



# **National Certified Counselor™ (NCC®) Certification Eligibility Policy**

**March 14, 2024**

## A. POLICY INTRODUCTION

The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) administers a rigorous, examination-based, professional certification program titled as the NBCC National Certified Counselor (NCC) Program. Professional counselors, who wish to be granted the NCC credential, must show that they have completed specific educational and training requirements, and demonstrate an ongoing professional commitment to the field of counseling by satisfying the other requirements of this Program.

Effective as of October 13, 2020, this Policy establishes and explains the NCC eligibility rules, which must be satisfied in order to obtain certification, including the relevant NBCC certification standards, policies, and procedures (NCC Certification Program). Questions concerning this Policy or the certification process should be directed to the Director of Certification and Credentialing Services.

## B. POLICY PURPOSES

The purpose of this Policy is to define the National Certified Counselor (NCC) certification eligibility requirements. Among other rules, the NCC Certification Program establishes valid and appropriate eligibility requirements concerning: professional education necessary for competent practice as a counselor; professional knowledge demonstrated by the completion of a comprehensive examination; and, the reporting of ethics-related matters.

Applicants for NCC certification understand and agree that their professional qualifications, including their education, clinical knowledge, and ethical standing, will be objectively and appropriately evaluated by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and that such NBCC eligibility determinations are final. NBCC has the exclusive authority to make and issue all certification eligibility decisions.

## C. CERTIFICATION EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

In order to qualify for NCC certification eligibility, the applicant must satisfy certain education and training rules, which include specific requirements relative to: educational degree attainment; credit/semester hour fulfillment; counseling-related content completion; and, supervised counseling field experience. Consistent with the terms of this Policy, applicants must complete the following educational requirements in order to be eligible for certification.

1. **Degree Requirement:** A Masters, Education Specialist/Educational Specialist, Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS), or Doctoral Degree (graduate degree) in counseling from either a CACREP Accredited degree program or a counseling program administered by a regionally accredited educational institution is required for eligibility for NCC certification.

[NOTE: Graduate degrees, other than Masters, Education Specialist/Educational Specialist, Certificate of Advanced Study, and Doctoral Degrees in counseling, may not qualify for NCC certification eligibility, and will be subject to NBCC review and approval. Such degree reviews will determine whether the degree is properly aligned with approved graduate-level counseling program content. NBCC has the exclusive authority to make all decisions concerning the eligibility of non-counseling degrees for NCC certification.]

2. Credit/Semester Hours Requirement: The successful completion of at least forty eight (48) semester hours or seventy two (72) quarter hours of graduate-level coursework taken from a CACREP Accredited program, or a counseling program administered by a regionally accredited institution.
  
3. Counseling-Specific Content Requirement: The submission of a qualified institution verified transcript from a qualifying institution showing the completion of graduate-level courses addressing the following nine (9), required content areas:
  - a. Human Growth and Development Theories in Counseling
  - b. Social and Cultural Foundations in Counseling
  - c. Helping Relationships in Counseling
  - d. Group Counseling Theories and Processes
  - e. Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development
  - f. Assessment in Counseling
  - g. Research and Program Evaluation
  - h. Professional Orientation to Counseling
  - i. Counseling Field Experience

[NOTE: All courses, except Counseling Field Experience, must carry (include) at least two (2) semester or three (3) quarter hours of graduate-level credit. The transcript must document the completion of at least six (6) semester or ten (10) quarter hours of graduate degree-related supervised counseling field experience.]

4. Professional Endorsement Requirement: The submission of a positive endorsement from a professional colleague, who holds a graduate degree in a mental health field. The individual providing the endorsement cannot be related to the applicant by blood or marriage.
  
5. Supervised, Post-Masters Counseling Work Experience Requirement: The successful completion of: at least three thousand (3000) hours of documented, supervised post- graduate counseling work (clinical) experience over a period of at least twenty four (24) months; and, at least one hundred (100) hours of supervision over a minimum period of twenty four (24) months. The applicant's completion of this experience requirement must be verified by the applicant's supervisor(s).

[NOTE: This requirement may be waived where the applicant: is a graduate of a CACREP Accredited program; is a professional counselor fully licensed by a State licensure agency; or, holds a Doctoral degree in counseling from a regionally accredited educational institution.]

6. Verification of Educational Requirements: Educational requirements must be verified by NBCC through the review of an official graduate transcript(s), sealed by the college or university (educational institution), which shows the conferral of a Masters, Education Specialist/Educational Specialist, or Doctoral Degree from a qualifying counseling program. Digital transcripts submitted by the educational institution and bearing the educational institution's digital seal are preferred. Non-degree educational credits related to qualifying counseling program courses must be verified by the submission of an official transcript sealed by the college or university showing the successful completion of such graduate credits in counseling. NBCC also may require the submission of qualifying course syllabi necessary to verify course alignment with the counseling-specific content areas.
7. Certification Educational Eligibility Appeals: Under certain, limited circumstances, an applicant, who is denied eligibility for the NCC certification concerning educational eligibility, may submit an appeal and request for reconsideration of his/her eligibility with respect to the education and training requirements in this Policy Section. All such appeals must be submitted consistent with the requirements of the Application and Certification Appeals Procedures, which is published at: [https://www.nbcc.org/assets/policies/certification\\_eligibility\\_appeals\\_policy.pdf](https://www.nbcc.org/assets/policies/certification_eligibility_appeals_policy.pdf).

