
Candidate Handbook for State Credentialing

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



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS



CENTER FOR
**CREDENTIALING
& EDUCATION**

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The Center for Credentialing & Education, Inc. (CCE) values 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 state licensure requirements should be directed to the state credentialing board to which you are applying. (Refer to insert for state-specific information.)

All questions and requests for information about the **NBCC examination program** should be directed to

Center for Credentialing & Education
 3 Terrace Way
 Greensboro, NC 27403
 Voice: 336-482-2856
 Fax: 336-482-2852
 Web site: www.cce-global.org

All questions and requests for information about **examination scheduling** should be directed to

Pearson VUE
 5601 Green Valley Dr.
 Bloomington, MN 55437
 Voice: 866-904-4432
 Web site: www.pearsonvue.com

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 can be downloaded from www.nbcc.org.

ABOUT NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is internationally recognized as a leading provider of counselor credentialing examinations. All fifty states, Guam, 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 examination process.

INDEPENDENT TESTING AGENCY

CCE has contracted with Pearson VUE to assist in the administration and scoring of the NCE. Pearson VUE is headquartered in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, with regional offices in Australia, China, Dubai, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

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

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Please check with your state board for specific information about licensure application procedures and any additional requirements. If you have previously achieved a passing score on an NBCC examination, contact your state board to determine if you are exam-exempt. You may be required to apply to your state board prior to sitting for the NCE. Candidates may not schedule an examination with Pearson VUE until they have registered with CCE.

EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

The examination is delivered by computer at more than 900 Pearson VUE testing centers located throughout the United States. Generally, there are no application deadlines and a candidate may submit a registration form and fee at any time. Testing is normally during the first two full weeks of each month. The examination is administered by appointment only on dates authorized by CCE, Monday through Saturday beginning at 8 a.m. with the last appointment at 5:30 p.m. Please contact Pearson VUE for particular locations and details. Candidates are allowed three hours and 45 minutes to take the exam. Available dates will be indicated when scheduling your examination. Candidates are scheduled on a first-come-first-served basis.

HOLIDAYS

Examinations are not offered on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve Day (Limited hours)
- Christmas Day

REGISTERING FOR AN EXAMINATION

Examinees have the option to register online or via a paper registration form. Online registration is the preferred method, as it requires a shorter processing time.

To begin the online registration process, go to <http://procounselor.nbcc.org> and choose the "Register to Take a State Licensure Exam" tab. Candidates cannot schedule an examination appointment with Pearson VUE until CCE has processed their registration. Pearson will then send e-mail notification to registered candidates with examination scheduling procedures.

To instead request a paper registration form, contact paperreg@cce-global.org. Be aware that a paper registration will require an extended processing time.

REGISTRATION EXPIRATION

A candidate who fails to test within six months after registering with CCE forfeits the registration and all fees paid to take the examination.

EXAMINATION REREGISTRATION

If you are unsuccessful in your examination attempt, you may reregister after a three-month waiting period by following the same registration process. The actual retest date will depend on the monthly testing schedule and site availability. A separate fee is required each time you register for the exam.

FEES AND REFUND POLICY

Candidates must submit the appropriate fee to register. Online payment must be made by credit card (VISA, MasterCard or American Express). Paper registration forms must include a cashier's check or money order payable to NBCC. (Personal checks are not accepted.) Examination fees are not refundable or transferable and expire if the registration process is not completed within one year.

SCHEDULING AN EXAMINATION

After you have completed the registration process and are approved to schedule your examination, you will receive an e-mail from Pearson VUE with your candidate ID number. There are two ways to schedule an appointment for the examination:

1. Online scheduling is the **preferred** method. To use this service:
 - Retrieve your candidate ID number from the e-mail.
 - Go to www.pearsonvue.com/cce and select "Create Account."
 - Follow the simple, step-by-step instructions to select your examination program and register for an examination.

