

## **CPCE Policy Manual**

Updated April 17, 2024

Updated Policies Approved by NACE National Board: November 21, 2022

### **Certified Professional in Catering and Events (CPCE) Policy Manual**

This policy manual contains all policies and procedures related to the CPCE program. It is the responsibility of each candidate to be aware of these guidelines and to meet all deadlines. This version of the CPCE Policy Manual was released on April 17, 2024 and supersedes all previous versions.

### **National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) contact information**

NACE's website has the most current information: [www.nace.net/cpce](http://www.nace.net/cpce)

Primary communication is email: [cpce@nace.net](mailto:cpce@nace.net)

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### **About the CPCE Program**

NACE launched the CPCE program in 1986, originally as the Certified Professional Catering Executive. NACE continuously develops the Certified Professional in Catering and Events (CPCE) program to meet the needs of the dynamic catering and events industry and to encourage the professional development of industry professionals. The CPCE exam was developed and is maintained by catering and event professionals who volunteer time to ensure the program reflects best practices in the industry.

The goals of the CPCE program are to:

- Establish a nationally recognized standard of competence
- Promote professional commitment to excellence
- Endorse active participation in educational offerings that support the continued competency of CPCE
- Aid employers in identifying qualified personnel
- Enhance the professional image of industry professionals
- Provide a sense of personal achievement for the advancement of one's career

### **About NACE**

NACE offers education, resources, and networking to empower catering and event professionals to thrive in their careers. Since its founding in 1958, the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) has been a respected resource and community for catering and event professionals nationwide. With more than 40 chapters across the country and a growing network of members, NACE empowers catering and event professionals by providing them with industry-leading education, tools and resources, and a vibrant community to learn and grow from.

### **CPCE Overview and Process**

The CPCE process includes the CPCE application, studying for the CPCE exam, and finally, sitting for the CPCE exam. The process and documentation required are detailed below. The total cost for the program is \$295 for the CPCE application, \$295 for one sitting of the CPCE exam, and any additional costs associated with study materials or programs. Rescheduling or retaking the CPCE exam incurs additional costs.

The CPCE process includes the following:

1. Professional Experience Requirements
  - a. Documentation of Professional Experience
2. Continuing Education Hours
  - a. Documentation Guidelines for NACE National Education
  - b. Documentation Guidelines for Continuing Education that is not provided by NACE
3. Submitting the Application
  - a. CPCE Application Approval Process
  - b. Application Payment Policies

- c. Group Discounts and Scholarships
- 4. CPCE Study Options
- 5. CPCE Exam
  - a. Exam Structure
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  - f. Exam Retakes
- 6. Recertification
  - a. Emeritus Status

### **Professional Experience Requirements**

Candidates will be required to meet the following requirements in professional experience. Catering and event industry professional experience is defined as being employed full-time in a position with responsibilities and decision-making authority that impacts the results of events. Full-time employment is defined as an average of at least 30 hours per week over the past 12 months.

Full-time position(s) as a professional or instructor in the catering and events industry, with the following:

- Within the past 5 years, a minimum of 36 months full-time experience or 24 months full-time experience following graduation from an accredited college with a hospitality degree
- Full-time employment in the catering and events industry in the past 12 months
- If an instructor, one year of professional experience in the industry is required within the past 5 years

### **Documentation of Professional Experience**

Professional experience is verified using the Candidate Agreement. If the candidate is a business owner or does not currently have a supervisor, two of the following items may be submitted.

- Business License
- Client Testimonials
- History of business from website
- Resume
- LinkedIn Profile

### **Continuing Education Hours** (1 hour of continuing education = 1 educational contact hour)

For application approval, candidates will be required to have documentation for a minimum of 30 educational contact hours. These hours are accumulated from education programs aligned with one or more of CPCE's seven core competencies. Attendance must have occurred within the past 5 years.

CPCE educational contact hours are the direct amount of time spent as an attendee of educational programs. Networking, meals, teaching, reading, writing, committee service, and facilitation of events are ineligible. Educational contact hours are calculated to the quarter hour. For example, 75 minutes of education = 1.25 contact hours. Also, 0.1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) = 1 CPCE educational contact hour.

