Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)
Content Outline

Examination Purpose

The Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) has developed the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE). The purpose of the CPCE is to assess a student's knowledge of core counseling areas taught in counselor education programs. The CPCE can also provide counselor education programs with the ability to gain an objective view of the effectiveness of their curriculum, offer pre- and post-test comparisons at various points during matriculation, compare student data to national averages, and utilize data in self-studies.

Target Population

The target population for the CPCE is master's-level students enrolled in a graduate-level counselor education program. This counselor education program should have courses in the following content areas:

- Human Growth and Development Theories in Counseling
- Social and Cultural Foundations in Counseling
- Helping Relationships in Counseling
- Group Counseling Theories and Processes
- Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development
- Assessment in Counseling
- Research and Program Evaluation
- Professional Orientation to Counseling

Examination Content

The CPCE includes content aligned with the eight Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) common core areas as defined by their Standards for Preparation:

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 and related life factors.

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.

These eight core areas, which constitute the CPCE, serve as the primary theoretical basis for the examination. It is through these areas that the CPCE is associated with accepted professional standards.

Examination Format and Scores

The CPCE consists of 160 multiple-choice questions (MCQs), with 20 items per CACREP area. Of the 20 items per section, 17 will be scored items and the remaining three will be pretest items that are not identified to the student. These 24 unscored items are used to gather statistical information on item performance for use in future examinations. Both scored and unscored items are of the same structure and are interspersed within the examination. Scores for each section and a total score will be reported to institutions for each student. CCE will provide statistics on the program's students as well as national data. Candidates will have 3 hours and 45 minutes to complete the examination.

The institution may choose to add components to the examination such as essay questions or questions from specialty areas (e.g., addictions counseling, mental health counseling). CCE leaves the responsibility for scoring additional sections to the institution. In addition, the institution is responsible for determining a minimum criterion score for their students.

Table 1. The Weight for Each Domain

	Domain	Percent of Items	Number of Scored Items
1	Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice	12.5	17
2	Social and Cultural Diversity	12.5	17
3	Human Growth and Development	12.5	17
4	Career Development	12.5	17
5	Counseling and Helping Relationships	12.5	17
6	Group Counseling and Group Work	12.5	17
7	Assessment and Testing	12.5	17
8	Research and Program Evaluation	12.5	17

Table 2. Content Outline

I. Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

A.   History and philosophy of the counseling profession and its specialty area

B.   The multiple professional roles and functions of counselors across specialty areas, and their relationships with human service and integrated behavioral health care systems, including interagency and interorganizational collaboration and consultation

C.   Counselors' roles and responsibilities as members of interdisciplinary community outreach and emergency management response teams

D.   The role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of the profession

E.   Advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients

F.   Professional counseling organizations, including membership benefits, activities, services to members, and current issues

G.   Professional counseling credentialing, including certification, licensure, and accreditation practices and standards, and the effects of public policy on these issues

H.   Current labor market information relevant to opportunities for practice within the counseling profession

I.   Ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling

J.   Technology's impact on the counseling profession

K.   Strategies for personal and professional self-evaluation and implications for practice

L.   Self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role

M.   The role of counseling supervision in the profession

II. Social and Cultural Diversity

A.   Multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally

B.   Theories and models of multicultural counseling, cultural identity development, and social justice and advocacy

C.   Multicultural counseling competencies

D.   The impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others

E.   The effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients

F.   Help-seeking behaviors of diverse clients

G.   The impact of spiritual beliefs on clients' and counselors' worldviews

H.   Strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination

III. Human Growth and Development

A.   Theories of individual and family development across the lifespan

B.   Theories of learning

C.   Theories of normal and abnormal personality development

D.   Theories and etiology of addictions and addictive behaviors

E.   Biological, neurological, and physiological factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior

F.   Systemic and environmental factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior

G.   Effects of crisis, disasters, and trauma on diverse individuals across the life span

H.   A general framework for understanding differing abilities and strategies for differentiated interventions

I.   Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for promoting resilience and optimum development and wellness across the life span

IV. Career Development

A.   Theories and models of career development, counseling, and decision-making

B.   Approaches for conceptualizing the interrelationships among and between work, mental well-being, relationships, and other life roles and factors

C.   Processes for identifying and using career, avocational, educational, occupational, and labor market information resources, technology, and information systems

D.   Approaches for assessing the conditions of the work environment on clients' life experiences

E.   Strategies for assessing abilities, interests, values, personality, and other factors that contribute to career development

