



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS[®]
AND AFFILIATES

Candidate Handbook for State Licensure

National Counselor Examination[™]
(NCE[®])

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For More Information

All questions and requests for information about state licensure requirements should be directed to the state licensing board to which you are applying. All questions and requests for information about the NCE examination process should be directed to:

**Center for Credentialing & Education, Inc. (CCE)
State Agency Services Department**

3 Terrace Way
Greensboro, NC 27403
Voice: 336-482-2856
Fax: 336-482-2852
Website: 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
Website: pearsonvue.com

Introduction

The National Counselor Examination (NCE) is designed to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities determined to be important for providing effective counseling services. The NCE is a requirement for counselor licensure in many states. It is also one of two examination options for the National Certified Counselor (NCC) certification.

The NCE was first used in 1983 as part of the NCC application process and continues to undergo regular review and development to ensure it represents the current reality of practice and research in the counseling profession.

You have two options when it comes to registering for the NCE:

1. You can register for the examination on its own, independent of a certification application, which will be covered in this handbook.
2. You can register as part of the National Certified Counselor (NCC) application. The benefit of taking the examination via this method is that it allows you to get a head start on earning your professional credentials. For more information on that process, review the candidate handbook at https://www.nbcc.org/assets/exam/handbooks/nce_applicant_handbook_for_national_certification.pdf.

About NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. and Affiliates (NBCC) is internationally recognized as a leading provider of national counselor credentialing examinations. All 50 states; the U.S. territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and the District of Columbia use NBCC examinations as part of their counselor licensure requirements. NBCC administers its examinations through the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE), its test administration services provider.

About Pearson VUE

Pearson VUE is NBCC's computer-based testing partner for the administration and scoring of the NCE. As an independent testing agency, Pearson VUE has test centers across the globe and is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Pearson VUE provides two test delivery options for the NCE:

- In-person administration, at a Pearson VUE test center.
- Internet-based (online) administration through Pearson VUE's OnVUE platform. The examination may be taken on a computer at home or in a private setting with a strong internet connection and webcam. Strict security protocols are in place to ensure the integrity and security of the testing process and examination content. For more information about the OnVUE process and system requirements, visit [nbcc.org/exams/administration](https://www.nbcc.org/exams/administration).

Nondiscrimination Policy

NBCC, CCE, and Pearson VUE do not discriminate against any candidate based on gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law.

Examination Administration

Candidates can take the NCE in-person at a Pearson VUE test center or online through Pearson VUE's OnVUE platform. Candidates choosing the **in-person administration** at a Pearson VUE test center can make an appointment during advertised business hours during the month-long, approved test authorization window. Candidates choosing the **online administration** option through OnVUE can make an appointment during the month-long, approved test authorization window.

Holidays

Examinations are not offered on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth National Independence Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve Day (Limited hours)
- Christmas Day

Examination Purpose, Content, and Form

Examination Purpose and Content

The NCE represents each of the original eight Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) content areas, with question content also emerging from the six work behaviors determined by NBCC's national job analysis of more than 16,000 credentialed counselors. The NCE measures an examinee's knowledge and understanding of theoretical and skill-based tenets necessary to practice safely and competently as an entry-level counselor.

Thus, the content validity of the NCE is anchored on the six empirically validated work behaviors determined to be most relevant for competent counseling practice and the eight CACREP curriculum educational standards. The minimally qualified candidate for the NCE has graduated from or is a well-advanced graduate student in a counseling program that has been accredited by CACREP or is housed within an institutionally accredited college or university.

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 a minimally qualified candidate surpasses the minimum criterion (i.e., "passing") score for that form. Each of these 160 questions comprise one score point; thus, the maximum possible score a candidate can achieve is 160. The remaining 40 items are unscored field-test items. Field-test items are included on the examination to gather item statistics to evaluate their performance for use on future examinations. See Appendix B for NCE sample examination questions. The following is an outline of the eight CACREP domains on which the examination questions are aligned:

1. 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.
2. Social and Cultural Diversity — Studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society.
3. Human Growth and Development — Studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels.
4. Career Development — Studies that provide an understanding of career development.
5. Counseling and Helping Relationships — Studies that provide an understanding of counseling and consultation processes.
6. 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.
7. Assessment and Testing — Studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.

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

*States may choose to allow candidates of comparable education levels from other related helping degrees to sit for the examination for licensure.

Measurement Focus and Target Population

See Appendix A for the NCE Content Outline.

Minimally Qualified Candidate

The minimally qualified candidate for the NCE must have a graduate-level degree or higher from a counseling program that has been accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) or is administered by an institutionally accredited college or university.

The counseling degree program must contain courses in the following eight (8) requirement areas:

1. Human Growth and Development Theories in Counseling
2. Social and Cultural Foundations in Counseling
3. Helping Relationships in Counseling
4. Group Counseling Theories and Processes
5. Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development
6. Assessment in Counseling
7. Research and Program Evaluation
8. Professional Orientation to Counseling

Examination Format

The NCE is a 200-question, multiple-choice, non-sectioned examination. Candidates will have a total test session of **255 minutes** (4 hours and 15 minutes), as follows:

- Time to complete the Test Administration and Confidentiality Agreement: **5 minutes**
- Time to complete the testing tutorial (including sample case study): **10 minutes**
- Time to complete the examination: **225 minutes**
- One scheduled break (after question #100): **15 minutes**

Total Test Session Time: **255 minutes**

Eligibility Requirements

Candidates should check with their state board for specific information about licensure application procedures and any additional requirements. Please visit nbcc.org/search/stateboarddirectory for contact information.

