



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS™

National Certified School Counselor Examination (NCSCE) Additional Information for Candidates

EXAMINATION CONTENT

The National School Counselor Examination (NCSCE) is based on a national job analysis. The purpose of the study was to describe the job activities of professional school counselors in sufficient detail to provide a basis for the development of a professional, job-related certification examination that is in compliance with the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) standards.

A school counselor is required to make important decisions regarding the well-being of students. Therefore, the NCSCE combines traditional multiple choice items with innovative simulated cases to more realistically assess knowledge, skills, and abilities in such decision making.

The NCSCE consists of seven (7) simulated school counseling cases, which assess specific School Counselor Knowledge, and forty (40) multiple choice questions assessing General Counselor Knowledge.

The forty (40) multiple choice questions on the NCSCE will cover the knowledge areas assessed by the *National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification* (NCE®).

The areas covered by the simulations include:

School Counseling Program Delivery (including but not limited to):

- Consult with teachers
- Develop academic intervention plans
- Adapt counseling for diverse populations
- Facilitate conflict resolution among group members
- Counsel the student(s) concerning divorce
- Conduct violence prevention activities
- Engage in ongoing evaluation of school counseling program

Assessment and Career Development (including but not limited to):

- Evaluate student's social functioning
- Assess student's strengths and weaknesses
- Assist student in understanding test results
- Use test results for student decision making
- Use interest inventories
- Provide career counseling for student(s)

Program Administration and Professional Development (including but not limited to):

- Obtain student's evaluation of counseling outcome(s)
- Manage school counseling program
- Read relevant professional literature
- Use resources to apply relevant legal statutes and regulations
- Use technology for program data management

Counseling Process Concepts & Applications (including but not limited to):

- Counsel student(s) concerning personal change
- Assess potential for student to harm self/others
- Evaluate student's progress toward counseling goals
- Assess student's psychological functioning
- Explain counselor and student roles
- Develop behavior management plans
- Assess need for student referral

Family-School Involvements (including but not limited to):

- Consult with parents
- Counsel student(s) concerning lifestyle change
- Counsel student(s) concerning substance abuse
- Facilitate family conflict resolution strategies
- Educate student(s) regarding human growth and development

EXAMINATION FORMAT

School Counselor Knowledge Simulated Cases

Each simulated school counseling case will consist of three components: Scenario, Information Gathering (IG) sections, and Decision Making (DM) sections. Each case begins with a Scenario. The remaining 5 - 8 sections of each simulated case are classified as either IG or DM.

The **Scenario** provides the setting and introductory information (e.g., age, gender, presenting problem(s)).

In **Information Gathering (IG)** sections examinees are to gather all relevant information for answering the question. This might include family background, status of physical health, etc. Read all responses before uncovering the responses that you consider necessary to proceed in response to the presenting issue. You should select only the options that are appropriate at the time. If you select more or less options than are appropriate, this will adversely impact your information gathering score.

Decision Making (DM) sections provide opportunities for making judgments or decisions. These sections may be formatted in one of two ways:

1. **Single Best Option** - There may be more than one acceptable option, but one option is generally regarded most acceptable.
2. **Multiple Options** - Several options are considered appropriate. These sections address decisions in which a combination of actions is required.

In the decision making section described in 1 above, the instructions will be to "CHOOSE ONLY ONE" option. You should not assume that your response is incorrect if you are directed to make another selection. The simulation examination format sometimes uses this direction. The multiple option type of decision making described in 2 will have instructions to "SELECT AS MANY."

General Knowledge Multiple Choice Questions

The 40 questions extracted from the **NCE** to assess the General Counselor Knowledge will appear after the School Counselor Knowledge Section. Each of the items contains an item stem and four response choices.

The items are designed so that there is only one correct response to each item. Responses are recorded on a separate machine-scorable sheet.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

You will be allowed four (4) hours to complete the examination. If you finish early you will be allowed to leave the testing area. You will be requested to arrive at the administration site at either 8:00 a.m. or 8:30 a.m., and the exam will begin at 9:00 a.m. Final notification of required arrival time will be included with Admission Letter.

