

# **CPCE Study Skills & Test Taking Tips**

**Comps Preparation Program Introduction Session**

# What is involved in the CPCE?

- The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) is used at over 350 universities for the purpose of determining the knowledge of students in the field of counseling.
- There are 160 items on the CPCE with 20 questions in each of the eight content areas.
- The exam is arranged by content area and four hours are allowed for completion.
- Three questions in each of the content areas are developmental in nature and not scored for the test taker so the highest possible number correct for each area is 17 and the total correct on the exam is 136.
- Although the exam comes from NBCC, the criterion for passing or cut-off score is determined by our university: Score of 82 is passing for the CMHC program & 75 for the Social Services Program

# **Eight Content Areas of CPCE**

1. Human Growth and Development
2. Social and Cultural Diversity
3. Helping Relationship
4. Group Work
5. Career Development
6. Assessment
7. Research and Program Evaluation
8. Professional Orientation and Ethical Practices

# Set up of Content Questions for CPCE

- CPCE exam questions are based on material found in the textbooks used by counselor education programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).
- The focus of exam questions is more knowledge-based with fewer application-focused questions than is true for the National Counselor Examination.
- The exam is available in paper-and-pencil version at this time but will be available for computer application in the future for universities which can accommodate that application mode.

# How is the CPCE related to the NCE

- Both exams are developed and managed by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC)
- Using a Practice Exam is a useful preparation tool to prepare for the NCE.
- The content areas are the same on both exams although the CPCE Exam has more recognition/recall and detail oriented questions and fewer application oriented questions than is true of the NCE.
- Graduates of the CACREP Programs can take the NCE at the end of their graduate program and if they pass they can become a National Certified Counselor (NCC)

# How Much Study Time is needed to prepare for the CPCE?

- For many individuals, a plan to review and study for two months before the exam may be sufficient.
- Anxiety about taking examinations in general, or the CPCE in particular, may also motivate review and study activities that may begin several months before the exam date.
- Other uniquely personal issues or circumstances may argue for longer or shorter study periods.

# Plan of Study for CPCE

- Do prepare a plan of study.
- If you are on a two-month schedule, you will want to review at least one content area per week.
- Designate hours each week for study activities
  - put them on your calendar and stay with them.
  - In planning your study, include day hours, not just evening and weekend hours when you would rather be doing anything else but studying.

Each week as you study new content material, don't forget to review 'old' material you studied in previous weeks.

# Use the SQ3R Method in Studying for the CPCE

## SQ3R Method - Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review

### **S = Survey**

- Gives an idea of what you are getting into. Helps determine how long it will take.
- Helps determine how what you already know is related.
- For a book:
  - Read the preface and introduction
  - Read the Table of Contents
  - Look at the visual aids-pictures, graphs, etc.
  - Review reference lists or glossaries
  - Read summaries of chapters
- For a chapter:
  - Try to understand the chapter title
  - Read the headings and subheadings
  - Read the summary
  - Read the captions under pictures, graphs, etc.
  - Scan the reference/bibliography list

# Q = Question

- Ask yourself questions about what you are going to read.
- Questions help you study by focusing attention on the subject matter.
- Questions provide a personal purpose for reading.
- Questions encourage you to look for answers.
- For example: What does the chapter title mean? Heading? Subheading?
- What do I want to learn from this chapter? How is the material related to what I already know?

# R1 = Read

- You will read with more understanding/comprehension if you do the SQ activities first.

As you read:

- Answer the questions you raised in SQ, or the chapter's/book's own questions, that gives a purpose and a sense of direction.
- Read all of the added attractions such as graphs, tables, pictures, etc.
- Read carefully the individual, italicized or bold printed words or phrases. The author thinks these are important.

# R2 = Recite

- Go over what you read in R1 by either orally summarizing what you have just read or by making notes of some kind. We tend to forget 80% of what we read in two weeks; after recitation we forget only 20%.
- Reciting reinforces what you read helps identify mistakes you may have made in your reading.
- Recite as needed-probably more often than once at the end of a chapter. You may want to recite after each section, and perhaps after each subsection.
- Mark and underline selectively, not everything. Read the entire section first, then underline when you recite after you have an overview and know what is important.
- Write an outline if you wish but remember that it is very time consuming.
- Oral summarizing may be especially helpful if you study with someone.