To maintain the integrity of NBCC and CCE examinations, ensure test security, and minimize the likelihood that former Pearson VUE personnel taking an NBCC or CCE examination are exposed to test content, all Pearson VUE employees and contractors, including test administrators and examination proctors, are disqualified from taking any NBCC or CCE examination for any purpose during their employment or affiliation with Pearson VUE and for 2 years following separation from employment or affiliation with Pearson VUE. This disqualification period applies to Pearson VUE personnel who are involved with the development or maintenance of NBCC/CCE examinations and/or the delivery of in-person or online NBCC/CCE test administrations. Similarly, any individual who plans to take any NBCC or CCE examination within the next 2 years cannot serve as a proctor or test administrator for NBCC/CCE examinations.

Registering for the Examination

Registration Process

This registration process is specific to those taking the NCE for state licensure.

There are two options to register for the NCE:

1. **Register online:** To begin this process, candidates should visit the Credentialing Gateway at my.cce-global.org and either log in or create a Credentialing Gateway account.
2. **Paper registration:** To request a paper registration form instead, candidates should email paperreg@cce-global.org. This process may take an additional 4 weeks to process. A money order for the amount of the examination is the only acceptable form of payment with the paper registration.

Test Authorization Window and Application Expiration

After a candidate has successfully registered with CCE via the Credentialing Gateway or paper registration and their registration has been processed, they will receive an Authorization to Test email from Pearson VUE with their candidate ID number. This email will arrive after the registration process is completed.

State licensure candidates are granted up to a 6-month test authorization window by their state licensure board. If the state board approval timeframe is less, candidates will not be able to test past this date. If the examination is not taken within the approved test authorization window, the candidate's registration and examination fees will be forfeited.

Any request to extend the test authorization window should be made in writing. A written request should be sent to the CCE State Licensure Facilitation Manager at extensionrequest@cce-global.org prior to the expiration of the candidate's test authorization window, which is identified in the Authorization to Test email. No extension requests will be considered once the original test authorization window has expired.

Failing to Report for an Examination

Candidates who fail to report for an examination appointment will forfeit all registration fees paid within the application to take the examination. A new registration and examination fee are required to reregister for the examination.

Registration Expiration

If a candidate fails to test within the authorized window after registering with CCE, they will forfeit their registration and all fees paid to take the examination.

Examination Reregistration

If a candidate does not sit for the examination within their allotted window or is unsuccessful in their examination attempt, they may retake the examination after completing a 30-day waiting period. Candidates may reregister at any time. The number of examination attempts allowed is determined by the candidate's state licensure board. Candidates are allowed to test once per authorized test window, and the examination fee is required each time a candidate reregisters for the examination.

Special examination accommodations (SEAs) must be requested each time a candidate reregisters for the examination—either for state licensure or as part of their NCC application.

Fees and Refund Policy

Online payments for state counselor licensure must be made by credit card (VISA, MasterCard, or American Express). A cashier's check or money order, made payable to NBCC, must be included if using the paper registration form. **Examination fees are not refundable nor transferable and are forfeited if the examination is not taken within the approved administration window.**

Scheduling an Examination

After a candidate has successfully registered with CCE via the Credentialing Gateway or paper registration and their registration has been processed, they will receive an Authorization to Test email from Pearson VUE with their candidate ID number. This email will arrive after the registration process is completed. Candidates may either schedule an appointment for the examination online or by telephone. If registering by telephone, please be prepared for a possible long hold time for a live Pearson VUE customer service representative.

Candidates who are taking the examination with approved special examination accommodations must schedule their examination appointment by telephone at 800-466-0450, option 3.

See **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES** for more information.

To Schedule Online

- Retrieve the candidate ID number from the Authorization to Test email received from Pearson VUE.
- Navigate to home.pearsonvue.com/cce and select "Create Account."
- Follow step-by-step instructions to select the examination program and register for an examination.

To Schedule by Telephone

- Call Pearson VUE at 866-904-4432 to schedule an examination appointment.
- This toll-free number is answered from 7 am to 7 pm Central Time, Monday through Friday.

Candidates may only schedule an examination appointment with Pearson VUE after they have registered with CCE and received an Authorization to Test email.

When scheduling an examination appointment, candidates should be prepared to confirm a location (for in-person testing), communicate a preferred date and time for testing, and provide their client ID number. Pearson VUE uses this number only for identification purposes for maintaining candidate records. When a candidate contacts Pearson VUE to schedule an examination appointment, they will be notified of the time to report for the in-person administration at the test center, or the online administration via OnVUE. After scheduling the examination appointment, candidates will receive a Confirmation of Examination Registration email from Pearson VUE to confirm the scheduled appointment. The Confirmation of Examination Registration will include the registration ID, date, time, appointment length, test center location (if applicable), and approved special accommodation(s), if applicable.

Accommodations for Candidates With Disabilities

CCE and Pearson VUE provide reasonable and appropriate special examination accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The existence of a disability does not automatically necessitate an accommodation. Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity or bodily function. All accommodation requests are reviewed under the Special Examination Accommodations Policy located on the NBCC website at [nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC-CCE Special Examination Accommodations Policy.pdf](http://nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC-CCE_Special_Examination_Accommodations_Policy.pdf).

Only specific, limited accommodations may be available for those candidates opting for the OnVUE online administration of the NCE.

Special examination accommodations (SEAs) must be requested for each examination registration. A candidate may use the Accommodation Request form at nbcc.org/assets/exam/SEA-NBCC-Certification-and-CCE-Credentialing-Candidates-active.pdf, or submit substantially similar documentation in accordance with the requirements set forth in the [Special Examination Accommodations Policy](#).

Accommodations must be pre-approved by NBCC before scheduling the examination. If an examination is scheduled prior to receipt of written confirmation of SEA approval, the candidate may forfeit their accommodation request and/or their scheduled examination appointment time.