The procedure for completing a simulated case is different from that of the more common multiple-choice item.

Each simulation problem is identified by a number and the student's name and each section is identified by a letter. Since progression through the individual simulations is not in sequence (that is, one page directly after the preceding page), it is important to make sure the number and student name is for the problem on which you are currently working.

You must use the special latent image marker provided to mark the selection(s) in the area numbered to correspond with the selection in the left-hand column. Use gentle, horizontal strokes with the marker across the latent image response area. Continuous or hard rubbing will obliterate the response. Printed information will appear in two to three seconds and provide you with the information selected, indicate the consequences of your action, or direct you to the next section for consideration. Two asterisks (**) indicate that a complete response for that box has been uncovered.

After each section is completed, care should be taken to follow the exact directions regarding the next section. Remember, the route through the simulation is **NOT** in alphabetical order (A-B-C-D...). Make sure you go to the section last indicated and that you are still in the correct problem (check student name). For example, you may be directed to go from section A to section F, then to section B. The directions "END OF THE PROBLEM. PLEASE PROCEED TO SIMULATION __.**, " indicate that the simulation problem has been completed.

TIPS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND AVOID ERRORS

1. Follow all instructions precisely. Do not uncover more than one selection in the DM sections unless instructed to do so. Be sure to go to the sections in the order in which you are directed.
2. Review the student name and the section heading before marking a response to determine that the correct section is being completed.
3. Carefully read all of the options for selection in a section before you uncover the response to make sure you have chosen correctly. The purpose of information gathering sections are not to arrive at a decision with a minimum number of choices, but rather to measure your ability to select all of the information that is relevant and necessary for the highest standards of practice.
4. Verify that the response number corresponds to the selection number before uncovering the response with the latent image pen.
5. **Once a selection has been highlighted with the latent image pen, there is no opportunity to change a selection even if it was developed by mistake.** Responses must be completely developed once the process has been initiated.
6. Do not uncover responses you do not think answer the question.
7. Use gentle, horizontal strokes with the latent image pen; rubbing will obliterate the response.
8. Try to visualize what would be done in a real practice setting in the decision making sections. Do not try to second guess what the problem authors want by thinking "Now what do they want me to do?" Instead think, "What is the best approach?" Select the best alternative(s) from the options provided.

SAMPLE SCHOOL SIMULATION PROBLEM

The following is an example of an IG section as it might appear in a problem on the National School Counselor Examination (NCSCE). Remember that in an actual problem there will be 5-8 sections and 4-14 selections per section (depending on the nature of the section). The responses in the shaded right-hand column are uncovered here. In an actual exam you will not be able to see the response unless you select and uncover it with the latent image pen.

Simulation 1 - Group You are working as an elementary school counselor at a school in which the majority of students receive free or reduced lunch. During the previous seven months, you have completed three six-session small group counseling activities about divorce adjustment for 5th graders.

Section A - Group

In order to provide accountability information for the school administrator, you should?

(SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section.)

| | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| A-1. | Interview each student in group | A-1. | The students report having found the group helpful ** |
| A-2. | Have the students tell the principal about the group | A-2. | Principal doesn't have the time to listen to them all ** |
| A-3. | Administer self-concept inventory | A-3. | Improved self-concept over baseline ** |
| A-4. | Monitor grades over next grading period | A-4. | Grades declined slightly ** |
| A-5. | Administer a personality inventory | A-5. | Parents won't give permission ** |

7-9 more choices would appear here on a complete problem.

When you have completed your selections in this section, **UNCOVER RESPONSE A-13**

| | |
|-------|---------------------|
| A-13. | Go to section D. ** |
|-------|---------------------|

The following is presented as examples of the multiple choice items which appear on the examination; actual items will vary from these examples by length, content, and difficulty level but not by format.

