

STUDY GUIDE for Candidates Pursuing a Practitioner Based Certification through the NCDA Credentialing Commission - CMCS

Suggestions on how to Prepare for the Written Assessment Portion of the CMCS Credential



The idea of assessing and responding to scenarios is a bit intimidating. How can I best prepare for the 4 scenarios within the CMCS application?

The CMCS is a practitioner level credential, meaning that it is designed to assess competency in the delivery of services across the CMCS Domains of Practice. The best advice would be to adopt the mindset of sitting in session with your student or client and discussing suggested resources, action steps and outcomes with the student/client during this session. We want you to draw upon your everyday experience to formulate your real world response to each scenario, write your response from this perspective. As soon as you click the icon to accept/start a scenario, you must complete that scenario within the 60 minutes allowed. If you wish, you may then log out of your application, in the *FluidReview*, web platform, and then log back in later (as your schedule permits) to complete the next scenarios.

How is “Competency” and “Mastery” measured, as it applies to the CMCS credential?

The CMCS credential is based on the **CMCS Domains of Practice**. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate a comprehensive level of understanding surrounding the domains of practice, by providing necessary documentation and completing 4 scenarios. This material will then be assessed, via rubric, by a qualified reviewer.

What are the CMCS Domains of Practice?

The **CMCS Domains of Practice** include the following:

1. **Career - providing services (guidance and support) to clients/students:**
 - **Career Management:** current print and technological resources and strategies to successfully launch, progress, ascend or transition in a career path
 - **Identity Clarification/Promotion:** identifying an individual’s unique value (discreet skills, strengths, and achievements) and developing strategies to communicate a value based profile to one’s professional network and prospective employers;
 - **Work-Life Synergy:** identifying areas of interest and providing guidance on creating a balanced approach to link one’s interests to a full spectrum of activities (school, career, family, friendships, community, spirituality, advocacy, recreation, and hobbies)

2. Relationships (assisting the client/student):

- **Relationship Mediation:** coping with the needs and demands of important people in one's life; such as family, friends, peers, direct reports, and managers; while satisfying one's personal needs
- **Talent Development:** identifying, cultivating and promoting others to assure their career satisfaction
- **Service Coordination** (aka Case Management): offering professional guidance on the appropriate department, vendor or professional to be engaged for specific services and support;
- **Cultural Competence:** awareness and knowledge about self and others, and how this understanding is applied effectively to assist students and clients in their educational and work settings *
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** the similarities and differences that occur within and across groups and cultures, and the intersection of cultural and social identities *

3. Program Development

- **Content/Curriculum:** selecting and promoting credible, timely resources and techniques
- **Logistics and Oversight:** contributing to the successful operation of programs offering career related content (this may span design, promotion, staffing, and supervision)

4. Ethics

- **Making Ethical Choices:** recognizing situations that present ethical dilemmas and negotiating situations that career services present while adhering to the defined ethics of our field
- **Modeling Ethical Behavior:** embracing scope and standards of practice and conduct, while setting a positive example for students, clients, peers, and direct reports.

** adapted from the 2015 NCD Code of Ethics Glossary*

How is the Program Management domain assessed?

The Program Management domain will be assessed via the candidate's professional references.

What is the focus of the scenarios?

Scenario 1 aligns with the Career domain. **Scenario 2** aligns with the Relationship domain (specifically, sub-domains Relationship Mediation, Talent Development and Service Coordination). **Scenario 3** aligns with the Relationship domain (specifically, sub-domains Cultural Competence and Diversity/Inclusion). **Scenario 4** aligns with the Ethics Domain.

In addition, it is suggested that you consider print and electronic resources available through academic and public libraries, book sellers, and the websites of government and professional associations related to the topic of career development. Your search terms/phrases, for these resources, might include: *resources for career coaches, career coaching resources, tools for career coaches, career coaching tools, career coaching case studies* ...replace the word *coaches* with *consultant* or *advisor* and replace the word *coaching* with *consulting* or *advising*.

Applicants are encouraged to review **The 2015 NCD Code of Ethics**

[https://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3395], as a core resource to prepare for the assessment portion of the CMCS application.

*** Writing a Response to a Scenario or Case Study ***

Throughout this guide, the terms **scenario**, **question** and **case study** *are interchangeable* and used to describe what you will read and then respond to in the assessment portion of the credentialing process. For most of our credentials, you will read the scenario and then respond to a focused question.

In this brief study guide, you will find some suggestions for preparing and succeeding when you are taking the assessment portion of your credential. Explore these topics:

- Preparing yourself physiologically
- Review the competencies and “freshen” your knowledge
- When you are ready to begin
- Tightening and editing your writing.