Candidates who receive written confirmation of SEA approval must schedule their examination appointment by calling Pearson VUE's toll-free number (800) 466-0450 and selecting Option 3.

For any questions related to accommodations, please feel free to email accommodations@cce-global.org.

Candidates who choose the online administration option through OnVUE are indicating their choice to test without special examination accommodations.

Examination Appointment Changes

Candidates may reschedule their examination appointment by calling Pearson VUE at 866-904-4432 or 800-466-0450, Option 3 if you have approved special accommodations. There will be a \$50 rescheduling fee. A new appointment may be rescheduled up to 24 hours before the currently scheduled examination appointment.

Circumstances Resulting in Forfeiture of Examination Registration Fees

The examination registration and all fees paid to take the examination are forfeited when a candidate:

- misses an appointment and does not reschedule at least 24 hours before the examination appointment.
- arrives more than 15 minutes late for the examination.
- violates any NBCC/CCE or Pearson VUE policy, rule, procedure, or instruction from a proctor or examination administrator.
- engages in any prohibited conduct during the examination administration, such as conduct related to cheating or a security breach.

Personal Emergency, Inclement Weather, or Power Failure

In the event of a personal emergency or other circumstance that prevents the candidate from taking the examination at the scheduled appointment time, the candidate is required to: promptly contact CCE at (336) 482-2856 or exams@cce-global.org; explain the circumstances resulting in the inability to test; submit specific information and related documentation, if applicable, supporting the reason(s) and circumstance(s) identified to CCE; and identify when the candidate is available to reschedule the examination. CCE, in its sole discretion, will determine whether the candidate is permitted to cancel the current test appointment and reschedule the examination, or is required to reregister to take the NCE.

In the event of inclement weather, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation and rescheduling of an examination appointment. An examination will usually be rescheduled if the test center personnel are unable to open the facility. Every attempt is made to administer an examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled at a test center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification by email or telephone regarding rescheduling or reregistration procedures.

During an OnVUE online NCE administration, if the candidate experiences a power outage that temporarily interrupts the administration of the examination, the NCE will restart at the last question completed. The candidate will need to log back in to restart the examination. Details about this process and the steps a candidate must follow, including conducting a system test for software compatibility prior to testing, are provided at home.pearsonvue.com/cce. Important FAQs and instructions are provided under the “Learn More” tab of the Pearson VUE/CCE webpage.

Taking the Examination

In-Person Examination Administration (Pearson VUE Test Center)

If you are taking an online examination administration through OnVUE, [see page 15](#).

The examination will be delivered by computer at a Pearson VUE test center. Advanced computer experience or typing skills are not required to take the examination. On the day of the examination appointment, the candidate can check in up to 30 minutes before the examination and up to 15 minutes after the scheduled appointment time. **If the candidate arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, the candidate will not be allowed to test and will forfeit their examination fee.**

Prior to testing at a Pearson VUE test center, the candidate is required to review and sign the Pearson VUE Candidate Agreement before being allowed into the test center. The document explains what candidates must do if they need help during the examination and identifies other test administration policies.

Identification Requirements

The candidate must present two forms of original (no photocopies), valid (unexpired) IDs; one form as a primary ID (government issued with name, photo, and signature, e.g., driver's license, state ID, military ID, passport) and one form as a secondary ID (with name and signature or name and recent photo). The first and last name that the candidate used to register must exactly match the first and last name on the ID that is presented on test day. All required IDs must be issued by the country in which the candidate is testing. If a candidate does not have the qualifying ID issued from the country they are testing in, a passport from their country of citizenship is required, along with a secondary ID.

Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a missed test appointment, and the candidate will forfeit their examination fee.

Candidates with questions or concerns about the ID requirements should contact Pearson VUE customer service at home.pearsonvue.com/Contact-Us.aspx.

Test Center Locations

Pearson VUE test 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 home.pearsonvue.com/cce under "Find a Test Center." Specific address information will also be provided once an examination appointment is made.

Security Requirements

NBCC/CCE and Pearson VUE maintain the highest degree of test administration and security standards. All test centers are monitored by audio and video surveillance equipment for security purposes.

The following security requirements apply during the in-person test administration:

- No cameras, notes, tape recorders, personal digital assistants (PDAs), pagers, cell phones, or smart watches 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 test center.
- A locker is provided for storing keys, wallets, and cell phones. Pearson VUE is not responsible for items left in the reception areas.

NBCC/CCE or Pearson VUE may modify these security requirements as needed.

Additional Test Administration Restrictions

- Writing materials will be provided during check in.
- All writing materials must be returned to the proctor at the completion of testing, or a score report will not be given.
- There will be a 15-minute break in the middle of the examination. Voluntary breaks may be taken during the examination; however, the examination clock will not stop during any voluntary breaks. Candidates must follow all Pearson VUE rules and procedures when requesting and taking a break.

Examination Process

Upon arrival at the test center, and following the check-in process, each candidate will be directed to a testing carrel. All candidate testing sessions will be monitored by video throughout the entirety of the test administration.

A nondisclosure agreement (NDA) will appear on the screen and the terms of the agreement must be agreed to in order to proceed with the examination. Candidates will have 5 minutes to agree to the NDA or the examination will terminate.

After agreeing to the terms of the NDA, each candidate will be provided with a 10-minute examination tutorial that reviews how to navigate and respond to the examination items. Upon completion of the tutorial, candidates will begin the timed examination.

Candidates will have 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete the examination. The computer tracks the time spent on the examination, and a digital clock appearing on the computer screen indicates the time remaining to complete the examination. The clock does not stop and will continue to run during any unscheduled break taken by the candidate during the examination administration. Once the time expires, the examination will terminate.