F.   Strategies for career development program planning, organization, implementation, administration, and evaluation

G.   Strategies for advocating for diverse clients' career and educational development and employment opportunities in a global economy

H.   Strategies for facilitating client skill development for career, educational, and life–work planning and management

I. Methods of identifying and using assessment tools and techniques relevant to career planning and decision-making

J. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for addressing career development

V. Counseling and Helping Relationships

A. Theories and models of counseling

B. A systems approach to conceptualizing clients

C. Theories, models, and strategies for understanding and practicing consultation

D. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for establishing and maintaining in-person and technology-assisted relationships

E. The impact of technology on the counseling process

F. Counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the counseling process

G. Essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills

H. Developmentally relevant counseling treatment or intervention plans

I. Development of measurable outcomes for clients

J. Evidence-based counseling strategies and techniques for prevention and intervention

K. Strategies to promote client understanding of and access to a variety of community-based resources

L. Suicide prevention models and strategies

M. Crisis intervention, trauma-informed, and community-based strategies, such as Psychological First Aid

N. Processes for aiding students in developing a personal model of counseling

VI. Group Counseling and Group Work

A. Theoretical foundations of group counseling and group work

B. Dynamics associated with group process and development

C. Therapeutic factors and how they contribute to group effectiveness

D. Characteristics and functions of effective group leaders

E. Approaches to group formation, including recruiting, screening, and selecting members

F. Types of groups and other considerations that affect conducting groups in varied settings

G. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for designing and facilitating groups

VII. Assessment and Testing

A. Historical perspectives concerning the nature and meaning of assessment and testing in counseling

B. Methods of effectively preparing for and conducting initial assessment meetings

C. Procedures for assessing risk of aggression or danger to others, self- inflicted harm, or suicide

D. Procedures for identifying trauma and abuse and for reporting abuse

E. Use of assessments for diagnostic and intervention planning purposes

F. Basic concepts of standardized and non-standardized testing, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments, and group and individual assessments

G. Statistical concepts, including scales of measurement, measures of central tendency, indices of variability, shapes and types of distributions, and correlations

H. Reliability and validity in the use of assessments

I. Use of assessments relevant to academic/educational, career, personal, and social development

J. Use of environmental assessments and systematic behavioral observations

K. Use of symptom checklists, and personality and psychological testing

L. Use of assessment results to diagnose developmental, behavioral, and mental disorders

M. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment and test results

VIII. Research and Program Evaluation

A. The importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice

B. Identification of evidence-based counseling practices

C. Needs assessments

D. Development of outcome measures for counseling programs.

E. Evaluation of counseling interventions and programs

F. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods

G. Designs used in research and program evaluation

H. Statistical methods used in conducting research and program evaluation

I. Analysis and use of data in counseling

J. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for conducting, interpreting, and reporting the results of research and/or program evaluation

Sample Items

The following sample items are provided as a representation of the sorts of questions that can be asked from the different competency areas.

Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

1. When is assent used in the informed consent process?
    A) with minor clients
    B) with mandated clients
    C) with clients diagnosed as bipolar
    D) with clients on Medicare

Social and Cultural Diversity

2. What is the term used for the study of differential use of space among different ethnic groups?
    A) stance
    B) proxemics
    C) social stature
    D) formality

Human Growth and Development

3. According to Piaget, what evidences an infant's first stage of adaptation?
    A) use of reflexes
    B) hand-to-mouth coordination
    C) attempts to vocalize
    D) eye-to-hand coordination

Career Development

4. What is the organizing concept in Super's career development theory?
    A) self-concept
    B) environment setting
    C) childhood needs
    D) decision-making style

Counseling and Helping Relationships

5. Why would a counselor use open-ended instead of close-ended questions?
    A) to elicit brief responses from the client
    B) to prompt the client to speak more freely*
    C) to demonstrate counselor understanding
    D) to elicit empathy from the client

Group Counseling and Group Work

6. What technique do group leaders use to protect members from harmful behaviors?
    A) blocking
    B) challenging
    C) reframing
    D) retraining

Assessment and Testing

7. Which of the following options is an example of a norm-referenced test?

    A) a mental status examination

    B) an IQ test

    C) a depression test

    D) a math test developed by the teacher

Research and Program Evaluation

8. Which of the following research designs would provide the best evidence for the existence of a causal link?

    A) a pre-test with two group design

    B) a pre- and post-test with two group design

    C) a randomized, post-test, two group design

    D) a randomized, pre-test, one group design

Sample Item	Key
1	A
2	B
3	A
4	A
5	B
6	A
7	B
8	C