# R3 = Review

- First of all, review the entire chapter/article when you finish reading.
- Read your markings, margin notes or outline and put all the material together.
- Review periodically.
- Plan a final review before taking the exam.
- Give yourself time to make it a thorough, useful review

# Other Suggestions for Studying

- Complete practice exams, take them in one sitting to get used to the time it takes to complete 160 questions
- Record your answers on separate sheets so that you can use the same tests over and over again
- Use study questions as offered in this Comps Prep Program
- The CPCE has questions focused on detail and thus you are likely to see fewer application questions and more recognition-recall questions

# Suggestions for Test Taking

- In taking any exam, there are some rules of thumb to remember.
- One way to help you remember these rules is by using a mnemonic device.
- The word **SCORER** can help you in this process.

# **S = Schedule your time (Scorer)**

- The CPCE has 160 multiple-choice questions.
- This equates to 1.5 minutes per question if you use all four hours allotted
- Remember on the CPCE, all questions carry the same value.

# C = Clue words (sCorer)

- Pay attention to clue words or qualifying phrases. They can change the meaning of a statement tremendously.
- Some clue words to watch for are:

all	always	best
every	usually	worst
most	never	more
some	invariably	less
- Underline these words as you read the question.
- Remember, these clue words might also appear in one of the four alternatives.

# **O = Omit the difficult questions (scOrer)**

- The O rule suggests that you answer the easiest items on the exam first and skip the difficult ones. The plan is to return later to the difficult ones you skipped.
- However, because you have read the difficult items, solution generation may be going on while you continue answering the easier items.
- Later questions might present material that helps with earlier, difficult questions.
- Make a mark in the test booklet by the questions you skipped so you can find them easily later.
- Or, make a list of skipped items on your "scratch" sheet.
- If you skip items in the test booklet, be sure you also skip the same spaces on the answer sheet.

# R = Read carefully (scoRer) Part 1

- Read the instructions for the test and then read each item carefully.
- Read the entire question and stop.
- Do you understand it? If not, read it again.
- Do not read any of the four answers until you understand the question.
- You are apt to confuse yourself and the meaning of the question by reading the alternatives before understanding the question.
- Read the question as it is, watching for clue words.
- Do not read more into the question than is there.

# R = Read carefully (scoRer) Part 2

- You may like True-False questions better than multiple-choice ones.
- You can treat a multiple-choice question as four True-False items.
- Read the question and the first alternative Is it true or false?
- Then go on to the second alternative and so on.
- After going through the four alternatives, you should end with one "True" answer
- If you have more than one, you need to narrow your choices to one and mark that one.
- You may want to try the true-false technique on some of the practice questions you work on before the 'real' exam. See how it works for you. Because it takes longer to work through a question using this approach, plan to use it for only some of the questions, perhaps the long, complex ones.

# E = Estimate (score)

- Estimate here means guessing. There is no penalty for guessing on the CPCE so do not leave any questions unanswered.
- You are encouraged to use the **Omit** rule for the difficult questions. When you go back to a difficult item, eliminate as many of the distractors (alternatives) as you can, and then guess if you still need to. Some guessing strategies have been proposed.

Use these guessing strategies:

1. 'Go for the flow.' Pick the answer that seems to 'flow' the most smoothly from the question.
2. Go for 'content.' Select content in the answer that fits the content (concepts) mentioned in the question.
3. Pay attention to 'general' versus 'specific.' Choose the answer that deals with the concepts/material at the same level of 'generality' or 'specificity' as found in the question.

# R = Review (scoreR)

- Use all the time you are allotted by reviewing your answers. You may be sick of the exam by then, but review the items, especially those you may have had questions about.
- You may have an hour or more left of your four hours when taking the CPCE.
- Do not change your answers too quickly.
- Many individuals have a regular pattern of changing a correct answer

# **Plan of Action of Comps Prep Program**

Week 1: Study Skills & Test Taking Tips-Homework: Practice Test & Unit 1

Week 2: Unit 1 Human Growth & Development - Homework: Unit 2

Week 3: Unit 2 Social and Cultural Diversity - Homework: Unit 3

Week 4: Unit 3 Helping Relationship - Homework: Unit 4

Week 5: Unit 4 Group Work - Homework: Unit 5

Week 6: Unit 5 Career Development - Homework: Unit 6

Week 7: Unit 6 Assessment - Homework: Unit 7

Week 8: Unit 7 Research and Program Evaluation - Homework: Unit 8

Week 9: Unit 8 Professional Orientation and Ethical Practices – Post-Test