifies the client’s emotional state in order to help the client understand the irrationality of the emotional reaction is known as
 - A. confrontation.
 - B. paradoxical intention.
 - C. systematic desensitization.
 - D. reconfiguration.

7. Counselors know that groups are formed for different purposes. For example, in some groups the primary goal is to yield some specified outcome, or “product,” while in others the primary goal is to focus on the “process” of interaction within the group. Which of the following types of groups is more product- than process- oriented?
 - A. Behavioral
 - B. Transactional-analysis
 - C. Adlerian
 - D. Client-centered

8. In the context of group counseling, members that are high in conformity also tend to be high in
 - A. independence.
 - B. authoritarianism.
 - C. intelligence.
 - D. superiority.

9. A counselor who structures a career counseling group to help group members understand a “fields and levels” approach to careers is following the theory of
- Super.
 - Roe.
 - Holland.
 - Tiedeman.
10. The concept of “career maturity” has been described and researched most extensively by
- Crites.
 - Hoyt.
 - Tiedeman.
 - Ginzberg.
11. Person A and Person B both took the same test. Person A got a score of 100 while Person B got a score of 75. In order for a counselor to determine whether the difference between their scores was because of “chance,” the counselor would need to know which of the following characteristics of the test?
- Mean
 - Standard deviation
 - Standard error of measurement
 - Standard error of the mean
12. A counselor conducted a study intended to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing group career counseling on the vocational maturity of high school sophomores. The study was begun in September and continued until June. This study is particularly susceptible to which of the following threats to the validity of an experiment?
- Regression
 - Maturation
 - Reactive effects of experimentation
 - Multiple treatment interference
13. A counselor designs a study where two experimental groups and one control group complete pre- and post-experiment measures of self-concept. The subjects were not randomly assigned to the groups because of scheduling problems. Which of the following techniques is MOST appropriate for analyzing the resultant data?
- Analysis of covariance
 - Correlated t-tests
 - Analysis of variance
 - Wilcoxon on matched-pairs signed-ranks test
14. You have been providing career counseling to a client who is seeking employment. Concurrent with the counseling, and with your knowledge, the client has made application for employment with several employers. A potential employer calls you and asks for your opinion as to your client’s suitability for the employer’s job opening. Under which of the following conditions are you free (i.e., not in violation of professional ethics), to provide the information requested?
- When it is clear that the client will not get the job unless the information is given
 - When you are certain that the information you would provide would assure that the client would get the job

- C. When in your best judgment you believe the information would enhance the client’s chances for getting the job
- D. None of the above

15. As applied to professional licensure of counselors, the term “reciprocity” means that
- A. one licensing agency agrees to accept the licensing standards of another as sufficient for its own.
 - B. a licensed counselor may legally perform the functions of a licensed psychologist.
 - C. certification is synonymous with licensure.
 - D. graduation from a fully accredited counselor education program automatically constitutes eligibility for licensure.

Sample Answer Key

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B | 11. C |
| 2. C | 7. A | 12. B |
| 3. D | 8. B | 13. A |
| 4. A | 9. B | 14. D |
| 5. D | 10. A | 15. A |

PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION

Developing an effective study plan is essential for successfully passing the NCE. A good study strategy includes preparation. To prepare, first determine what you need to learn by reviewing the content areas for the NCE (CACREP areas and work behavior areas). Choose your study materials and select a quiet, comfortable place that allows you to focus. Before you begin, check to make sure you have everything you need. Try to avoid interruptions.

Developing a study plan will allow you to learn the most as you study. Include setting goals in your study plan. Review what you have studied as often as possible. Study guides are available in the ProCounselor Online Store.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

Approximately 10 days before the examination, you will receive an exam admission letter that will provide specifics regarding when and where to report and what to bring with you.

A candidate who arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled report time will not be admitted.

