



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS®

National Counselor Examination (NCE) Handbook

as Part of the National Certified Counselor (NCC) Application

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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

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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 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. For more information on that process, review the candidate handbook at nbcc.org/Assets/StateLicensure/NCE.pdf.
2. You can register as part of the National Certified Counselor (NCC) application, which will be covered in this handbook. The benefit of taking the examination via this method is that it allows you to get a head start on earning your professional credentials.

ABOUT NBCC

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is internationally recognized as a leading provider of national counselor credentialing examinations. Additionally, all 50 states; the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; 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 provides 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 contracts with CCE to oversee the examination process.

ABOUT PEARSON VUE

Pearson VUE is our 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, with regional offices in Australia, China, Dubai, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Pearson VUE provides two administration options for the NCE:

- In-person administration—at a Pearson VUE test center.
- Online administration through Pearson VUE's platform, OnVUE—from the privacy of your home.
 - o To find out more information about the OnVUE process and system requirements, visit nbcc.org/exams/onvue.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

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

EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

When taking the NCE as part of the NCC application, the examination is administered twice a year, in spring and fall. You will have a five-week window to sit for the examination during an administration. As noted, you have the choice to take the NCE in-person at a Pearson VUE test center or online through Pearson VUE's OnVUE platform.

If you choose the in-person administration at a Pearson VUE test center, you will have the option to make an appointment at a test center anytime during your examination administration window. The online administration option through OnVUE will allow you to take the examination online from the privacy of your home during the same administration examination window, with strict security protocols in place to ensure the integrity and security of the testing process and examination content. To find out more information about the OnVUE process, visit nbcc.org/exams/onvue.

EXAMINATION PURPOSE, CONTENT, AND FORM

The National Counselor Examination (NCE) is a 200-question, multiple-choice, non-sectioned examination. 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. See Appendix A for the national job analysis and NCE content outline.

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 a regionally accredited institution.

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

REGISTERING FOR AN EXAMINATION

NCC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You can view the National Certified Counselor Certification Eligibility Policy on our website at nbcc.org/assets/certification/ncc_certification_eligibility_policy.pdf.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

For complete information and regulations, please read the Special Examination Accommodations Policy located on the NBCC website at nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC-CCE_Special_Examination_Accommodations_Policy.pdf.

If you require special examination accommodations (SEA) with your examination, you must request SEA each time you register for the examination—as part of your NCC application or for state counselor licensure.

If you are testing with approved special accommodations, you must schedule your examination via Pearson VUE's toll-free number (800-466-0450, option 3).

If you schedule your examination date prior to confirmation of an approved special accommodation(s) you must forfeit either your accommodation or your scheduled examination date (which you would then need to reschedule).

REGISTRATION PROCESS

This registration process is specific to those taking the NCE as a part of the NCC application.

You have two options for taking the NCE during your administration window:

- In-person at a Pearson VUE test center: You will have the option to schedule a time for your examination at a test center during their business hours.
- Online through Pearson VUE's platform, OnVUE: You will have the option to schedule an appointment to take the examination online from the privacy of your home.
 - o To find out more information about the OnVUE process and system requirements, visit nbcc.org/exams/onvue.

You must register online using your ProCounselor account as part of the NCC application. Navigate to nbcc.org and choose "Login," located in the top right corner of the screen. This will take you to a blue login screen where you can log in with your ProCounselor account. Please ensure the first and last name you use to register for the examination match the name shown on your current government-issued ID. If the name does not match, please contact us immediately so that we can assist in updating your information. Failure to do so may disqualify you from sitting for the examination.

On the NBCC Exam Registration Selection page, select "NCE: National Counselor Examination" from the drop-down menu, confirm the examination cycle for which you are registering, and indicate your preferred examination location. The actual scheduling of the examination time will come later, after you receive an email from Pearson VUE.

If you are unsure of any part of the registration process, please email NBCC at certification@nbcc.org before submitting a registration request or supporting documentation. You cannot schedule an examination appointment with Pearson VUE until you have received the authorization to test email from Pearson VUE.

REGISTRATION EXPIRATION

If you do not take the examination within the allotted five-week administration window, you are considered a “no-show” and must reregister in the next available examination administration.

EXAMINATION REREGISTRATION

If you do not sit for the examination within the allotted five-week window or are unsuccessful in your examination attempt, you may retake the examination during the next available examination administration by reregistering in your ProCounselor account. If you are taking the examination as part of your NCC application, you are allowed three examination attempts in a two-year period. If you are unable to pass the examination within the two-year period, your NCC application will close. A separate reregistration fee is required each time you reregister for the examination.

You also have the option to retake the examination through the “State Counselor Licensure” process through our affiliate, the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE). Your passing score through this process can be used to complete the examination requirement for your NCC application. Please note that additional fees will apply when choosing this administration option.

FEES AND REFUND POLICY

Online payments for the NCC application, including examination fees, must be made by credit card (VISA, MasterCard, or American Express) and are not refundable or transferable.