1. The counseling technique in which the counselor intensifies the client's emotional state in order to help the client understand the irrationality of the emotional reaction is known as
 - A. confrontation
 - B. paradoxical intention
 - C. systematic desensitization
 - D. reconfiguration
2. A person got a score of 83 on a norm-referenced test. This means that the person
 - A. mastered 85% of the material covered in the test
 - B. achieved a score better than 83% of those taking the test
 - C. answered 83 questions correctly
 - D. insufficient information
3. In the context of group counseling, members that are high conformity also tend to be high in
 - A. independence
 - B. authoritarianism
 - C. intelligence
 - D. superiority
4. The concept of "career maturity" has been described and researched most extensively by
 - A. Crites
 - B. Hoyt
 - C. Tiedeman
 - D. Ginzberg
5. When persons who are characteristically shy and withdrawn participate in "assertiveness training," initially they experience uncertainty and self-doubt. Counselors refer to this social psychological concept as
 - A. cognitive dissonance
 - B. dissociation
 - C. individuation
 - D. acculturation

5. A
4. A
3. B
2. D
1. B

Answers:

SAMPLE SCHOOL COUNSELING SIMULATION PROBLEM

The following is an example of a simulation as it might appear in a problem on the National School Counselor Examination (NCSCE). Remember that in an actual problem there will be 5-8 sections and 4-14 selections per section (depending on the nature of the section). The responses in the shaded column are uncovered here. In an actual exam you will not be able to see the response unless you select and uncover it with the latent image pen. In the right hand column a justification is provided for each response. Please remember in an actual problem justifications will not be provided. The weight for each option is also provided in this sample problem. Weights will not be shown in the actual NCSC exam problems. Remember the route through the simulation is **not** in alphabetical order (A-B-C-D....).

Section A

You are working as an elementary school counselor at a school in which the majority of students receive free or reduced lunch. You plan to conduct small group counseling about divorce adjustment for 5th graders. Each of the three groups will last for a period of six weeks.

What information should be gathered before the small groups are conducted?

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|--|-----------------|---|----------------------|---|
| A-1. | [-1] Reduced/free lunch status of group participants | A-1. | None are in this program. ** | A-1. | Status is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-2 | [+2R] Parents current marital situation | A-2 | Some of their parents are legally divorced, some are separated, and some intend to separate. ** | A-2 | Parents' current marital status is the justification for group inclusion. |
| A-3. | [+1] Homework submission frequency | A-3. | Most report having difficulty completing homework assignments. ** | A-3. | Research indicates stress levels may cause academic decline. |
| | | | | | |

Section A – continued

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|--|-----------------|--|----------------------|--|
| A-4. | [+1] Level of anxiety | A-4. | Group members are well above average in anxiety level. ** | A-4. | Increased anxiety is commonly associated with parental marital distress. |
| A-5. | [-1] Standardized achievement test results | A-5. | Students test scores varied widely. ** | A-5. | This is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-6. | A-6 [-1] Students' favorite movies | A-6. | Harry Potter, Hulk, Scooby Doo ** | A-6. | This is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-7. | [-1] Students' favorite recording artists | A-7. | Dixie Chicks and Brittany Spears ** | A-7. | This is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-8. | [-1] Extracurricular activities | A-8. | Varied activities ** | A-8. | This is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-9. | [-1] Average number of hours of TV watched per day | A-9. | Two and one-half hours ** | A-9. | This is not an appropriate eligibility criterion. |
| A-10 | [+2R] Number of people outside the group that each group member can talk to about their problems | A-10 | Each has at least one significant support person (e.g., member of extended family, spiritual leader, or club advisor) ** | A-10 | An effective support network is vital to students' positive adjustment. |
| A-11 | [+1] Self-report of current level of adjustment to their respective situations | A-11 | Most report having a lot of difficulty ** | A-11 | Students' opinions help define group goals. |
| A-12 | [+1] Angry behaviors observed | A-12 | Various intensity levels ** | A-12 | It provides a base-line for a variety of important considerations such as accountability, goal setting, coping mechanisms and outcome evaluations. |

Section A continued

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|--|
| A-13 | [-2] Parents' sexual orientations | A-13 | Not asked ** | A-13 | It will cause harm by alienating the counselor from the students and violates the ethical principal to maintain the integrity of the relationship. |
| A-14 | Go to Section C. ** | | | | |

Section B

Once you have completed discussing accountability results with the principal, which of the following most accurately describes ethical behavior?