Types of accepted education may include:

- NACE conferences ([Experience](#), [Evolve](#)), [NACE Online Education](#), CPCE Fast Track Online, NACE Webinars
- Local [NACE Chapter](#) education
- Industry conferences, such as Catersource/TSE, Wedding MBA
- Webinars, such as through Smart Meetings, Meetings Net
- Certificate programs, such as ServSafe, sommelier, event planning, wedding planning
- Company sponsored seminars such as accounting, HR, marketing

## **Documentation Guidelines for NACE National Education**

- Education provided by NACE national includes conferences, online education, webinars, CPCE Fast Track, and others
- To claim hours from any NACE national education, the candidate should provide educational content titles and dates attended on the application, and NACE staff will internally verify hours

## **Documentation Guidelines for Continuing Education that is not provided by NACE**

- Full documentation is required to receive educational contact hours for CPCE application approval
- Documentation requirements include dates, educational hours (total or timed agenda), title and description of educational content, and proof of attendance (including candidate's name)
- Education providers will be required to be recognized by organization letterhead or similar representation. A simple list in an email, Word document, or excel spreadsheet is ineligible.

Below is an example of acceptable documentation. Clearly displayed is the date, educational hours, proof of attendance (candidate's name), and provider letterhead. This, accompanied with the conference schedule, provides all necessary information for documentation.

Examples of documentation: [Certificate of Attendance](#), [Timed Agenda](#), [NACE Chapter Education List](#)

## **Submitting the Application**

The CPCE application is submitted via the NACE website ([www.nace.net/cpceapplication](http://www.nace.net/cpceapplication)). At the time of application, candidates also are required to submit all items necessary to complete the application, including the candidate agreement signature, documentation of professional experience, and documentation of educational contact hours.

## **CPCE Application Approval Process**

Applications will be reviewed by NACE staff. Payment is required before NACE staff will review the application. Candidates are notified by email of the status of their application. If the application is incomplete, the application will expire 90 days after submission. Incomplete applications may be due to insufficient educational contact hours, insufficient documentation, incomplete forms, or failed payment. NACE staff will communicate with candidates regarding the specific reasons why the application is incomplete or expired. Expired applications will require candidates to complete a new application, including payment.

Approved applications will expire one year from the date of approval if candidates do not pass the exam.

## **Application Payment Policies**

The CPCE application fee is \$295 for both members and nonmembers for application review and processing. Fees will be paid online. Candidates who wish to pursue certification after their application has expired must reapply including payment of the application fee again. Application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

## **Group Discounts**

A group discount for 5 or more candidates is available. Groups are required to designate a group coordinator and pay together. Group members each receive a \$50 discount off the CPCE application fee. Group members are not required to take the exam together.

## **CPCE Study Options**

- The NACE Professional Reference Guide for the Catering and Events Industry, Second Edition is recommended. More information about cost and delivery options can be found on [nace.net](http://nace.net).
- The CPCE Fast Track offers contact hours toward exam eligibility and is available in person and online.

- The CPCE Fast Track is offered as an in-person course at various locations throughout the year.
- The online course offers access to videos and sample quizzes covering CPCE's core competencies. Purchase of the CPCE Fast Track online includes one year of access.
- Both the in-person and online CPCE Fast Track include a printed CPCE Fast Track Workbook.
- Virtual and in-person study groups may also be available throughout the year to get support during the exam preparation process.
- Additional study tools and programs may be available on nace.net.

### **CPCE Exam**

The CPCE exam is based on The NACE Professional Reference Guide for the Catering and Event Industry, Second Edition. Each question corresponds to one or more of CPCE's seven core competencies. All exam questions undergo an extensive review process by a group of catering and event industry subject matter experts. Each time the exam is offered, a unique exam is comprised of select questions from the CPCE item bank. The exam tests the candidates' overall knowledge of the material, and answers may be based on applied knowledge gained from the material. Not all questions may be specifically detailed in the suggested reference guide.

### **Exam Structure**

The CPCE exam is comprised of 175 multiple choice questions. The exam allows 2.5 hours for completion. Four multiple choice answers are provided for each question. Only one of the four answers is correct. To pass the exam, candidates must score a minimum of 70% correct. The exam is only offered in English; translation into other languages is not available.

The CPCE exam consists of questions designed to emphasize the core competencies of the catering and events industry, listed below. Each exam offered is unique, representing a selection of questions from these core competencies. The numbers in parentheses designate the quantity of questions included from each.

### **Accounting (18)**

- Define and understand Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- Define the elements of financial statements, including statement of cash flow, balance sheet and income statement.
- Define basic accounting terminology for catering and event industry leaders.
- Define accounting and inventory valuation methods.
- Explain how to calculate food, beverage and labor costs for catering and event operations.
- Describe the basic characteristics of budgeting for an operation.