#### **D. CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS**

In order to be eligible for the NCC certification, a passing score on the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examinations (NCMHCE) is required. Complete information about the Examinations is published in the relevant Examination Handbooks, which are published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/exams>.

1. Examination Requirements: NCC certification applicants must successfully complete either the National Counselor Examination (NCE), or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE), to fulfill the examination requirement for certification.
  - a. NCE. The NCE measures an applicant's knowledge and understanding of theoretical and skill-based tenets necessary to practice safely and competently as an entry-level counselor. The Examination is composed of two hundred (200) multiple choice questions.
  - b. NCMHCE. The NCMHCE measures an applicant's ability to apply professional knowledge and skills with respect to the evaluation of specific client cases. The Examination assesses an entry-level clinical mental health counselor's ability to use theoretical and skill-based tenets through responses to clinical case simulations. The Examination is composed of eleven (11) clinical mental health counseling cases.

[NOTE: Applicants for State licensure taking the NCE or the NCMHCE must satisfy the educational, examination, and other requirements of the relevant State agency, which may be different from the certification requirements in this Policy.]

2. Special Examination Accommodations: NBCC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and ensures that no applicant with a qualified disability is deprived of the opportunity to take an Examination solely by reason of that disability. NBCC will provide reasonable accommodations

to applicants with disabilities. A complete explanation of the NBCC disability accommodations rules and procedure is provided in the relevant Examination Handbooks, which are published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/exams/accommodations>.

3. **Examination Retest Policy:** An applicant who fails to pass the NCE or the NCMHCE on the first attempt must wait a minimum of 30 days to retake the examination. Such an applicant is permitted to retest up to two (2) additional test administrations through the certification process within two (2) years of his/her original application date. If an applicant fails the Examination for certification three (3) times, or when two (2) years have passed since submission of the certification application, the application will be closed, and a new NCC application must be submitted if the applicant seeks to be certified by NBCC. A separate fee will be required for each examination reregistration.
4. **Examination Appeals:** Under certain, limited circumstances, applicants, who fail to pass the NCE or NCMHCE, may submit an appeal and request another test administration without a re-registration fee. The permitted reasons or grounds for appeal are explained in the NBCC Examination Appeals Policy, and are summarized as follows:
  - a. **Examination Administration Appeals.** The applicant claims that a test administration condition negatively affected his/her ability to complete or pass the Examination, including certain appeals related to: physical test site problems; test computer equipment problems; test administration issues; or, conduct issues concerning test center personnel or others present during the test administration.
  - b. **Special Examination Accommodation Appeals.** The applicant claims that he/she was not provided with an approved special examination accommodation during the test administration, or alleges that another problem existed with respect to a disability accommodation during an Examination administration. An applicant cannot submit an appeal concerning a special disability accommodation that was not previously approved by NBCC.
  - c. **Examination Content Appeals.** The applicant claims that one (1) or more specific Examination items and/or answers are inaccurate or incorrect, and that his/her failure to receive credit for such items and/or answers caused the applicant to fail the Examination.
  - d. **Unacceptable Grounds for Examination Appeals.** As established and explained in the NBCC Examination Appeal Policy, applicant claims and issues concerning a variety of test-related circumstances cannot be the subject of an Examination appeal, including, but not limited to: lack of understanding of test administration policies, instructions, and requirements; test anxiety or nervousness; a personal situation that may have negatively affected the applicant, such as illness, injury, or family problem; errors related to understanding or recording test questions; computer-related problems that are not promptly reported to a proctor, or do not significantly affect the test administration; reasonable and commonly occurring sounds in the testing location; late test arrival; the general validity of the Examination; the Examination passing score; and, a belief that the applicant should have received a passing score on the Examination.

## E. CERTIFICATION ETHICS REQUIREMENT

1. Ethics Requirement: NCC applicants and certificants must ensure that their professional and public behaviors are consistent with the conduct standards set forth in the NBCC Code of Ethics, the Certification Eligibility Ethics Policy, and the Ethics Case Procedures. These important policies are published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/ethics/certification>.
2. Ethics Disclosure Requirement: As a condition of certification eligibility, an applicant must accurately and fully complete the required NCC Application Sections titled Ethics Attestation and Applicant Agreement and Release Authorization, which require the disclosure of all prior legal, criminal, and disciplinary matters related to the applicant. All such Application ethics-related disclosures are reviewed by NBCC in accordance with the NBCC Certification Eligibility Ethics Policy, which is published at: <https://www.nbcc.org/ethics/certification>.