SCHEDULING AN EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT

After you have successfully registered with NBCC via the NCC application in your ProCounselor account and have been approved to schedule your examination appointment, you will receive an authorization to test email from Pearson VUE with your candidate ID number. This email will arrive about two weeks prior to the opening of the examination window. You may either schedule an appointment for the examination online or by telephone.

You may only schedule an examination appointment with Pearson VUE after you have registered with NBCC and received an authorization to test email.

If you are taking the examination with approved special examination accommodations, you must schedule your examination appointment by phone at 800-466-0450, option 3. See SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES on page 5 for more information.

To Schedule Online

- Retrieve the candidate ID number from your authorization to test email.
- Navigate to pearsonvue.com/nbcc and select “Create Account.”
- Follow step-by-step instructions to select the examination program and register for an examination.

To Schedule via 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.

When scheduling an examination appointment, be prepared to confirm a location (for in-person testing), communicate a preferred date and time for testing, and provide your client ID number. Pearson VUE uses this number only for identification purposes for maintaining candidate records. When you contact Pearson VUE to schedule an examination appointment, you are notified of the time to report for testing (for the online administration) or the time to report to the test center (for the in-person administration).

After scheduling the examination appointment, you will receive a confirmation of examination registration email from Pearson VUE to confirm your scheduled appointment. It will include the registration ID, date, time, appointment length, test center location (if necessary), and approved special accommodation(s), if applicable.

EXAMINATION APPOINTMENT CHANGES

You may reschedule an examination appointment by calling 866-904-4432 (if testing with approved special examination accommodations, call 800-466-0450, option 3). Pearson VUE charges a \$50 fee for rescheduling, and you cannot reschedule less than 24 hours prior to your appointment.

MISSED APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

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

1. Misses an appointment and does not reschedule at least 24 hours before the examination appointment.
2. Arrives more than 15 minutes late for an examination.
3. Violates any Pearson VUE or NBCC rule or disobeys a directive from a Pearson VUE or OnVUE proctor or examination administrator.
4. Engages in any behavior(s) that can be deemed as cheating or unethical at any time during the registration process or examination administration.

New registration and examination fees are required to reregister for the examination.

EXAMINATION DEFERRALS

You may postpone or defer your examination registration to the next available administration without penalty if you contact NBCC at certification@nbcc.org more than 30 days prior to the opening of your examination cycle. If your request is less than 30 days prior to the opening of your examination cycle or if you do not take the examination on your scheduled date, you will be required to pay a reregistration fee to take it during the next examination cycle.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY, INCLEMENT WEATHER, OR POWER FAILURE

In the event of inclement weather, Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation and rescheduling of an examination appointment. An examination appointment will usually be rescheduled if the test center personnel are unable to open the facility. If the power to a test center (or your home if choosing the OnVUE option) is temporarily interrupted during an administration, the examination will restart to the last question you completed.

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

Before learning about the examination process specifics for your chosen administration, please be aware of the following rules that apply to all candidates, whether you are testing in-person at a Pearson VUE test center or online through the OnVUE platform.

MISCONDUCT

Candidates 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, cell phones, PDAs, or smart watches.
- 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.
- Being observed with notes, books, or other aids.
- Participating in any data dump activities or other misuses of provided writing materials.
- Any other behavior deemed as misconduct or suspicious activity as reported by Pearson VUE examination administrators or proctors.

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. Prior to being granted access to any examination questions, all candidates are required to read and agree to a nondisclosure agreement (NDA).

IN-PERSON EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION (PEARSON VUE TEST CENTER)

The examination will be delivered by computer at a Pearson VUE test center. Advanced computer experience or typing skills are not needed. You will be required to select answer choices. On the day of the examination appointment, you should plan to arrive at the test center early. Prior to testing at the Pearson VUE test center, you are required to read and sign the [Pearson VUE Candidate Agreement](#) before you are allowed into the test center. The document outlines what test takers should do if they need help with the examination and other policies.

If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, you will not be admitted and will forfeit your registration fee.

If you are taking an online examination administration, see page 10.

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 test centers, including addresses and driving directions, is available at home.pearsonvue.com/nbcc. Specific address information will also be provided once an examination appointment is made.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

You must have proper identification to gain admission to the test 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. For specific information on identification requirements, please visit home.pearsonvue.com/Policies/1S/English.

SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

NBCC, CCE, and Pearson VUE maintain the highest degree of administration and security standards. The test 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, 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.

It is important to note that Pearson VUE may add other prohibited items and include other restrictions as needed.

EXAMINATION 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. No documents or notes of any kind may be removed from the testing room.
- No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination.
- Breaks may be taken during the examination; however, the examination clock will not stop during any voluntary breaks. You must follow proper Pearson VUE procedures when requesting a break.
- Eating, drinking, chewing gum or tobacco products, vaping, or smoking is not permitted in the test center.

EXAMINATION PROCESS

You will be directed to a testing carrel after your identification has been confirmed. Test takers will be monitored by video 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. You will have five minutes to agree to the NDA or the examination will terminate.

After agreeing to the terms of the NDA, there will be a tutorial for the examination. You will have 10 minutes to review how to navigate and respond to the examination items. Following the examination instructions, you will begin the timed examination by pressing "Start."