Or

2. Telephone: Call Pearson VUE at 866-904-4432 to schedule an examination appointment. This toll-free number is answered from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central time Monday through Friday. **You may experience extended hold times.**

When scheduling an examination, be prepared to confirm a location and a preferred date and time for testing, and to provide your client candidate ID number. Pearson VUE uses this number only for identification in maintaining your record. When you contact Pearson VUE to schedule an examination appointment, you will be notified of the time to report to the testing center. Please make a note of it, because you will **not** receive additional communications confirming your scheduled appointment

TESTING CENTER LOCATIONS

Pearson VUE testing centers have been selected to provide accessibility to most candidates in all states and major metropolitan areas. A current listing of Pearson VUE testing centers, including addresses and driving directions, is available at Pearson VUE's Web site (www.pearsonvue.com). Specific address information will also be provided when a candidate schedules an examination appointment.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

CCE and Pearson VUE comply 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. With supporting documentation, CCE and Pearson VUE will provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with permanent or temporary disabilities or for whom English is a second language. Please note that accommodations must be pre-approved by your state board and/or CCE. Visit www.nbcc.org/directory for state-specific information on special accommodations.

Candidates testing with approved special accommodations must schedule their examination via Pearson VUE's toll-free number (800-466-0450) and inform Pearson VUE of the need for special accommodations. Please note, in order for an accommodation to be approved, the candidate must submit supporting documentation to accommodations@cce-global.org. Supporting documentation must be submitted on letterhead; dated within five years of the request; include the candidate's full name, date of birth, diagnosis and recommended accommodation(s); and be signed by a licensed, qualified professional

Candidates should not schedule the exam without confirmation of the approved special accommodations. Candidates who schedule their examination date prior to confirmation of the approved special accommodations will forfeit the scheduled exam and the exam date will be rescheduled.

EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT CHANGES

You may reschedule an examination appointment for a \$50 fee by calling Pearson VUE at 866- 904-4432. You cannot reschedule less than 24 hours prior to your appointment.

MISSED APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

A candidate forfeits the examination registration and all fees paid to take the examination when he or she:

- Intends to reschedule an examination but fails to contact Pearson VUE at least 24 hours before the examination appointment.
- Arrives more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
- Fails to report for an examination appointment for **any reason**.

A separate registration and examination fee are required to reregister for the examination.

INCLEMENT WEATHER, POWER FAILURE OR EMERGENCY

In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies on the day of an examination, Pearson VUE 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 center 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 center, 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 representing 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 in the five empirically derived work behaviors most relevant to 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:

Human Growth and Development—Studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels.

Social and Cultural Diversity—Studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society.

Helping Relationships—Studies that provide an understanding of counseling and consultation processes.

Group Work—Studies that provide an understanding of group development, dynamics, counseling theories, group counseling methods and skills, and other group work approaches.

Career Development—Studies that provide an understanding of career development.

Assessment—Studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.

Research and Program Evaluation—Studies that provide an understanding of types of research methods, basic statistics, and ethical and legal considerations in research.

Professional 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.

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.

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.

Diagnostic and Assessment Services—Assessing clients' educational preparation and potential for harm to self and others. Conducting biopsychosocial interviews, initial assessments and custody evaluations.

Professional Practice—Advocating for client needs and the profession of counseling. Applying career counseling interventions, current counseling and multicultural counseling models.

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.

The National Board for Certified Counselors (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. 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
2. 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?
 - A. Mean
 - B. Standard deviation
 - C. Standard error of measurement
 - D. Standard error of the mean
3. 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 began in September and continued until June. This study is particularly susceptible to which of the following threats to the validity of an experiment?
 - A. Regression
 - B. Maturation
 - C. Reactive effects of experimentation
 - D. Multiple treatment interference
4. A counselor designs a study in which two experimental groups and one control group complete pre- and postexperiment 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?
 - A. Analysis of covariance
 - B. Correlated t-tests
 - C. Analysis of variance
 - D. Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test
5. 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?
 - A. When it is clear that the client will not get the job unless the information is given
 - B. 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
6. What is the expected counseling outcome of applied person-centered counseling with a client?
 - A. Rational thoughts
 - B. Self-awareness
 - C. Personal responsibility