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. The candidate indicates their choice by clicking the option using the mouse. To change an answer, the candidate simply clicks on the alternate option using the mouse. The candidate may change their answer as many times as they wish before the examination time limit. Going back to review questions is permitted if needed. Candidates are encouraged to provide an answer for every examination question before ending the examination, as there is no penalty for guessing.

Online Examination Administration (OnVUE)

The examination will be delivered via internet-based, online-proctored testing administered by Pearson VUE, at an appropriate location selected by the candidate. Advanced computer experience or typing skills are not required to take the examination. On the day of the examination appointment, the candidate can check in up to 30 minutes before the examination and up to 15 minutes after the scheduled appointment time. ***If the candidate checks in more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, the candidate will not be allowed to test and will forfeit their registration fee.***

Prior to testing, the candidate is required to read and sign the [Pearson VUE Candidate Rules Agreement](#). The document outlines what test takers should do if they need help with the examination and other policies.

Identification Requirements

On examination day, candidates will be prompted to take a photo of their government-issued ID and a real-time photo of themselves. Candidates will be required to show that same photo ID to the proctor via the webcam.

Before testing online, candidates will need to provide ID that meets the following requirements:

- All IDs must be valid (unexpired) government-issued originals (i.e., not a photocopy).
- IDs must include the candidate's name and a recent, recognizable photo.
- The first and last name on the ID must match the first and last name used to register for the examination.
- Acceptable forms of ID:
 - o international travel passport
 - o driver's license
 - o identification card (national or state ID card)
 - o alien registration card (green card or permanent resident/visa)

* Pearson VUE cannot accept restricted IDs—those prohibited by law from being photocopied, digitized, or captured on camera—as identification for online testing.

Note: The candidate must have proper identification to test via internet-based, online-proctored testing. Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the examination is considered a missed test appointment, and the candidate will forfeit their examination fee.

Candidates with questions or concerns about the ID requirements should contact Pearson VUE customer service at home.pearsonvue.com/Contact-Us.aspx.

OnVUE Test Administration Requirements

The candidate will be required to adhere to the following NBCC/Pearson VUE test administration policies and rules with respect to internet-based testing:

Security Requirements

- Immediately prior to the start of their testing session, each candidate must run a computer system check to ensure that the computer being used to complete the examination meets all Pearson VUE computer system and technical requirements. Information concerning the systems check is available at home.pearsonvue.com/nbcc/onvue. Failure to perform the system check may result in technical deficiencies that could adversely affect a candidate's test administration or ability to complete the examination.
- Prior to accessing the examination, candidates will be required to show their testing space to the online proctor via the computer webcam and capture four photos of their testing environment.
- Constant online proctoring/monitoring will be conducted by both artificial intelligence and a Pearson VUE-certified proctor by webcam and microphone throughout the test administration.

Testing Space Requirements

During the test administration, the candidate **MUST**:

- **Be alone in the room.** Other individuals (including children) and pets (except service animals) are not allowed in the testing environment. It is recommended that candidates use a room with a locking door to reduce the likelihood that an interruption will occur.
- **Have a clear desk and testing area.** The candidate is not permitted to have textbooks, cell phones, smart watches, or other materials that may have test content or exam-related information in their testing location, including bulletin boards, white boards, or other items.
- **Be connected to a power source and the internet.**
- **Keep their webcam, speakers, and microphone on for the duration of the test.** The proctor must be able to see and hear the candidate throughout the test.

The candidate **CANNOT**:

- use a phone or headphones.
- use dual computer monitors.
- leave their seat or get up for any reason, unless specifically instructed by the proctor. A 15-minute break will be offered to all candidates at the halfway point of the examination.
- talk or read the test questions aloud.

Any interruption, including contact with any person other than the examination proctor, or any violation of these test administration rules will result in termination of the online administration of the NCE.

The proctor may provide other directives regarding the examination environment. Failure to follow any instructions or directives from the proctor will result in termination of the examination and forfeiture of the test appointment and NCE registration fee.

Additional Examination Administration Restrictions

- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- A 15-minute break will be offered after the first 100 questions, but no additional time will be given to test.
- Candidates may not eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke during the examination. Candidates may have water in a clear container on your testing surface during the examination.

Break Limitations

Candidates are not permitted to get up or leave their testing space for any reason except for one 15-minute, prescheduled break. This break will be provided after completion of the first 100 questions of the examination. After the break, candidates will not be permitted to return to the first 100 questions. If a candidate leaves their testing space at any time outside of this break, their examination will be terminated, and they you will forfeit their examination appointment and fee.

Examination Process

Candidates are encouraged to review the OnVUE test administration rules and procedures and the FAQ page, which are located on the Pearson VUE website at home.pearsonvue.com/cce/onvue.

Upon accessing the secure examination, candidates will be instructed to show the proctor a full view of the testing area after their identification has been confirmed. Candidates will be monitored by video and audio throughout the examination session.

A nondisclosure agreement (NDA) will appear on the screen and the terms of the agreement must be agreed to in order to proceed with the examination. Candidates will have 5 minutes to agree to the NDA or the examination will terminate.

After agreeing to the terms of the NDA, each candidate will be provided with a 10 minutes examination tutorial that reviews how to navigate and respond to the examination items. Upon completion of the tutorial, candidates will begin the timed examination.

Candidates will have 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete this examination. The computer tracks the time spent on the examination, and a digital clock appearing on the computer screen indicates the time remaining to complete the examination. Once the time expires, the examination will terminate.

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. The candidate indicates their choice by clicking the option using the mouse. To change an answer, simply click on the alternate option using the mouse. The candidate may change their answer as many times as they wish before the examination time limit. Going back to review questions is permitted if needed. Candidates are encouraged to provide an answer for every examination question before ending the examination, as there is no penalty for guessing.