You will have 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete this examination. The computer tracks the time you spend on the examination, and the examination terminates if the time allowed is exceeded. A digital clock indicates the time remaining 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. You 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. Going back to review questions is permitted if needed. You are encouraged to provide an answer for every examination question before ending the examination because there is no penalty for guessing.

ONLINE EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION (ONVUE)

The examination will be delivered via computer. Advanced computer experience or typing skills to take the examination are not needed. You will be required to select answer choices. On the day of the examination appointment, you can check in up to 30 minutes before the examination, and up to 15 minutes after the scheduled appointment time. Prior to testing, you are required to read and sign the [Pearson VUE Candidate Agreement](#). The document outlines what test takers should do if they need help with the examination and other policies.

If you check in more than 15 minutes after the scheduled testing time, you will not be allowed to test and will forfeit your registration fee.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- You will be prompted to capture:
 - A photo of your currently valid government-issued ID
 - A real-time photo of yourself
- Note: The first and last name that you used to register for the examination must exactly match the first and last name on the government-issued ID that is presented on the day of the examination. If the identification that you submit does not pass the initial review, you may be asked to submit an alternative option. All required IDs must be issued by the country in which you are testing. If you do not have a qualifying ID issued from the country in which you are testing, a passport from your country of citizenship is required along with a secondary ID. If you have any questions or concerns about the ID requirements, please contact Pearson VUE customer service at home.pearsonvue.com/nbcc/contact.

You must have proper identification to test online. 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. For specific information regarding identification requirements, please visit home.pearsonvue.com/Policies/1S/English.

SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

- You will be required to capture four photos of your testing environment.
- Constant online proctoring/monitoring will be conducted by both artificial intelligence and a VUE-certified proctor via webcam and microphone throughout the examination.
- You must review all submitted information and follow-ups, as needed, with a Pearson team member.

TESTING SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Other individuals (including children) and pets (except service animals) are not allowed in the testing environment. We recommend, if possible, using a room that has a door with a lock to reduce the likelihood that an interruption will occur. You are not permitted to get up or leave your testing computer for any reason except for one 15-minute, prescheduled break. Interruptions (including contact with any person other than the examination proctor) will result in disqualification from the online administration of the NCE. In the event that this happens, you will have to schedule to take the examination at a Pearson VUE test center at a later date.

Additionally, you are not allowed to have textbooks, cell phones, smart watches, or other materials that may have test content information on your desk or within reach in the testing environment. This includes bulletin boards, white boards, or other items on the wall that may contain information relevant to the examination. The Pearson VUE employee may provide other directives regarding the examination environment. Failure to follow any directive from Pearson VUE staff will result in termination of the examination and forfeiture of the examination appointment and fee.

EXAMINATION 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. Eating, chewing gum, or smoking is not permitted during the examination. You may have water in a clear container on your testing surface during the examination.

BREAK LIMITATIONS

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

EXAMINATION PROCESS

We encourage you to review the OnVUE FAQ page: home.pearsonvue.com/Clients/Dell/Online-proctored/OnVUE-Online-Proctored-Exams.aspx.

You will be instructed to show the proctor a full view of the testing area after your identification has been confirmed. Test takers 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. You will have five minutes to agree to the NDA or the examination will terminate.

After agreeing to the terms of the NDA there will be a tutorial for the examination. You will have 10 minutes to review how to navigate and respond to the examination items. Following the examination instructions, you will begin the timed examination by pressing “Start.”

You will have 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete this examination. The computer tracks the time you spend on the examination and the examination terminates if the time allowed is exceeded. A digital clock indicates the time remaining 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. You 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 either before the break or before the examination time limit. Going back to review questions is only permitted within the first 100 questions or during the last 100 questions. After the break, you will not be allowed to return to the previous 100 questions. You are encouraged to provide an answer for every examination question before ending the examination because there is no penalty for guessing.

FOLLOWING THE EXAMINATION

You will receive a total score immediately upon completion of the examination. Within six weeks after the examination, you will receive notification that your examination score has been uploaded to your ProCounselor account. This will be an unofficial score report for your records. You can order an official score verification report to be sent to third parties (such as licensure boards) through your ProCounselor online store. Passing the examination does not guarantee certification. NBCC reserves the right to withdraw or void official scores if it is found that a candidate engaged in misconduct, wrongfully sat for the examination, or violated the conditions of their certification application.

PASS/FAIL SCORE DETERMINATION

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

The passing score and score you 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.

SCORE VERIFICATION

You may request a score verification for yourself or a third party by submitting a completed Score Verification Request form and payment. This form is available in your [ProCounselor](#) online store.

SCORES CANCELED BY NBCC, CCE, OR PEARSON VUE

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

APPEALING EXAMINATION RESULTS

For complete information regarding appeals of failed examination attempts, please read the Examination Appeals Policy located on the NBCC website at nbcc.org/Assets/Policies/NBCC_CCE_Examination_Appeals_Policy.pdf.

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 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 CCE over the course of one calendar year (May 2016–July 2017). 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	130

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

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