- D. Self-Actualization
7. What counseling theory would a counselor use to prompt a client to envision how the future will be different if a particular problem no longer exists?
- Existential therapy
 - Solution-focused brief therapy
 - Bibliotherapy
 - Dialectical behavioral therapy
8. A client asks a counselor if abortion is morally acceptable. Which of the following would be an ethical response?
- "I am pro-life, but respect others who disagree. Do you?"
 - "I am pro-choice and support clients who make tough choices."
 - "I believe morals and our behaviors should be guided by our religion."
 - "My opinion about this topic seems important to you. Can you tell me more? "
9. During a group counseling session a client says, "I realized I am not the only one struggling with relationship problems after listening to others in the group talk about their experiences." The group member's comment is best defined as which group factor identified by Yalom
- Catharsis
 - Imparting information
 - Interpersonal learning
 - Universality
10. A counselor is using a developmental career counseling approach with a client. Which of the following would the counselor measure to determine if the counseling approach is effective?
- Measure the degree of similarity between the client's personality and job environment.
 - Assess how well the client is mastering identified developmental career tasks.
 - Evaluate whether the client developed a belief about their ability

- to obtain a career.
- D. Rate how well the client's vocational choice is matched to the needs of the client.

Sample Answer Key

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. D |
| 2. C | 7. B |
| 3. B | 8. D |
| 4. A | 9. D |
| 5. D | 10. B |

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.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

Your examination will be delivered by computer at a Pearson VUE testing center. You do not need advanced computer experience or typing skills to take the examination. (You will be required to select answer choices and in some instance scroll to the end of the current page using a mouse.) On the day of your examination appointment, please plan to arrive at the testing center early. For your convenience, signs indicating Pearson VUE testing center check-in will be posted at the testing center.

A candidate who arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time will not be admitted and will forfeit their registration fee.

IDENTIFICATION

To gain admission to the testing center, 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.

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 testing center. 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, CCE and Pearson VUE maintain the highest degree of administration and security standards. The testing center is continuously monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security procedures apply during the examination:

- No cameras, notes, tape recorders, personal digital assistants (PDAs), pagers or cellphones are allowed in the testing room.
- No calculators are permitted.
- No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the testing room or reception areas.
- No personal items, valuables or weapons should be brought to the testing center. A locker is provided for storing keys, wallets and cellphones. Pearson VUE is not responsible for items left in the reception areas.

EXAMINATION RESTRICTIONS

- Writing materials will be provided during check-in.
- You must return all 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 choose, but you will not be given additional time to test.
- Eating, drinking, or smoking is not permitted in the testing center.

MISCONDUCT

Individuals who engage in any of the following conduct may be dismissed from the examination and 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, display or share these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Those who do so may be subject to severe civil and criminal penalties.

EXAMINATION PROCESS

After your identification has been confirmed you will be directed to a testing carrel. The system will monitor you via video throughout your examination session. Following the examination instructions, you will begin the timed examination.

You will have three hours and 45 minutes to complete this examination. The computer tracks the time you spend on the examination. The examination begins when you select "start." A nondisclosure agreement (NDA) appears on the screen; you must agree to the terms of the agreement to proceed with the exam. You will have five minutes to agree to the NDA, or the examination will terminate.

After you agree to the terms of the NDA, you will click the "Next" button and arrive at the tutorial for the examination. You have 10 minutes to review how to navigate and respond to the examination items.

The examination will terminate if you exceed the time allowed. A digital clock indicates the time remaining for you to complete the examination.

Only one examination question is presented at a time. The question number appears in the upper right portion of the screen. Answer choices are identified as A, B, C or D. Indicate your choice by clicking the option using the mouse. To change your answer, simply click on the alternate option using the mouse. You may change your answer as many times as you wish before the examination time limit.

Be sure to provide an answer for each examination question before ending the examination. There is no penalty for guessing.

FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

After completing the examination, you are asked to complete a short evaluation of your examination experience. Then, you will be instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive your unofficial score report, which includes your photograph. Your scores will be presented by CACREP area and by work behavior.

After verifying that you have abided by testing policies and procedures during the administration of your exam, CCE will report your official scores to your licensing organization.