Preparing yourself physiologically,

- Just think—we expect athletes to practice constantly and use everything in their abilities and situations in order to achieve success. Yet, somehow many of us are convinced that they can quickly write a coherent focused essay response – even though it may have been a while since you wrote one in a time limited situation. Essay exams are like any other testing situation in life: you’ll do best if you are prepared for what is expected of you, have practiced doing it before, and have arrived in the best shape to do it.
- You may not want to believe this, but it’s true: a good night’s sleep and a relaxed mind and body can do as much or more for you as any last-minute cram session. If you are rested, breathing normally, and feeling prepared, you are in a much better position to do a good job
- If for some reason you find yourself feeling a sense of panic, take a minute every once in a while during the test to breathe deeply, stretch, and clear your brain. You need to be especially aware of the likelihood of errors, so check your essays thoroughly before you hand them in to make sure they answer the right questions and don’t have big oversights or mistakes (like saying Holland when you mean Super).
- Take all of the time you’ve been allotted. Reread, rework, and rethink your answers if you have extra time at the end, rather than giving up and clicking submit the minute you’ve written your last sentence. Use every advantage you are given.
- Remember that your reviewers do not want to see you trip up—they want to see you do well. With this in mind, try to relax and just do the best you can. The more you panic, the more mistakes you are liable to make. Put the experience in perspective: will you die from a poor performance? Will you lose all of your friends? Remember: it’s just a short essay response.

Review the competencies and “freshen” your knowledge,

1. Review the topic of your essay. You will want to think carefully about what you read on the credentialing website about the competencies that will be addressed. Spend some time reviewing these competences and think about their application in the settings in which you work.
2. As you are reviewing this material, think about it with the goal of writing a short essay response.
3. Review our advice on the components of focused, brief essay writing.

When you are ready to begin,

1. Before you open your 1st scenario, free write about the topic for about 5 minutes as a warm-up.
2. Plan your time: Figure about 1/10 of your time to plan your response: write a brief outline. Plan another 1/5 of your time to read back through your response for editing and tightening it.
3. Read all the information provided for you and the instructions carefully to understand the format, the question, and the time limit. All of the credential assessments have a time limit.
4. As you read the scenario, notice key words in the questions (discuss, compare/contrast, analyze, explain, provide examples and such). Try looking closely at what the question is directing you to do, and try to understand what specific information you need to provide.
5. Before you begin writing, organize your answer. For answers that require a paragraph or two, jot down several important ideas or specific examples that help to focus your thoughts.
6. In planning your answer, **briefly** outline how you will address all the pieces of the questions or the topic. Check your outline against what the question or instructions ask. Think about a clear, concise and logical way to organize your response. Your outline will have to be selective—not everything you know, but what you know that you can state clearly, keep to the point in the time available, and address the question.
7. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind in writing essay exams is that you have a limited amount of time and space in which to get across the knowledge you have acquired and your ability to use it. Essay exams are not the place to be subtle or vague. It’s okay to have an obvious structure, even the

five-paragraph essay format you may have been taught in high school. Introduce your main idea, have several paragraphs of support—each with a single point defended by specific examples, and conclude with a restatement of your main point and its significance.

8. REMEMBER: Answer the question you are asked. Be careful not to stray off topic by exploring too many options. **Read the question carefully and address the core of what is being asked!**

As you are writing,

1. Generally, write sentences and paragraphs but switch to point form if you are running out of time.
2. Be clear for your reviewer: have a topic sentence for each paragraph and identify points you want to make. If the scenario has specific subparts (or required components), clearly identify what you are addressing in each subpart. You might use a header to introduce that point you want to make.
3. Follow your outline.
4. If you draw a blank, but know you want to add more, leave space for additional points.
5. Watch the clock carefully to ensure that you do not spend too much time on only one part of your answer. You must be realistic about the time constraints of an essay exam. If you write one dazzling answer on an exam with three parts, you earn only 33 points, but not enough to pass.
6. Keep your writing real – answer in simple, clear language.

Tightening and editing your writing,

1. Add a 1-3 sentence introduction and summary. In both, preview (or remind) about the key points. If introductions stump you, just leave some space and add the intro later.
2. Review your response to make sure you have answered the questions and your response matches your thesis or topic sentences. Make clear connections.

Listed Below are several suggested Resources to prepare for the Scenarios/Case Studies within the assessment portion of your application for certification:

- [The Critical Thinking Skills Cheatsheet \[Infographic\] – courtesy of Global Digital Citizen](#)
- [Tips for how to start the writing assignment - Invention: Starting the Writing Process – courtesy of the Purdue Owl](#)
- [How to write a good essay: Paraphrasing the question – courtesy of engVid: Learn English with Emma](#)
- [Writing a case study response – courtesy of QUT cite | write](#)

References:

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Emma. (2016, September 12). *How to write a good essay: Paraphrasing the question*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/o9aVjBHEEbU>

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