### **Beverage Management (25)**

- Describe fundamental characteristics of various types of beverages.
- Identify the primary legal considerations regarding alcohol service.
- Explain how to calculate beverage cost and pricing for profit.
- Understand the differences between ordering by the drink, by the bottle or by the hour.
- Assist customers with beneficial beverage pairings.
- Consider the placement of bars and drink service areas for event flow and quality service.

### **Catering Services and Operations (35)**

- Calculate the number of portions necessary to prepare for various types of catered events.
- Identify the most important procedures used by catering and event professionals for food preparation, storage, and handling.
- Create menus that can maximize revenue and provide high quality service to customers.
- Describe basic characteristics of various styles of food and table service and evaluate staffing needs.
- Assess and implement customer requests while recognizing operational constraints in order to deliver high quality food and beverage during an event.

## **Contracts and Risk Management (18)**

- Define the components of a contract, essential clauses for receiving products and services and the importance of maintaining legal paperwork.
- Define breach of contract and explain how to prevent and enforce.
- Understand risk as it relates to safety, liability, and legal exposure.
- Identify laws that affect catering or event organizations and legal options related to those laws.

## **Event Design and Execution (35)**

- Understand and identify various event functions and the appropriate sequences of events for those functions.
- Describe the various ancillary services available to caterers and event planners.
- Describe the steps involved in the event planning process.
- Understand the basics of various types of events and weddings.

## **Human Resources and Administration (19)**

- Describe the steps in the hiring process.
- Describe the goals and information provided during the onboarding process.
- Describe the stages of the training cycle.
- Identify the essential functions and legal considerations involved in employee performance appraisals.
- Identify guidelines for an exit interview program.

## **Sales and Marketing (25)**

- Differentiate between sales and marketing.
- Identify strategies in developing a marketing plan.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis to identify one's product and conduct a competitive analysis.
- Understand competition in the marketplace and pricing strategies.
- Define the importance of social media and electronic forms of marketing within a marketing plan.
- Identify elements of the sales forecasting process.

## **Exam Policies**

The CPCE Exam Fee is \$295 for both members and nonmembers and provides one sitting of the exam. Fees will be paid online via nace.net. Exam fees are non-refundable and non-transferrable. After an exam is scheduled, it may be rescheduled once for no cost. If there is a need to reschedule the exam a second time, a \$100 fee will be required to cover administrative costs.

Exams are available online and must be proctored virtually or in-person. To schedule the exam, the candidate completes the CPCE Exam Scheduling form and pays the CPCE Exam fee. An exam will not be scheduled until registration is complete, the exam fee is paid, and the proctor, date, and time of the exam are confirmed with the CPCE candidate, the proctor, and NACE staff.

To ensure equal opportunity for all qualified persons, NACE will make reasonable accommodations for applicants with disabilities. Applicants are responsible for any costs incurred in obtaining the required diagnosis and recommendation. Requests for testing accommodations are inherently individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis. Consequently, no single type of accommodation will necessarily be appropriate for all individuals with disabilities. Email cpce@nace.net for the CPCE Exam Accommodations Request Form.

## **Proctor Policies**

NACE-approved proctors are required for CPCE exams. There are two options for exam proctors: live proctors or virtual proctors.

**All Proctors:** NACE must approve all proctors. A current CPCE or a colleague that is not considered the candidate's supervisor or subordinate may serve as an exam proctor. Approved proctors also include accredited college or university testing center staff, accredited college or university advisor or counselor, or U.S. military base education officer. Inappropriate proctors are family members, friends, supervisors, and subordinates. If an individual does not meet the above requirements, an exception may be granted. Please contact NACE Staff to request an exception (cpce@nace.net). Volunteer Proctors for the CPCE Exam agree to the following:

- I am not the candidate's supervisor or subordinate.
- I verified the candidate's identity with a photo I.D.
- The candidate did not use any resources, unless instructed to in the directions of the examination and only used a calculator, blank paper and a pen or pencil.
- I did not leave the candidate unattended at any time during the examination.
- The candidate did not copy down any questions to take from the examination room.

**Virtual Proctors:** To take the CPCE exam with a virtual proctor, the candidate agrees to the following:

- Work with NACE staff or other approved virtual proctor to schedule the exam during hours which the virtual proctor is available
- Use one computer to do the following
  - Share a web cam and audio with the virtual proctor for the duration of the 2.5-hour exam that shows the candidate and their exam space
  - Share their screen for the duration of the exam
- Use only one screen/monitor during the exam
- Show a photo ID via web cam before the exam begins

All other exam policies apply. The exam will be scheduled in the candidate's local time zone.

