



How to Prepare for the Certification Examination for Nutrition Specialists

The Certification Examination for Nutrition Specialists is designed to test the knowledge and skills acquired by those who have successfully completed both the academic and experiential criteria of the CNS and CNS-S. While those who have not yet completed the CNS supervised practice experience may be approved to sit for the examination, historically, those with experience perform better than those without.

The examination contains 200 multiple-choice, single answer questions, and covers a broad spectrum of basic and applied nutritional science, based on an explicit set of competencies. These competencies have been determined through a job analysis study conducted on practitioners. They are grouped into domains, subdomains and tasks, which together form the Examination Content Outline for the examination.

The Examination Content Outline is the key tool for preparing for the examination. It should be used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. Due to the breadth of topics covered, it is likely most candidates will require preparation in one or more content areas. The reference list below is intended to assist candidates in addressing those areas. The Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists (BCNS) does not endorse any specific study preparation method, course, or reference as being relevant, correct or complete. The following list has been assembled based on reports previous candidates have found these references helpful for preparation.

The method used by the BCNS to determine the passing score for the examination is known as the Angoff technique, and is in accordance with the standards set by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), which has fully accredited the CNS certifying program. The Angoff technique requires the Examination Development Council's analysis on an item-by-item basis. If an item is considered by the council to be more difficult, the expectation of candidate performance is lower than if an item is considered by the council to be less difficult. These council judgments of item difficulty are expressed as numeric performance indices. The pass-fail cut score reflects these item performance indices, and is expressed as a percentage equivalent.

For each examination, the pass-fail cut score will vary somewhat based on that exam's difficulty level, but the cut scores are equated such that an equivalence of difficulty is maintained. Historically, cut scores have ranged between 60 and 69%. This historic range represents outcomes to date, but should not be considered policy; it is possible for a future cut score to fall outside of this range.

Reference List

Domain I: Fundamental Principles of Nutrition

- Gehlbach, SH, *Interpreting the Medical Literature*, McGraw-Hill, 2006.
- Gropper and Smith. *Advanced Nutrition and Human Metabolism*, 6th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Mahan LK, Raymond JL, Escott-Stump S. *Krause's Food & Nutrition Therapy*, 13th ed. Saunders 2011.



BOARD for CERTIFICATION of NUTRITION SPECIALISTSSM

- Nelms M, Sucher KP, Lacey K, Roth SL: *Nutrition Therapy & Pathophysiology*, Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2011.
- Stipanuk MH and Caudill MA, *Biochemical, Physiological and Molecular Biological Aspects of Human Nutrition*, 3rd ed., Elsevier, 2013.
- American Nutrition Association, *Clinical Nutrition Science Primer*, 2014.

Domain II: Nutrients and Human Health

- Berdanier C, Dwyer J, and Feldman, E, *Handbook of Nutrition and Food*, 3rd ed., CRC Press, 2013.
- Bowman B, Russell RM, *Present Knowledge in Nutrition*, International Life Sciences Institute, 10th ed., 2012.
- Gropper and Smith. *Advanced Nutrition and Human Metabolism*, 6th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Ross AC, Caballero B, and Cousins R Tucker KL, and Ziegler, TR, *Modern Nutrition in Health and Disease*, 11th ed., Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins 2012.
- Stipanuk MH and Caudill MA, *Biochemical, Physiological and Molecular Biological Aspects of Human Nutrition*, 3rd ed., Elsevier, 2013.
- American Nutrition Association, *Clinical Nutrition Science Primer*, 2014.

Domain III: Nutrition Assessment

- Bouchard C and Ordovas JM, editors, *Recent Advances in Nutrigenetics and Nutrigenomics*, volume 108, Elsevier, 2012.
- Escott-Stump S, *Nutrition and Diagnosis-Related Care*, 7th ed., Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, 2011.
- Lee RD and Neiman DC, *Nutritional Assessment*, 6th edition, 2012.
- Lord RS and Bralley JA, *Laboratory Evaluations for Integrative and Functional Medicine*, 2nd ed., 2008.
- Mahan LK, Raymond JL, Escott-Stump S. *Krause's Food & Nutrition Therapy*, 13th ed. Saunders 2011.
- Nelms M, Sucher KP, Lacey K, Roth SL: *Nutrition Therapy & Pathophysiology*, Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2011.
- Pagana, KD and Pagana TJ, *Mosby's Manual of Diagnostic and Laboratory Tests*, 5th ed., Elsevier Mosby, 2013.
- American Nutrition Association, *Clinical Nutrition Science Primer*, 2014.

Domain IV: Clinical Intervention and Monitoring

- Bauer K, Liou D, Sokolik CA. *Nutritional Counseling and Educational Skill Development*, Cengage Learning, 2011
- Escott-Stump S, *Nutrition and Diagnosis-Related Care*, 7th ed., Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, 2011.
- Hark L, and Morrison, G, *Medical Nutrition and Disease: A Case-Based Approach*, 4th ed., Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2007.



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- Jones D, Quinn S, *Textbook of Functional Medicine*, 3rd ed., Institute for Functional Medicine, 2010.
- Mahan LK, Raymond JL, Escott-Stump S. *Krause's Food & Nutrition Therapy*, 13th ed. Saunders 2011.
- Nelms M and Roth SL, *Medical Nutrition Therapy, A Case Study Approach*, 4th ed., Cengage Learning, 2013.
- Nelms M, Sucher KP, Lacey K, Roth SL: *Nutrition Therapy & Pathophysiology*, Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2011.
- Pizzorno JE, Murray MT, Joiner-Bey H. *The Clinicians Handbook of Natural Medicine*, 2nd ed. Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier, 2008.
- American Nutrition Association, *Clinical Nutrition Science Primer*, 2014.

Domain V: Professional Issues

- Bauer K, Liou D, Sokolik CA. *Nutritional Counseling and Educational Skill Development*, Cengage Learning, 2011
- National Restaurant Association, *ServSafe Coursebook*, 6th edition, 2012.
- American Nutrition Association, *Clinical Nutrition Science Primer*, 2014.