Examination Rules and Requirements

Regardless of test delivery format selected by the candidate (i.e., in-person or online test administrations), candidates will be required to comply with all NBCC/CCE and Pearson VUE test administration policies, rules, instructions, and security requirements, including the Pearson VUE Candidate Rules Agreement, which can be reviewed on the following website: home.pearsonvue.com/Clients/CCE/Rules-Agreements.aspx.

Misconduct

Candidates must not engage in any prohibited conduct during the examination, including, but not limited to:

- Cheating
- Using any unauthorized materials or communication devices, such as cell phones, PDAs, smart watches, or pagers
- Accessing other computer programs, applications, or content during the examination
- Communicating with other candidates or other persons during the test administration
- Being abusive to, or otherwise uncooperative with, the proctor and/or test administrator
- Interruptions where others enter or walk through the testing room
- Copying, or attempting to make copies of, any examination materials, including, without limitation, any questions, answers, or screen images; this includes taking photos or videos of computer screens, even if attempting to document a technical problem or other issue
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else
- Being observed with notes, books, or other aids
- Participating in any data dump activities (e.g., sharing specific test questions and content with others)
- Reading aloud or mouthing the questions and answer choices
- Looking around the room
- Taking an unauthorized break in test centers
- Taking an unscheduled break in the OnVUE examination
- Eating, chewing gum, smoking, or having a drink, other than water in a clear container
- Asking the proctor or examination administrator questions about the examination content
- Any other behavior deemed as misconduct or suspicious activity as reported by examination administrators or proctors

If NBCC/CCE or Pearson VUE determines that a candidate has acted contrary to any applicable NBCC/CCE or Pearson VUE test administration policy, rule, procedure, or instruction, or the terms of the Test Administration and Confidentiality Agreement, the candidate's examination may be terminated and/or their scores may be invalidated by NBCC. Additionally, a candidate may be subject to appropriate corrective actions and/or sanctions, including, but not limited to, ineligibility for any future NBCC tests.

Examination Materials Ownership

The NCE, including all test questions and answers, is confidential and cannot be provided to any other person(s). NBCC owns all rights, titles, and interests related to the NCE and all examination-related materials, including trademark and copyright interests and rights.

Candidates are prohibited from: copying, or attempting to make copies of any examination materials, including, without limitation, any questions, answers, or screen images; disclosing, reproducing, using, or transmitting any examination material, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, verbal or written, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose; and, reconstructing, or attempting to reconstruct, any NCE questions or answers from memory in any form, or discussing any of the content of the NCE with any other person(s). Candidates are strictly prohibited from taking photos or videos of any examination materials, including but not limited to the content of the examination, even if attempting to provide documentation of a technical problem or other issue.

Following the Examination

Upon completion of the examination, candidates will be asked to complete a short evaluation of their examination experience. Test center candidates will then be instructed to report to the examination proctor to receive their unofficial score report, which includes the candidate's photograph. Candidates taking the examination through OnVUE will be able to access their score report information from their dashboard. They will log in to their Pearson account and select the "View/Print Score Report" option at the top right of the login page. If this option is not available, they should contact Pearson's customer service at 866-904-4432 to request a copy.

Within 30 days of the end of the monthly test administration cycle, CCE will automatically report official scores to the candidate's state licensing agency after verifying that the candidate complied with all test administration policies, rules, procedures, and instructions during the examination administration. It is not necessary to submit a Score Verification Request for the official score report to be sent to the State Board for which the examination was taken. There will be a \$30 processing fee deducted for any refunded Score Verification Request fees.

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.

Pass/Fail Score Determination

The examination score is determined only by the candidate's performance on the NCE. Work history, quality of work, or other personal or professional variables do not constitute or otherwise substitute examination 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 Subject Matter Expert 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 candidates.

The passing score and score candidate's receive on the version of the examination 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.

If you pass the examination, your official score will be forwarded to your state licensure board within 30 days of the end of the testing cycle. You should contact your state board for the next steps for licensure.

If you do not pass the examination, you may take the examination once every 30 days. You can reregister by submitting a new examination registration with the appropriate fee.

You may submit comments about the examination content, which will be shared with the NCE Subject Matter Expert Committee.

Scores Canceled by NBCC, CCE, or Pearson VUE

NBCC, CCE, and Pearson VUE are responsible for the validity and integrity of the scores they report. On occasion, occurrences such as misconduct by a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. NBCC, CCE, and Pearson VUE reserve the right to void or withhold examination results if, upon investigation, violation of their regulations are discovered.

If you pass the examination, your official score will be forwarded to your state licensure board within 30 days of the end of the testing cycle. You should contact your state board for the next steps for licensure.

If you do not pass the examination, you may take the examination once every 30 days. You can reregister by submitting a new examination registration with the appropriate fee.

You may submit comments about the examination content, which will be shared with the NCE Subject Matter Expert Committee.

Score Verification Requests

Candidates can order an official score report by submitting a completed Score Verification Request form, with payment, through their Credentialing Gateway Account. This form is also available at cce-global.org/Assets/StateLicensureCandidates_score-verification-form.pdf.

Please note: Within 30 days of the **end** of the monthly test administration cycle, CCE will **automatically** report official scores to the candidate's state licensing agency after verifying that the candidate complied with all test administration policies, rules, procedures, and instructions during the examination administration. It is not necessary to submit a Score Verification Request for the official score report to be sent to the State Board for which the examination was taken. **There will be a \$30 processing fee deducted for any refunded Score Verification Request fee.**

Appealing Examination Results

In the event that a candidate wishes to appeal a failing test result, the candidate must satisfy the requirements in the NBCC/CCE Examination Appeals Policy located on the NBCC website at [nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC CCE Examination Appeals Policy.pdf](https://nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC_CCE_Examination_Appeals_Policy.pdf) and complete all appeal submission requirements. Failure to follow the appeal instructions identified in this Policy will result in rejection of the appeal.