Passing the examination does **not** guarantee licensure. NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE reserve 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 regulations of the respective organizations. Scores are reported in written form only and not over the telephone, by e-mail or by fax.

PASS/FAIL SCORE DETERMINATION

Examination scores are only determined by an individual's performance on the exam. Neither individual scores nor passing scores are compared to or influenced by the performance of other examinees.

The passing point for the NCE is calculated using a modified Angoff method, which requires subject matter experts of the NCE examination committee to review and evaluate each question on the examination in order to determine the passing score that would be expected of a minimally competent professional counselor.

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 passing score for different versions of the examination. Statistical equating adjusts the passing score up or down by accounting for the overall difficulty of each version of the examination.

Test scores will not be modified based on work history, quality of clinical work, or other personal or professional variables (e.g., taking the test multiple times, belonging to honor societies, or holding other professional credentials).

SCORES CANCELLED BY NBCC, CCE OR PEARSON VUE

NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE are responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores they report. NBCC, CCE and Pearson VUE reserve the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of regulations is discovered.

IF YOU PASS THE EXAMINATION

Your official scores will be forwarded to your state licensure board within 30 days of the end of the testing cycle. Candidates who pass the examination should follow their state board requirements for licensure.

IF YOU DO NOT PASS THE EXAMINATION

Candidates may take the examination once every three months. You can reregister by submitting a new examination registration with the appropriate fee.

Examinees may submit comments about the examination content, which will be shared with the NCE examination committee.

APPEALING EXAMINATION RESULTS

Examinees may appeal exam score results. To be considered, appeals must follow the guidelines below.

Administration Appeals

Candidates may base their appeal on:

- Proctoring errors (e.g., proctor failed to check candidates in properly, improper materials in the testing area).
- Site conditions (e.g., distractions, lighting failures).
- Computer failure (e.g., error messages, screen failures).

In order to submit an administration-based appeal, the candidate must not have been offered an opportunity to reschedule their exam due to the issue in question, immediately report the issue to the testing center staff and file an incident report while on site. Before considering the appeal, CCE must be able to confirm the issue filed in the report through system logs or Pearson staff. If properly submitted, examinees should expect to receive a decision regarding administration errors within 60 days.

Special Exam Accommodations Appeals

An individual can only submit an appeal of accommodations if initially approved for them. For the appeal to be considered, the candidate must file a detailed incident report while on site at the Pearson Testing Center, showing that the approved accommodations were not provided. If properly submitted, examinees should expect to receive a decision regarding special exam accommodations within 60 days.

Content Appeals

In order for the appeal to be considered, the candidate must provide a summary of the item in question and complete primary or secondary references (citations alone are not sufficient) to support the appeal. Primary and secondary source data comes from the pool of knowledge generally acknowledged by counseling professionals (e.g., commonly referenced in research or textbooks). All content appeals must be reviewed by subject matter experts during secure committee meetings; therefore, content appeal decisions may take up to eight months.

Filing an Appeal

To be considered, an exam score appeal must:

- Be submitted within one week of the exam.
- Be e-mailed to appeal@cce-global.org. (Appeals are not accepted by telephone or other e-mail addresses.)
- Include the candidate's full legal name, NBCC/CCE ID number, Pearson candidate ID number, test date and testing center location.

In addition, administration appeals must be accompanied by a Pearson Incident Report. Administration appeals will not be considered without a properly filed Pearson Incident Report.

Issues Not Valid for Appeal

Candidates are not eligible to appeal exam results based on the following:

- Testing errors on the part of the candidate (e.g., failing to scroll through all possible alternatives or unintentionally clicking an item);
- Test anxiety;
- Late arrival for the testing appointment;
- Failure to follow examination instructions as provided;
- Cut score determination; and
- The construction or criterion-related validity of the examination.

FAILING TO REPORT FOR AN EXAMINATION

A candidate who fails to report for an examination forfeits the registration and all fees paid to take the examination. A completed registration form and examination fee are required to reregister for an examination.

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.

SCORE VERIFICATION

Candidates may request score verification for themselves or a third party by submitting a completed Score Verification Request form and payment. This form is available at www.cce-global.org.