NATIONAL COUNSELOR EXAM (NCE)

The National Counselor Exam is just one requirement for the NCC credential or national certification in counseling. In keeping with the voluntary nature of the credential, the NCE may not be used as a departmental comprehensive or as a graduation requirement.

Exam Administrator Role
The exam administrator is identified by the campus coordinator to administer the NCE to registered student applicants on a pre-determined testing date in April and/or October. Because of potential conflicts of interest, the exam administrator may not be involved in grading or awarding academic credit to the examinees. The exam administrator could be a faculty member from a different department, a member of the administrative staff, or a student not planning on taking the NCE during the next two years. The individual should have familiarity with the administration of standardized tests. S/he will arrange for the exam location and any special accommodations approved by NBCC. An Exam Administrators Manual with complete instructions is provided by the NBCC Assessment Department before the exam. The exam booklets and exam roster are mailed to the exam administrator about one week before the exam. NBCC staff members are available on the exam date to resolve any issues which may arise that day. About six weeks after the exam, an honorarium will be mailed to the exam administrator.

Exam Structure
The NCE is a 200-item non-sectioned test that relies on CACREP standards for derivation of content and a job analysis for the derivation of context. Its purpose is to assess knowledge of counseling information that is deemed necessary for effective counselor functioning. While the NCE is primarily a knowledge-based achievement test, it includes some practice related items. CACREP’s eight core areas constitute the eight content domains of the exam and thus form the theoretical basis for it.

Each question contains an item stem and four response choices. There is only one correct response to each item. As much as possible, awkward, difficult, and “tricky” wording has been eliminated. While the exam is scheduled for a 4-hour period, most examinees complete the exam in 2 ½ to 3 hours.

Special Accommodations
Special testing accommodations can be arranged at no cost for students with special needs. Applicant instructions can be found on the back cover of the application. Be sure students check the special accommodations box in #5 on the first page.
Time extensions, reading/recording assistance, and translation dictionaries are examples of special accommodations. Students who cannot sit for the exam on a Saturday for religious reasons may also be accommodated. Students with special needs should include a written request in their application folders along with supporting documentation.

Because of the time required to make special testing arrangements, NBCC asks that these requests be made at least 45 days in advance of the examination date. Accommodations for requests submitted less than 45 days in advance cannot be guaranteed.

**Study Aids**
A list of study guide titles can be found on the NBCC Web site ([www.nbcc.org/study](http://www.nbcc.org/study)). Since these tools are designed for varying learning styles and preferences, NBCC does not endorse any particular one. NBCC itself publishes an Official NCE Preparation Guide for $34.95. It describes the NCE design and construction and includes over 100 sample questions. A complimentary copy is available upon request for new institutions participating in the NCC for Graduate Students application option.

**Site Switching**
Most student examinees appreciate being able to test on campus in a familiar environment. Occasionally someone needs to test elsewhere for personal reasons. And occasionally, a campus may not reach the minimum number of applications (3) necessary for NBCC to offer the exam on campus. In these instances, students may elect to test at one of NBCC’s public testing sites on the same day. Most states have at least two such locations for each exam cycle—October and April. Students who want or need to test away from their universities should place a simple note in the application folder indicating their location preference. Public sites are listed on the NBCC Web site at [http://www.nbcc.org/Assets/Exam/sitelist.pdf](http://www.nbcc.org/Assets/Exam/sitelist.pdf). They must also add $25 to the application fee to cover NBCC’s costs of making the change.

**Exam Scoring**
Fourteen independent scores are generated from the exam—one for each of the eight CACREP content areas, one for each of the five job analysis areas, and one for the sum of correct answers or total. The cutoff or passing score is based on the total score. It is determined by a particular statistical technique-- the modified Angoff method.

Within six to eight weeks of the examination, applicants will receive an individualized score report in the mail itemizing scores for the 13 domains and including a total score. Means and standard deviations are included for each domain and the total for those taking the NCE in that administration. The passing score is indicated along with a designation of whether the examinee met or surpassed the minimum criterion.
Participating institutions will receive aggregate results of the students’ exam performance about 12 weeks after the exam. Individually identifiable statistics are not provided.

**Score Release Policies**

Once students have
- passed the NCE
- graduated and submitted a final transcript,
they may ask (in writing) to have their official NCE score report sent to a third party. The cost is $25. Detailed instructions are on the applicant’s copy of MY NCC GUIDE and are also available at http://www.nbcc.org/Exams/ScoreVerification.

**Deferring or Failing**

Occasionally applicants must miss the exam for personal reasons or must retake the exam. Since they have already applied and been approved to test, NBCC does not ask them to reapply. Instead, they are instructed about how to reregister for the exam.

- To reregister, student applicants will complete the exam reregistration form mailed to them by NBCC about the time of their original testing date. It will have a deadline. If their counselor education program is hosting the exam, they may choose to take it at their alma mater or at one of NBCC’s public testing sites. A list is provided with their reregistration materials. Note: student NCC application folders are only for new, first-time applicants.
- Applicants who notify NBCC by email (certification@nbcc.org) at least 30 days in advance of the test date that they will not be attending will have their examination reregistration fees ($150) waived, but must still submit the reregistration form with their site and date choices.
- When there are extenuating circumstances in the last 30 days before the exam date which will preclude an applicant’s attendance at the exam, the applicant may request a waiver of the reregistration fee. Requests should be made in writing and should be sent with supporting documentation to: NBCC Certification Department (attn: Michelle Gross) 3 Terrace Way, Greensboro, NC 27403