A free retake of the examination is the only remedy for an accepted and approved appeal. The candidate's test score will not be changed or modified.

Appendix A

Job Analysis and Content Outline

The most recent job analysis was finalized in June 2019, with the content outline drafted and approved by the NCE Subject Matter Expert (SME) Committee.

The committee's responsibilities included, but were not limited to, identifying components of the profession and related job tasks, crafting survey items, and reviewing the format of the instrument to measure those components and tasks. Development of the job analysis survey was completed at the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) over the course of one calendar year. The committee also evaluated the examination content for alignment with the eight CACREP content areas following the creation of the content outline to provide valuable information to examinees.

The table below represents the six domains (work behaviors) and the percent and number of scored items on the NCE for each of the domains.

Domain	Percent of items	Number of Scored items
Professional Practice and Ethics	12	19
Intake, Assessment, and Diagnosis	12	19
Areas of Clinical Focus	29	47
Treatment Planning	9	14
Counseling Skills and Interventions	30	48
Core Counseling Attributes	8	13
Total	100	160

Below are the six empirically validated work behaviors of knowledge, skills, and tasks.

1. Professional Practice and Ethics

This section encompasses counselors' knowledge, skills, and abilities related to maintaining proper administrative and clinical protocols.

- A. access your (the counselor) competency to work with a specific client
- B. understand statistical concepts and methods in research
- C. practice legal and ethical counseling
- D. clarify counselor–client roles
- E. discuss client's rights and responsibilities
- F. discuss limits of confidentiality
- G. explain counselor agency policies
- H. review payment, fees, and insurance benefits
- I. explain counseling processes, procedures, risks, and benefits

- J. explain uses and limits of social media
- K. inform clients about the legal aspects of counseling
- L. obtain informed consent
- M. discuss confidentiality as it applies to electronic communication
- N. establish group rules, expectations, and termination criteria
- O. assess competency to provide informed consent
- P. monitor the therapeutic relationship and build trust as needed
- Q. review client records
- R. provide adequate accommodations for clients with disabilities
- S. provide information to third parties
- T. provide referral sources if counseling services are inadequate/ inappropriate
- U. advocate for professional and client issues
- V. seek supervision/consultation
- W. create and maintain documentation appropriate for each aspect of the counseling process
- X. awareness and practice of self-care

2. **Intake, Assessment, and Diagnosis**

This section encompasses counselors' knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively conduct client intake, assessment, and diagnosis.

- A. conduct a biopsychosocial interview
- B. conduct a diagnostic interview
- C. conduct cultural formulation interview
- D. conduct an initial interview
- E. determine diagnosis
- F. perform a Mental Status Exam (MSE)
- G. consider co-occurring diagnoses
- H. determine level of care needed
- I. determine the appropriate modality of treatment
- J. assess the presenting problem and level of distress
- K. evaluate an individual's level of mental health functioning
- L. screen clients for appropriate services
- M. select, use, and interpret appropriate assessment instruments
- N. use formal and informal observations
- O. assess for trauma
- P. assess substance use
- Q. obtain client self-reports
- R. evaluate interactional dynamics
- S. conduct ongoing assessment for at-risk behaviors (i.e., suicide, homicide, self/other injury, and relationship violence)
- T. use pre-test and post-test measures to assess outcomes
- U. evaluate counseling effectiveness

3. **Areas of Clinical Focus**

This section encompasses counselors' knowledge and skills related to areas of clients' concern(s).

- A. adjustment related to physical loss/injury/medical condition
- B. aging/geriatric concerns

- C. behavioral problems
- D. bullying
- E. caregiving concerns
- F. cultural adjustments
- G. end-of-life issues
- H. fear and panic
- I. financial issues
- J. gender identity development
- K. grief/loss
- L. hopelessness/depression
- M. loneliness/attachment
- N. hyper/hypo mental focus
- O. intellectual functioning issues
- P. insomnia/sleep issues
- Q. maladaptive eating behaviors
- R. remarriage/recommitment
- S. developmental processes/tasks/issues
- T. obsessive thoughts/behaviors
- U. occupation and career development
- V. physical issues related to anxiety
- W. physical issues related to depression
- X. physical/emotional issues related to trauma
- Y. process addictions (pornography, gambling)
- Z. racism/discrimination/oppression
- AA. religious values conflict
- AB. retirement concerns
- AC. ruminating and/or intrusive thoughts
- AD. separation from primary care givers
- AE. sexual functioning concerns
- AF. sleeping habits
- AG. spiritual/existential concerns
- AH. stress management
- AI. substance use/addiction issues
- AJ. suicidal thoughts/behaviors
- AK. terminal illness issues
- AL. visual/auditory hallucinations
- AM. worry and anxiety
- AN. adoption issues
- AO. blended family issues
- AP. child abuse-related concerns
- AQ. child development issues
- AR. dating/relationship problems
- AS. divorce
- AT. family abuse/violence (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional)
- AU. interpersonal partner violence concerns
- AV. marital/partner communication problems
- AW. parenting/co-parenting conflicts
- AX. emotional dysregulation

4. **Treatment Planning**

This section encompasses counselors' knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop an effective course of treatment.

- A. collaborate with client to establish treatment goals and objectives
- B. establish short- and long-term counseling goals consistent with clients' diagnoses
- C. identify barriers affecting client goal attainment
- D. identify strengths that improve the likelihood of goal attainment
- E. refer to different levels of treatment (e.g., outpatient, inpatient, residential)
- F. refer to others for concurrent treatment
- G. guide treatment planning
- H. discuss termination process and issues
- I. discuss transitions in group membership
- J. follow-up after discharge
- K. use assessment instrument results to facilitate client decision-making
- L. review and revise the treatment plan
- M. engage clients in review of progress toward treatment goals
- N. collaborate with other providers and client support systems (documentation and report writing)
- O. discuss with clients the integration and maintenance of therapeutic progress
- P. educate client to the value of treatment plan compliance

5. **Counseling Skills and Interventions**

This section encompasses counselors' knowledge, skills, and abilities to conduct effective counseling.

