



8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3492

1.800.284.2378
301.628.5000 *tel*
301.628.5004 *fax*
www.nursecredentialing.org

Clinical Nurse Specialist Core Exam Board Certification Test Content Outline – Effective Date: September 1, 2009

There are 175 questions on this examination. Of these, 150 are scored questions and 25 are pretest questions that are not scored. Pretest questions are used to determine how well these questions will perform before they are used on the scored portion of the examination. The pretest questions cannot be distinguished from those that will be scored, so it is important for a candidate to answer all questions. A candidate's score, however, is based solely on the 150 scored questions. Performance on pretest questions does not affect a candidate's score.

This Test Content Outline identifies the areas that may be included on the examination. The percentage and number of questions in each of the major categories of the scored portion of the examination also are shown.

Category	Domains of Practice	No. of Questions	Percent
I	Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for Clinical Nurse Specialist Practice	12	8.00%
II	Phenomena of Concern	15	10.00%
III	Design and Implementation of Evidence-based Nursing Assessments, Interventions and Programs with Patients, Families, Communities, Organizations, Populations, and/or Systems	12	8.00%
IV	Technology, Products, and Devices that Support Nursing Practice and Contribute to Improved Outcomes	8	5.33%
V	Teaching and Coaching	10	6.67%
VI	Influencing Change: Change Theory and Techniques	16	10.67%
VII	Systems/Organizations	16	10.67%
VIII	Leadership, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Professionalism, and Advocacy	16	10.67%
IX	Consultation	7	4.67%
X	Measurement and Evaluation Methods	15	10.00%
XI	Evidence-based Practice and Research	23	15.33%
Total		150	100%

Please Note: Critical thinking skills are required though out the whole examination.

Clinical Nurse Specialist Core Exam Board Certification Test Content Outline – Effective Date: September 1, 2009

I. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for CNS Practice

Knowledge of:

- A. Nursing theories (e.g., Orem, Rogers, Watson)
- B. Practice models (e.g., synergy model, spheres of influence)
- C. Health, illness and wellness (including stress, health behaviors, self-care and health behavior change)
- D. Shared theories
 - 1. systems theories (including physiological, environmental, social)
 - 2. family and role theories
 - 3. social theories (e.g., political theory, cultural diversity, feminist theory)
 - 4. critical thinking, decision making and problem solving theories
- E. Ethics theories and concepts

II. Phenomena of Concern (examples may include: Cognitive impairment, iatrogenesis, developmental delay, end of life/dying, environmental hazards, impaired mobility, ineffective coping, impaired wound healing, nausea, parenting, sleep disturbances, pain, nutrition, unsafe work place)

Knowledge of:

- A. Pathophysiology and physiology (e.g., risk factors, nondisease and disease etiologies)
- B. Pharmacological principles
- C. Normal growth and development across the lifespan
- D. Levels of prevention (primary, secondary, tertiary)

Skills in:

- E. Conducting a comprehensive history, physical, and psychological assessment of signs and symptoms, including interpreting changes in normal function indicative of illness and injury
- F. Formulating and prioritizing differential diagnosis
- G. Using evidence, standards of practice, practice guidelines, and best practices to provide direct care and indirect care

III. Design and Implementation of Evidence-based Nursing Assessments, Interventions and Programs with Patients, Families, Communities, Organizations, Populations, and/or Systems (examples of types of assessments, interventions, and programs may include: nursing assessments to identify etiologies of risk; interventions to decrease medication errors, fall risks; programs for families of dying children; community-based screening programs; educational programs for patients/clients with a chronic condition)

Knowledge of:

- A. Characteristics of and approaches to patients/families, communities, organizations, populations, and/or systems
- B. Program development methods and concepts

Skill in:

- C. Conducting a thorough analysis (e.g., data collection, data analysis, appropriate sources of data, available resources) and developing and selecting innovative approaches and methods
- D. Applying standards of practice, practice guidelines, and best practices to strategies to meet the needs of patients/families/communities, including recommending pharmacologic interventions and non-pharmacologic interventions

IV. Technology, Products, and Devices that Support Nursing Practice and Contribute to Improved Outcomes

Knowledge of:

- A. Informatics (e.g., documentation, communication, technological interventions, data management)
- B. Safety issues, ergonomics and recalls
- C. Confidentiality and ethical issues related to technology

Skill in:

- D. Evaluating and selecting technology, products and devices (e.g., utility, cost-benefit analysis, ease of use, effects on patients outcomes, ethical considerations, software, IV pumps, patient handling/movement equipment, accuracy, sensitivity and specificity of a device)
- E. Using technology, products, and devices that support nursing practice and contribute to improved outcomes (e.g., documentation, telemedicine, education)

