

Certified Professional in Catering and Events Program 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 26, 2018 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

Primary communication is email: cpce@nace.net

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p: 410-290-5410 f: 410-630-5768 Office hours are M-F 9am-5pm EST/EDT

About the CPCE Program

NACE launched the CPCE program in 1986, originally as Certified Professional Catering Executive. Today, NACE is continuously developing the Certified Professional in Catering and Events 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

The CPCE exam is comprised of 8 core competencies:

- Accounting
- Beverage Management
- Catering Services
- Contracts and Agreements
- Event Management
- Food Production
- Human Resources
- Sales and Marketing

About NACE

The National Association for Catering and Events (NACE), the oldest and largest catering association in the world, encompasses all aspects of the catering and events industry. Dedicated to promoting career success for its members and the professionalism of the industry, NACE offers educational programs, professional certification, chapter initiatives, networking opportunities, recognition and awards programs, a job bank, community service projects and the industry's most prestigious annual conference. In helping its members enhance their business and careers, NACE helps the industry reach its highest potential.

About the Certification Committee

The NACE Certification Committee works to continue the advancement of the CPCE certification by recommending standards and creating new programs based on NACE's strategic plan that assist candidates in attaining the certification.

CPCE Application Process

1. [Professional Experience Requirements \(Supervisor Verification Form\)](#)
2. [Continuing Education \(Documentation\)](#)
3. [Application \(CPCE Application\)](#)
4. [Payment](#) (pay online, NACE to setup payment through portal)
5. [Study \(www.nace.net/cpce/prepare\)](http://www.nace.net/cpce/prepare)
6. Schedule and take [Exam](#) (Proctor Approval Form)
7. Continuing CPCE Certification – [Recertification](#) and [Emeritus](#)

Professional Experience Requirements

Applicants must meet one of two options for requirements in professional experience. This is verified using our [Supervisor Verification Form](#). 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 an event.

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

- Minimum 36 months full time experience or 24 months full time experience in addition to a hospitality degree
- Full time employment in the catering and events industry within the past 12 months
- Experience within the past 5 years may be listed

OR

Option Two: Full-time position(s) as an instructor of catering and events, with the following:

- Minimum 36 months full time experience in academia
- Full time employment in academia within the past 12 months
- Experience within the past 5 years may be listed
- One year of professional experience in the catering and events industry.

Full time employment is defined as an average of at least 30 hours per week over the past 12 months.

Continuing Education (1 hour of continuing education = 1 contact hour)

To be eligible for the CPCE exam, candidates must have a minimum of 30 educational contact hours. These hours are accumulated from education programs aligned with one or more of [CPCE's eight core competencies](#). Participation must have occurred within the past 5 years. CPCE contact hours are the direct amount of time spent in education, calculated to the quarter hour. For example, 75 minutes of education = 1.25 contact hours. Also, 0.1 CEU = 1 CPCE contact hour. Types of accepted education include, but are not limited to:

- Company/organization sponsored continuing education or training
- Local professional development, including certificate programs and seminars
- NACE education programs including Experience, Evolve, chapter educational programs, webinars, and Business Academies
- Allied association education programs (based on acceptance by NACE)

Documentation Guidelines

- Documentation must be submitted to receive contact hours for application approval.
- Documentation must include dates, educational hours, session descriptions, and proof of attendance.
- Education provider must be recognized by organization letterhead or similar representation.

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

[Certificate of Attendance](#), [Schedule of Conference](#)

Submitting the Application

[CPCE application](#) is submitted by being electronically downloaded, completed, and returned to NACE via email (cpce@nace.net). Remember to submit the [Supervisor Verification Form](#) and [educational contact hour documentation](#) together with the application. These three items should be emailed to cpce@nace.net in their entirety at the time of application.

Experience and educational hours must be completed at the time of application submission. Volunteer work and part-time employment do not count toward fulfilling the professional experience requirement.

CPCE Application Approval Process

Applications will be reviewed by NACE staff. Candidates are notified by email of the status of their application. Approved candidates have one year to schedule and take the CPCE exam. Documentation should be submitted at the time of application or as soon as possible following application. Applications will expire 90 days after submission if incomplete. Incomplete applications may be due to insufficient educational contact hours, incomplete supporting documentation, or incomplete payment. NACE staff will communicate with candidates regarding specific reasons why applications expire. Expired applications require candidates to complete new application and payment.

Payment Policies

The CPCE application fee is \$525 for both members and nonmembers, and provides candidates a thorough application review, including determining qualification, as well as one sitting of the CPCE exam. Fees may be paid by credit card online or by check. Candidates have one year from application approval to sit for the exam. Applications will expire one year from approval if candidates do not schedule the exam. Candidates who wish to pursue certification after their application has expired must reapply including payment of the application fee. Application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

A group discount for 5 or more participants is available. Groups must designate a group coordinator and pay together. Group members each receive a \$100 discount off the CPCE application fee. Group members do not need to take the exam together. However, if a paper exam is desired, the paper exam guidelines below must be followed.