- A. align intervention with client's developmental level
- B. align intervention with counseling modality (individual, couple, family, or group)
- C. align intervention with client population (e.g., veterans, minorities, disenfranchised, disabled)
- D. implement individual counseling in relation to a plan of treatment
- E. establish therapeutic alliance
- F. apply theory-based counseling intervention(s)
- G. address addiction issues
- H. address cultural considerations
- I. address family composition and cultural considerations
- J. evaluate and explain systemic patterns of interaction
- K. explore family member interaction
- L. explore religious and spiritual values
- M. guide clients in the development of skills or strategies for dealing with their problems
- N. help clients develop support systems
- O. help facilitate clients' motivation to make the changes they desire
- P. improve interactional patterns
- Q. provide crisis intervention
- R. educate client about transference and defense mechanisms
- S. facilitate trust and safety
- T. build communication skills
- U. develop conflict resolution strategies
- V. develop safety plans
- W. facilitate systemic change
- X. provide distance counseling or telemental health
- Y. provide education resources (e.g., stress management, assertiveness training, divorce adjustment)
- Z. provide psychoeducation for client

- AA. summarize
- AB. reframe/redirect
- AC. facilitate empathic responses
- AD. use self-disclosure
- AE. use constructive confrontation
- AF. facilitate awareness of here-and-now interactions
- AG. facilitate resolution of interpersonal conflict
- AH. use linking and blocking in a group context
- AI. management of leader–member dynamics
- AJ. model giving and receiving of feedback
- AK. address impact of extended families
- AL. contain and manage intense feelings
- AM. explore the influence of family of origin patterns and themes
- AN. address the impact of social support network
- AO. use “structured” activities
- AP. promote and encourage interactions among group members
- AQ. promote and encourage interactions with the group leader
- AR. use psychoeducation as a part of the group process
- AS. explain phases in the group process
- AT. identify and discuss group themes and patterns
- AU. create intervention based on the stage of group development
- AV. challenge harmful group member behaviors
- AW. address the potential interaction of members outside of the group

6. Core Counseling Attributes

This section encompasses behaviors, traits, and dispositions of effective counselors.

- A. awareness of self and impact on clients
- B. genuineness
- C. congruence
- D. demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to gender orientation and gender issues
- E. demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to multicultural issues
- F. demonstrate conflict tolerance and resolution
- G. empathic attunement
- H. empathic responding
- I. foster the emergence of group therapeutic factors
- J. non-judgmental stance
- K. positive regard
- L. respect and acceptance for diversity
- M. use foundational listening, attending, and reflecting skills

Below are the eight CACREP curriculum educational standards.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice | 5. Counseling and Helping Relationships |
| 2. Social and Cultural Diversity | 6. Group Counseling and Group Work |
| 3. Human Growth and Development | 7. Assessment and Testing |
| 4. Career Development | 8. Research and Program Evaluation |

Appendix B

NCE Sample Examination Questions

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

1. How would a counselor apply cognitive behavioral theory?
 - a. Challenge irrational thoughts.
 - b. Identify repressed feelings.
 - c. Establish defense mechanisms.
 - d. Identify stages of change.

2. How would a counselor build a therapeutic alliance with a client?
 - a. Offer solutions for client problems.
 - b. Determine treatment goals.
 - c. Provide a release of information.
 - d. Give an empathetic response.

3. What is the purpose of using basic attending skills?
 - a. To gain the trust of the client.
 - b. To reinforce the client behavior change.
 - c. To decrease the client's irrational thoughts.
 - d. To link client experiences in a group session.

4. When do group counselors expect members to express genuine thoughts and feelings?
 - a. the initial stage
 - b. the transition stage
 - c. the contemplation stage
 - d. the working stage

5. Which of the following work behaviors are counselors ethically required to follow?
- a. Give free counseling services to 25% of minority clients.
 - b. Provide 10% off of services for clients with children.
 - c. Devote a portion of services for which there is little or no payment.
 - d. Charge clients with higher income more and those with lower income less.
6. What term represents the process in which a counselor and client create a plan to help the client change?
- a. screening
 - b. informed consent
 - c. free association
 - d. goal setting

ANSWER KEY

- 1. A
- 2. D
- 3. A
- 4. D
- 5. C
- 6. D

Pearson VUE Candidate Rules Agreement

Please review and sign the following test rules agreement. Contact the TA if you have any questions. The term TA will be used in this document to mean test administrator, invigilator, and proctor.