IDENTIFICATION

To gain admission to the examination room, you must present two forms of identification, one with a photograph. The name on your registration and on your photo ID **must** be identical. Both forms of identification must be current and include your current name and signature. You will be required to sign a roster for verification of identity. Bring your exam admission letter with you as it includes your NBCC ID number, which you will need to sign in.

Acceptable forms of photo identification include a current driver's license, a current state identification card, a current passport, or a current military identification card. Employment ID cards, student ID cards and any type of temporary identification are **not** acceptable as the primary form of identification.

You must have proper identification to gain admission to the examination room. Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a missed appointment and a refund of your examination fee will not be granted.

SECURITY

NBCC maintains examination administration and security standards so that all candidates have the same opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The testing location is manned by an examination administrator and a proctor.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- No cameras, notes, tape recorders, personal digital assistants (PDAs), pagers or cellphones are allowed in the examination room.
- No calculators are permitted.
- No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the examination.
- Except for keys and wallets, no personal items, valuables or weapons should be brought to the examination room. NBCC is not responsible for items left outside the examination room.

EXAMINATION RESTRICTIONS

- Writing materials will be provided during check-in. You must return the writing materials to the proctor at the completion of testing, or you will not receive a score report. No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the examination room.
- No questions concerning the content of the exam may be asked during the examination.
- You may take a break when you wish, but you will not be given additional time to test.

MISCONDUCT

Individuals who engage in any of the following conduct will be dismissed from the examination and will forfeit their scores and fees:

- Creating a disturbance or being abusive or otherwise uncooperative;
- Displaying and/or using electronic communications equipment such as pagers, cellphones or PDAs;
- Giving or receiving help or being suspected of doing so;
- Attempting to record examination questions or make notes;
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else; or
- Being observed with notes, books or other aids.

COPYRIGHTED EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of NBCC. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Those who do so will be subject to severe civil and criminal penalties.

EXAMINATION PROCESS

After your identification has been confirmed, you will be directed into the examination room. Following the examination instructions, you will begin the timed examination.

You will have four hours to complete this examination. You may take periodic breaks, although you will not receive extra time for the exam.

FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

Within a month after the examination, you will receive notification that your exam score has been uploaded to your ProCounselor account. The score report you will have access to is an unofficial score report for your records. After NBCC has received and verified a final, official transcript of your graduate degree, you can order an official score verification report to be sent to third parties (such as licensure boards) through the ProCounselor online store. Passing the examination does **not** guarantee certification. NBCC reserves the right to withdraw or void official scores if it is found a candidate engaged in misconduct, wrongfully sat for the examination, or violated the conditions of their certification application.

PASS/FAIL SCORE DETERMINATION

The examination score is determined only by your performance on the NCE. Work history, quality of work, or other personal or professional variables do not constitute or otherwise substitute exam performance.

The methodology used to determine the passing point for the NCE is a modified Angoff method.

Identified subject matter experts who make up the NCE examination committee formulate responses and, through review of numerical data, unanimously determine the appropriate passing score. The subject matter experts evaluate each question on the examination to determine how many correct answers are necessary to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to pass the examination.

It is important to note a candidate's ability to pass the examination depends on the knowledge and skill of the candidate and not on the performance of other test takers.

The passing score and score you received on the version of the examination you were administered will be provided as a score report. Passing scores may vary slightly for each version of the examination. To ensure fairness to all candidates, a process of statistical equating is used to determine the cut score for each version of the examination. This involves selecting an appropriate mix of individual questions for each version of the examination that meets the content distribution requirements of the examination content blueprint. Because each question has been pretested, a difficulty level can be assigned.

The process then considers the difficulty level of each question selected for each version of the examination, attempting to match the difficulty level of each version as closely as possible. To ensure fairness, slight variations in difficulty level are addressed by adjusting the passing score up or down, depending on the overall difficulty level statistics for the group of scored questions that appear on a particular version of the examination.

EXAMINATION REREGISTRATION

If you were unsuccessful in your examination attempt, you may retake the exam on the next available date by and reregistering through ProCounselor. Your application provides for three attempts to pass the exam before the application closes. There is a fee for reregistration.