CPCE Study Options

- [The NACE Professional Reference Guide for the Catering and Event Industry](#) is recommended.
- [Food Safety Management Principles](#) also serves as suggested reading to prepare for the food production section of the exam.
- The CPCE Fast Track offers 8 contact hours toward exam eligibility and is available in person and online. The Fast Track is offered as a live seminar at several industry conferences including the NACE Experience Conference. The online course offers access to trainer-led videos covering each CPCE core competency and sample quizzes. Purchase of the Fast Track online includes one year of access.

Exam Structure

The CPCE exam is comprised of 175 multiple choice questions. The online exam allows 2.5 hours for completion, and the paper exam allows 3 hours. Four multiple choice answers are provided for each question. Only one of the four answers is correct. There are no trick questions. 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.

What is on the CPCE Exam?

The CPCE exam is based on several resource books. The two primary resources are [The Professional Reference Guide for the Catering and Event Industry](#) and [Food Safety Management Principles](#). Each question corresponds to one or more of [CPCE's 8 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 within a database of CPCE exam questions. The exam tests the candidates' overall knowledge of the catering and events industry and answers are based on industry standards. ***Not all questions may be specifically outlined in the suggested study guides.***

Exam Guidelines

- You may bring a calculator-only device, blank paper, and pens or pencils.
- You may not bring aids of any kind other than items listed above. Prohibited aids include:
 - Dictionaries
 - Books 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
- Cell phones or other electronic devices must be powered off and secured with the proctor.
- 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.
- Help offered or received during the exam will result in being escorted from the testing room. Anyone involved in this activity will be reported and exam results disqualified.
- 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.
- If you believe something associated with the exam process affected your ability to successfully complete the exam, ***immediately bring your concerns to the attention of the proctor.*** Any issue not brought to the attention of the proctor must be reported to cpce@nace.net within 3 business days of the exam.

Online Exam Guidelines

- Candidates have 2.5 hours to complete the online exam.
- Time begins when you start the exam, not when the exam is scheduled.
- Your answers will be automatically submitted when time expires. Unanswered questions count as incorrect. Therefore, we suggest making a "best guess" and flagging if you're unsure, then you can review later if time allows.
- Results are given immediately following completion.

Paper Exam Guidelines

- A group of 5 or more participants must be interested in taking a paper exam together in order to schedule a paper exam.
- Candidates have 3 hours to complete the paper exam.
- Your exam must be submitted when time expires. Unanswered questions count as incorrect. Therefore, we suggest making a "best guess" and flagging if you're unsure, then you can review later if time allows.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to scheduled exam time.
- If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, the proctor may choose not to seat you to avoid disrupting others. If the proctor does not seat you, there is no refund of exam fees, and there are no exceptions to this.
- Results will be emailed in 4-6 weeks.

Exam Results and Scoring

70% or greater is required for passing 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.

Exams resulting in a score under 70% 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 a reduced fee of \$200.

Exam scores are based only on the total number of correct answers. It is to the candidate's advantage to answer all questions. Candidates do not compete and there is no limit to the number of candidates who may pass the exam.

Exam Retakes

Candidates who are unsuccessful on the CPCE exam may retake the exam within one year of application approval. To retake the exam, candidates must communicate with NACE staff, complete and submit a new Proctor Approval Form as well as payment.

Proctor Policy

NACE-approved proctors are required for CPCE exams. A current CPCE or a colleague who is not considered the candidate's supervisor or subordinate may serve as exam proctor. Approved proctors also include accredited college or university testing center staff, accredited college or university advisor or counselor, or US military base education officer. Inappropriate proctors are family members, friends, supervisors, and subordinates. Please contact NACE Headquarters to request an exception or help finding a proctor.

Recertification

To maintain the designation, CPCEs must recertify every five years. As with application, 30 contact hours with supporting documentation is required. The fee for recertification is \$245. NACE encourages CPCEs to forward documentation of education to cpce@nace.net as they attend, and NACE staff will keep records on file to simplify recertification every five years. NACE national events, such as Experience and Evolve, as well as NACE on-demand online education (Fast Track and Business Academies) require no documentation as attendance is verified internally.

Emeritus Status

NACE offers the opportunity to apply for emeritus status to CPCEs interested in permanently maintaining the designation.

Requirements:

- Current, active CPCE in good standing for 10 or more years
- 60 years or older in the calendar year that the certification is up for renewal and must supply documentation of age (driver's license, birth certificate, etc.)
- A 300-500-word essay describing how the CPCE designation has helped enhance their professional life and why they believe it is important to retain it
- \$250 Fee

Confidentiality Policies

The identity and all information concerning CPCE candidates is considered confidential. Information concerning a candidate's status is communicated directly to the individual by NACE staff. Application and exam results are not provided over the phone or to any third party. Individuals should refrain from engaging other parties to write letters of support, make telephone calls or otherwise attempt to influence the process.