1. **No** personal items, including but not limited to mobile phones, hand-held computers/personal digital assistants (PDAs) or other electronic devices, pagers, watches, wallets, purses, firearms or other weapons, hats (and other non-religious head coverings), bags, coats, jackets, eyeglass cases, pens, or pencils, are allowed in the testing room. No barrettes or hair clips that are larger than 1/4-inch (1/2-cm) wide and headbands or hairbands that are larger than 1/2-inch (1 cm) wide are allowed in the testing room. **No** jewelry that is removable and larger than 1/4-inch (1/2-cm) wide is allowed in the testing room. **No** books and/or notes are allowed in the testing room unless authorized by the test program sponsor for your use during the test. You must store all personal items in a secure area as indicated by the TA or return them to your vehicle. If you refuse to store your personal items, you will be unable to test, and you will lose your test fee. All electronic devices must be turned off before storing them in the designated secure area.
2. You will be asked to empty your pockets for the purpose of allowing the TA to verify that nothing is in them. If you have hair that covers your ears, you may be asked to show them for the purpose of allowing the TA to verify that no Bluetooth devices are present. The TA may also ask you to roll up your sleeves to verify that you have no writing on your arms. Before you enter the testing room, you will be asked to pat yourself down (for example: arms, legs, and waistline) to show there is nothing hidden on your body. The test center is not responsible for lost, stolen, or misplaced personal items. **Studying IS NOT allowed in the test center.**
3. Some test program sponsors require TAs to collect a digital photograph and/or digital signature and may digitally authenticate your ID. This is done to verify each candidate's identity and to protect the security and integrity of the test. If required, the TA will obtain this information from you before you enter the testing room. You understand that if there are discrepancies during the check-in process you may be prohibited from entering the testing room, you may not be allowed to reschedule your test appointment, and you may forfeit your test application fee. The identification requirements used during the check-in process are defined by the test sponsor, and the TA has no flexibility to add, delete, or alter this process. Upon entering and being seated in the testing room, the TA will provide you with those materials authorized by the test program sponsor for your use during the test to make notes or calculations on, and you will be provided any other material as specified by the test program sponsor. **You may not remove any of these materials from the testing room or begin writing on your note board until your test has been started.** If you need new or additional materials during the test, you must raise your hand. You must return all items and materials to the TA immediately following the test.
4. The TA will log you into your assigned workstation. You will verify that you are taking the intended test that you registered to take. Unless otherwise instructed, you must remain in your assigned seat until escorted out of the testing room by a TA.
5. Once you have entered the testing room, you may not communicate with other candidates. Any disruptive, threatening, or fraudulent behavior in the testing room may be grounds for terminating your test, invalidating your test results, or disqualifying you from taking the test at a future date.
6. You understand that eating, drinking, chewing gum, smoking, and/or making noise that creates a disturbance for other candidates is prohibited during the test.

7. To ensure a high level of security throughout the testing experience, you will be monitored at all times. Both audio and video may be recorded.
8. Break policies are established by the test program sponsor. Some tests may include scheduled breaks and, if so allowed, instructions will appear on the computer screen at the appropriate time. It is important to note that whether or not the test time stops depends on the test program sponsor's policy. If you take an **unscheduled break** at any other time or if you take a break during a test in which the test program sponsor has not scheduled a break, the test time will not stop. The TA will set your workstation to the break mode, and you must take your ID with you when you leave the room. The TA will check your ID before escorting you back to your seat and will then resume your test.
9. If you are taking **any break, you MUST receive permission from the TA PRIOR to accessing personal items that have been stored** (except for comfort aids, medication, and food, which you may access without permission). Unless specifically permitted by the test program sponsor, personal items that cannot be accessed during any break include but are not limited to mobile phones, test notes, and study guides.
10. You must leave the testing room for all breaks. **If you want to leave the test center building during any breaks, verify with the TA whether your test program sponsor permits you to leave the building.**
11. You must follow all of the appropriate check-in and check-out processes as defined by your test program sponsor. This may include the need to show identification when leaving and re-entering the testing room. Before re-entering, you will be asked to pat yourself down again (for example: arms, legs, and waistline) to show there is nothing hidden on your body. Unless otherwise instructed, the TA will escort you to your assigned workstation and resume the test for you so that you may continue with your test.
12. If you experience any problems or distractions or if you have other questions or concerns, you must raise your hand, and the TA will assist you. The TA cannot answer questions related to test content. If you have concerns about a test question or image, make a note of the item (question) number, if available, in order for the item to be reviewed.
13. After you finish the test, you may be asked to complete an optional on-screen evaluation.
14. Unless otherwise instructed, after you have completed the test you must raise your hand, and the TA will come to your workstation and verify that your test session has ended properly. Depending on the type of test taken, the test program sponsor may display your test score on the computer screen after you have completed the test; or you may be provided with a printed score report; or you may be provided with a confirmation notice indicating that you have completed the test program sponsor's test. If printed information is to be provided to you, you must present your ID again to the TA and return any and all materials supplied to you prior to the beginning of your test. You must not leave any materials at your testing workstation after you have completed your test.
15. You may not remove copies of test questions or test answers from the testing center, and you may not share or discuss with anyone all or any of the test questions or test answers you saw or viewed during the taking of the test. If you do not abide by these rules, if you tamper with the computer, or if you are suspected of cheating, appropriate action will be taken, including the possibility of the test program sponsor taking action against you.

Your Privacy: Your test results will be encrypted and transmitted to Pearson VUE and the test sponsor. The test center does not retain any information other than when and where your test was taken. The Pearson VUE Privacy and Cookies Policy provides additional information, which you can obtain by visiting the Pearson VUE website at www.pearsonvue.com or by contacting the Pearson VUE call center.

By signing below or providing a digital signature:

- I give Pearson VUE my explicit consent to retain and transmit my personal data and test responses to Pearson VUE located in the U.S. and to the test sponsor (either of which may be outside of the country in which I am testing).
- I understand the information provided above and agree to follow these rules in addition to any other program rules I may have agreed to during my registration for this test.
- I understand that if I do not follow the rules or I am suspected of cheating or tampering with the computer this will be reported to Pearson VUE and the test sponsor, and I acknowledge and understand that my test may be invalidated, and the sponsor may take other action such as decertifying me, and I will not be refunded my test fee.

Name (Please print): _____ Date: _____

Signature _____ Exam: _____

A Non-Disclosure Agreement or other security statement may be presented to you before the test begins. If so presented, you must read, acknowledge, and agree to the terms and conditions of such document within the specified time limit, if applicable, in order to begin your test. Should you not agree, you will not be permitted to proceed with taking the test and you may forfeit your test fee. If you select "DECLINE," your test session will immediately end.

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