SCORES CANCELLED BY NBCC

NBCC is responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores it reports. On occasion, occurrences such as misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. NBCC reserves the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of its regulations is discovered.

APPEALS

Examinees may appeal test scores on the NCE. Appeals must be filed within five business days of the examination to appeal@cce-global.org. CCE will confirm that the appeal was received within one business day. Appeals made by telephone or to other e-mail addresses will not be considered. Examinees should include their full legal name, NBCC ID number, test date and testing center location. Appeals without proper identification information will not be considered.

APPEALABLE ISSUES

Candidates can only appeal test results for the following reasons: (a) test administration issues including but not limited to room temperature, distractions, improper seating, lighting, or technical issues with computer equipment or Internet connection; (b) improper accommodations; (c) registration and application errors; (d) proctoring errors; or (e) content. Test takers must request documentation (Incident Report) of the administration error from the proctor in order for NBCC/CCE to take any action on behalf of the examinee.

To appeal administration errors, examinees must provide detailed, clear and concise descriptions of the issue under appeal (e.g., room temperature as it reads on a thermostat). Failure to provide adequate detail will significantly delay the investigation or may invalidate the appeal.

To appeal content of a specific exam item, candidates must provide a description of the item in question and primary or secondary source references (citations are not sufficient) to support the appeal. Primary or secondary source data comes from the pool of knowledge generally acknowledged by counseling professionals (e.g., commonly referenced research or textbooks). Failure to provide sufficient information for identifying the item in question or lack of primary source data (e.g., citations rather than references) will invalidate the content appeal.

NONAPPEALABLE ISSUES

Examinees may not appeal (a) examination cut scores or the procedure for calculating cut scores, (b) the construction of the examination, (c) the criterion-related validity (the relationship between the examination and other variables), or (d) failing scores due to the candidate improperly following examination instructions or instructions provided during the tutorial. Examinees may submit comments about the examination content, which will be shared with the NCE examination committee.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about candidates for testing and their examination results are considered confidential. Studies and reports concerning candidates will not contain personally identifiable information unless authorized by the candidate.

SELECTED REFERENCES

NBCC does not endorse any particular study materials for the NCE. The following references are presented as potentially helpful options in preparing for the NCE. NCE performance enhancement is neither implied nor expressed.

American Counseling Association,(2014). *ACA Code of ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

American Psychiatric Association.(2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.) Washington, DC: Author.

Corey, G. (2012). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (9th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Hood, A.B., & Johnson, R.W. (2014). *Assessment in counseling: A guide to the use of psychological assessment procedures*(5th ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Wiger, D. E. (2012). *The psychotherapy documentation primer* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ : Wiley & Sons.



Examination Incident Report

Complete this document in its entirety to report any irregularities you experienced during the administration of the examination. You have five days from the time of the examination to submit this document. If it is submitted after five days, you will not be able to appeal you exam score results. Submit this document by giving it to the proctor or scanning and e-mailing it to appeals@cce-global.org.

EXAMINATION DETAILS

Examination: _____ Examination Date: _____ Administration Site: _____

Please identify the reason for the report and include a description of what took place, who was involved, where, what time, how the issue was addressed, etc.

Description of Irregularity (Please select the reason for your submission below.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Specific complaint regarding lack of special examination accommodation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Physical environment (Electrical outage, room temperature, noise, lighting problems, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Printing error (Questions omitted, missing pages, blurred ink, numeration errors, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Proctoring error: (Improper test instruction, improper timekeeping, lack of presence, inattentive, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: |

Please use the space below to describe in detail the irregularities that took place during the examination.

TO BE COMPLETED BY EXAMINEE

Name: _____ NBCC ID: _____ E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

My signature below is verification that I experienced the events described in this document.

Examinee Signature _____ University _____ Date _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY PROCTOR

Name: _____ E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

My signature below is verification that I have witnessed or confirmed the events described in this document.

Proctor Signature _____ Position/Title _____ Date _____