V. Teaching and Coaching (includes various types of learners: patients/families/communities, nurses, health care professionals, and other stakeholders)

Knowledge of:

- A. Teaching and learning theories and concepts (e.g., adult learning theory, learning needs assessment, age appropriate educational methods, mentoring theories and concepts)

Skill in:

- B. Conducting needs assessment
- C. Designing teaching strategies to enhance learning environments, including designing health messages and health education materials to match literacy, ability, cultural diversity, and physical capabilities
- D. Mentoring, precepting, and developing professional growth strategies
- E. Coaching patients and families to navigate the healthcare system

VI. Influencing Change: Change Theory and Techniques

Knowledge of:

- A. Change theory
- B. Conflict management and group dynamics

Skill in:

- C. Assessing the drivers of and barriers to change
- D. Using expert power (e.g., clinical, legislative, political, organizational)
- E. Designing and implementing change at patient, practice and system levels (e.g., using persuasion to influence decision-making, building consensus, influencing changes in risk behaviors, engaging leaders in a planned change strategy (including informal leaders)
- F. Managing conflict

VII. Systems/Organizations

Knowledge of:

- A. Systems and organizational theories and concepts (e.g., intended and unintended outcomes of change across units; individual, group and organizational behaviors)

Skill in:

- B. Assessing organizational culture and evaluating environmental climate, including formal and informal power bases
- C. Creating, evaluating, and influencing organizational policies and standards of care
- D. Predicting and evaluating individual, group, and organizational behaviors
- E. Assist groups or organizations to respond proactively to outside influences requiring regulatory or other change
- F. Analyzing safety and error (e.g., root cause analysis and failure mode effects analysis)
- G. Designs programs to improve clinical and system level processes and outcomes

VIII. Leadership, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Professionalism, and Advocacy

Knowledge of:

- A. Theories and concepts of leadership, collaboration and communication
- B. Political advocacy and activism
- C. Factors that influence scope of practice of the CNS

Skill in:

- D. Developing facilitators and removing barriers to collaboration
- E. Promotes the role and scope of practice of the CNS to legislators, regulators, other health care providers and the public
- F. Communicating expert knowledge
- G. Advocating for equitable healthcare through legislative, political and/or professional processes
- H. Promoting a practice climate conducive to providing ethical care
- I. Establishing collaborative relationships that promote patient/community safety, culturally competent care, and clinical excellence (e.g., leading, building teams, and facilitating groups)

IX. Consultation

Knowledge of:

- A. Consultation theory and research

Skill in:

- B. Providing patient-, nurse-, and system-centered consultation (e.g., clarifying the role of a consultant in problem-solving, developing alternative strategies for a client/consultee to consider, using clinical expertise as a power base, initiating consultation to obtain resources, analyzing the impact of fiscal, legal, accrediting and regulatory issues on practice)

X. Measurement and Outcome Evaluation Methods

Knowledge of:

- A. Measurement principles and concepts
- B. Clinical considerations of measurements, outcome evaluation methods and techniques (e.g., physiological, behavioral, psychosocial) required to:
 - 1. assess and diagnosis problems
 - 2. evaluate quality of care and clinical and fiscal outcomes.
- C. Systems characteristics, resources, and variances

Skill in:

- D. Designing and/or selecting measurement instruments for evaluation of interventions at the individual, group, and system level, including critiquing the validity, reliability and clinical applicability of measurement instruments
- E. Selecting appropriate outcomes of interest (e.g., clinical, fiscal, patient/family satisfaction, nurse satisfaction, benchmarking, organizational outcomes [e.g., readmissions, iatrogenic complications])
- F. Developing databases relevant to the evaluation of:
 - 1. CNS practice outcomes
 - 2. Efficacy of treatment

XI. Evidence-based Practice and Research

Knowledge of:

- A. Systematic inquiry (e.g., research methods, scientific methods)
- B. Evidence based practice principles and models (e.g., Patient Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome (PICO); levels of evidence; triad of evidence based practice – evidence, patient preference, and clinician experience)

Skill in:

- C. Accessing current and relevant data needed to answer clinical questions
- D. Analyzing, comparing, and prioritizing evidence
- E. Integrating evidence into the health, illness and wellness management
- F. Applying principles of evidence-based practice and quality improvement to all health care
- G. Cultivating a system climate of clinical inquiry
- H. Disseminating expert knowledge
- I. Participating in the research process (e.g. collecting data, subject recruitment, consulting in research)

This page last revised 08/04/2008.