### **Exam Guidelines**

- Candidates may bring a calculator-only device, blank paper, and pens or pencils.
- Candidates may not bring aids of any kind other than the items listed above. Prohibited aids include:
  - Books, notes, or papers of any kind
  - Other materials deemed inappropriate by proctor or NACE staff
  - Food, beverages, and smoking are not permitted while taking the exam (water is allowed)
- Cell phones or other electronic devices powered off and secured with the proctor.
- Help offered or received during the exam will not be permitted.
- Candidates have 2.5 hours to complete the online exam.
- Time begins when the exam begins, not when the exam is scheduled.
- Answers will be automatically submitted when time expires. Unanswered questions count as incorrect. Therefore, we suggest making a "best guess" and flagging if unsure, then review later if time allows.
- Pass or fail results are given immediately following completion.
- Numerical score is only shared with the candidate if they did not pass the exam. In this case, detailed score by competency is shared so the candidate may focus preparation for an exam retake.
- All exam materials, including questions and all forms of the exam, are copyrighted and the property of NACE. Any distribution of these materials through reproduction, oral or written communication, is strictly prohibited and punishable by law. Exam questions are confidential and should not be copied or screenshot for later use.
- Following the exam, feedback may be provided to the proctor and NACE staff, bearing no impact on exam score. Comments may be sent at any time to cpce@nace.net and are both reviewed and welcomed as NACE aims to ensure exam quality. Feedback should not contain pictures of exam questions but may reference question numbers.
- If a candidate believes something associated with the exam process affected their ability to successfully complete the exam, they should immediately bring concerns to the attention of the proctor. Any issue not

brought to the attention of the proctor needs to be reported to cpce@nace.net before the exam is completed.

- Once an exam is completed and a score is received, the exam score is final.

### **Exam Results and Scoring**

A score of 70% or greater is required to pass the exam. After passing the exam, candidates will receive a congratulations email including an electronic certificate and a printed certificate will be mailed by the end of the following month. Exam scores are based only on the total number of correct answers. Candidates do not compete and there is no limit to the number of candidates who may pass the exam.

### **Exam Retakes**

Candidates with exams results of under 70% correct will receive an email from cpce@nace.net with a detailed report of percentage score by core competency. These candidates are eligible to retake the exam within one year from their application approval date for the exam fee of \$295. To schedule a retake exam, candidates follow the CPCE Exam Policies.

### **Recertification**

To maintain the designation, CPCEs must complete the following:

- CPCEs must recertify four years from the date on their current certificate by completing the CPCE Recertification Form
  - CPCEs may recertify up to one year in advance
  - Recertification date will remain four years from previous certification/recertification date regardless of how early CPCEs recertify
- CPCEs must submit documentation of 30 educational contact hours within the past four years
  - See Continuing Education Hours on Page 2 of this document
- CPCEs must sign/initial to verify employment in the catering and events industry in the past four years
- CPCEs must pay the recertification fee of \$295
  - Recertification fees are non-refundable and non-transferable

NACE encourages CPCEs to forward documentation of education (such as registration confirmation emails) to cpce@nace.net as they attend, and NACE staff will keep records on file to simplify the recertification process. To claim hours from NACE national education, the CPCE should provide titles and dates attended on the recertification application, and NACE staff will internally verify hours. To claim hours from education not provided by NACE, the same documentation requirements apply as specified in this policy manual for new applicants.

If the CPCE does not complete the recertification form with documentation, along with payment by the expiration date, the applicant will be notified by email that the CPCE designation has expired, and they are no longer authorized to use the designation.

### **Emeritus Status**

NACE offers the opportunity to apply for emeritus status to CPCEs interested in permanently maintaining the designation near the end of their career. Once a candidate becomes a CPCE Emeritus, they are CPCE certified for life with no further recertification required. Requirements for emeritus status include:

- Current, active CPCE in good standing for eight or more years
- 60 years or older within 6 months of their recertification date and candidates supply documentation of age (driver's license, for example)
- A testimonial describing how the CPCE designation has helped enhance their professional life and why they believe it is important to retain it that can be used by NACE in marketing and promotional materials for the CPCE
- Payment of the \$295 Emeritus Fee

**Confidentiality Policies**

The identity of and all information concerning CPCE candidates is considered confidential. Information concerning a candidate's status is only communicated to the candidate directly by NACE staff. Application and exam results are not provided over the phone or to any third party. Writing letters of support, making telephone calls, or attempting to influence the application approval or exam process in any way by any person is unacceptable.