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|---|-----|---|
| B-1 | [+2] Obtain informed consent to use videotaped vignettes for presentation at a counseling conference | B-1 | End of problem. Please proceed to Simulation X ** . (In the actual NCSCCE Exam, when you have reached the end of the problem, you will be asked to proceed to the next problem.) | B-1 | Follows ethical requirements for use of student information |
| B-2 | [-2] Accept a merchandise gift certificate from a grateful parent | B-2 | End of problem. Please proceed to Simulation X ** . | B-2 | Unethical behavior |
| B-3 | [-2] Tell the students' teachers about the information that was shared in the group | B-3 | End of problem. Please proceed to Simulation X ** . | B-3 | Unethical behavior |
| B-4 | [-2] Arrange conferences with each child's parents to discuss your concerns about the effects of divorce on children | B-4 | End of problem. Please proceed to Simulation X ** . | B-4 | Unethical behavior |

Section C

In order to provide accountability information for the school administrator, you should

Choose as many as apply

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|--------|--|----------|---|---------------|---|
| C-1 | [+2R] Conduct pre/post interviews with each student | C-1 | Most students report that the group was helpful. ** | C-1 | Provides data to show change in student attitudes. |
| | | | | | |
| C-2 | [+1] Administer a questionnaire on the counselor's effectiveness | C-2 | Children reported that the counselor was helpful. ** | C-2 | Provides empirical data on counselor effectiveness. |
| | | | | | |
| C-3 | [+1] Monitor grades over next grading period | C-3 | Grades declined slightly. ** | C-3 | Provides empirical data on student academic performance. |
| | | | | | |
| C-4 | [-1] List books read on divorce counseling | C-4 | List provided. ** | C-4 | Information is not relevant. |
| | | | | | |
| C-5 | [-2] Ask the students' friends how they are doing | C-5 | Friends say O.K. ** | C-5 | Unethical behavior. |
| | | | | | |
| C-6 | [-2] Monitor students' blood pressure | C-6 | Not monitored ** | C-6 | Waste of time, resources, and effort. |
| | | | | | |
| C-7 | [+1] Interview one custodial parent for each student | C-7 | Most report better adjustment ** | C-7 | Time intensive, but yields helpful information. |
| | | | | | |
| C-8 | [-1] Have the students list their leisure activities | C-8 | Students aren't having much fun lately ** | C-8 | Information is not relevant. |
| | | | | | |
| C-9 | [+2R] Survey the students' teachers | C-9 | Teachers report that most of the students are doing better ** | C-9 | Provides an indication of students' classroom performance |
| | | | | | |

Section C - continued

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|---|-----------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| C-10 | [-2] Have the students rate each other on degree of adjustment to the divorce | C-10 | Students are confused about the task ** | C-10 | Unethical behavior. |
| | | | | | |
| C-11 | [-1] Have the students tell the principal about the group | C-11 | Principal doesn't have the time to listen to them all ** | C-11 | Inefficient use of time. |
| | | | | | |
| C-12 | Go to Section E. **. | | | | |

Section D

Which of the following would be the most effective ways to present the accountability information to the principal?

Choose as many as apply

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|--------|---|----------|---|---------------|---|
| D-1 | [+2R] Develop a brief written report that summarizes the activities and students' responses to them | D-1 | Principal accepts the report ** | D-1 | Written documentation of the results should always be provided |
| D-2 | [-2] Develop a website and put the students' comments about the group on it | D-2 | Students don't want their comments "publicized" ** | D-2 | Unethical behavior |
| D-3 | [-2] Develop a half-day workshop for the next school faculty/staff meeting | D-3 | Not enough time available on the meeting agenda ** | D-3 | Inefficient use of staff time |
| D-4 | [-1] Meet with the principal and present the results of the sessions orally | D-4 | Principal doesn't want to take notes on what is presented ** | D-4 | Inefficient use of staff time and may lead to ineffective communication |
| D-5 | [-1] Write a journal article about the process and its results | D-5 | Principal doesn't have time to wait for development of a formal manuscript ** | D-5 | Good idea, but not for this purpose |
| D-6 | [+1] List changes the students reported from participation in the group | D-6 | Principal is impressed with these data ** | D-6 | Appropriate to provide indicators of change |

Option D – continued

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|--|-----------------|---|----------------------|---|
| D-7 | [+2R] List teachers' comments about positive changes in the students' classroom performance | D-7 | Principal is impressed with teachers' comments ** | D-7 | Teachers are major stakeholders in this accountability activity |
| D-8 | [+1] Provide visual media showing changes in students' behaviors from before to after the groups | D-8 | Principal can see the changes clearly ** | D-8 | Graphic presentations enhance understanding of results |
| D-9 | Go to Section B ** | | | | |

Section E

Which of the following potential resources would be particularly helpful as you plan to generate accountability information for these activities?

Choose as many as apply

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|--------|---|----------|---|---------------|--|
| E-1 | [+1] Internet search of professional databases | E-1 | Evaluation models found ** | E-1 | Convenient and cost effective way to get information |
| | | | | | |
| E-2 | [+2R] A textbook on research methods | E-2 | Ideas for field-based research are found ** | E-2 | A proven, convenient, and reliable way to get information |
| | | | | | |
| E-3 | [-1] A general textbook on school counseling | E-3 | Only theoretical support is found ** | E-3 | Not intended to provide specific plans for accountability activities |
| | | | | | |
| E-4 | [-1] A teacher who has several of the students in class | E-4 | Teacher doesn't really understand the nature of small group counseling ** | E-4 | Teachers do not have specific training in accountability for school counselors |
| | | | | | |
| E-5 | [-1] The school principal | E-5 | The principal says school counselor should know how to be accountable ** | E-5 | Principals do not have specific training in accountability for school counselors |
| | | | | | |
| E-6 | [-1] The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV, Text Revised | E-6 | Psychopathology not evident in the students ** | E-6 | Resource was not designed as an accountability tool |
| | | | | | |
| E-7 | [+2R] A colleague who is a school counselor | E-7 | Ideas for how to gather the data are shared ** | E-7 | Professional collaboration provides an ethical safeguard |
| | | | | | |
| E-8 | [+1] A computer program for data analysis | E-8 | A spreadsheet program is available ** | E-8 | Easily accessible, efficient, and readily used resource |
| | | | | | |

Option E – continued

| OPTION | | RESPONSE | | JUSTIFICATION | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|----------------------|--|
| E-9 | [-1] District curriculum coordinator | E-9 | District curriculum coordinator doesn't really understand the nature of small group counseling ** | E-9 | District curriculum coordinators do not have specific training in accountability for school counselors |
| E-10 | Go to Section D. ** | | | | |

Suggested Reading

NBCC® does not endorse any particular materials as being effective in preparing for your participation in the NCSCE. The following references are presented only with the potential to be helpful in preparing for the NCSCE. NCSCE performance enhancement is neither implied nor expressed.

School Counselor Knowledge

American School Counselor Association. (2005). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

Erford, B. T. (Ed). (2007). *Transforming the school counseling profession* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Tyson, L. E., & Pedersen, P. B. (Eds.). (2000). *Critical incidents in school counseling* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Thompson, C. L., & Henderson, D.A. (2007). *Counseling Children* (7th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Jacobs, E., Masson, B., Harvill, R. (2006). *Group Counseling: Strategies and Skills*, 5th ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole.

McWhirter, J. J., McWhirter, B. T., McWhirter, A. M., & McWhirter, E.H. (2007). *At-Risk Youth: A Comprehensive Response* (4th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole Publishing.

General Counselor Knowledge

Rosenthal, H. (2002). *Encyclopedia of counseling* (Rev. ed.). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Vacc, N. A., & Loesch, L. C. (2000). *Professional orientation to counseling* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge.

Brown, D., & Srebalus, D. (2002). *Introduction to the Counseling Profession* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.