



Preparing for the Written Assessment Portion of the CSCDA Credential

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

The CSCDA is designed to assess an individual's competency and application of the current 12 competencies of the NCDA's *School Career Development Advisor training* curriculum. This training includes completion of NCDA's Facilitating Career Development training plus these additional chapters (which form the CSCDA component): Business Relations, K-12, and SCDA. The competencies include the following:

1. Helping Skills
2. Labor Market Information and Resources
3. Assessment
4. Diverse Populations
5. Ethical and Legal Issues
6. Career Development Models
7. Employability Skills
8. Training Clients and Peers
9. Program Management/Implementation
10. Promotion and Public Relations
11. Technology
12. Consultation

To demonstrate that an individual has competency during the written portion of the assessment, the best advice would be to adopt the mindset of sitting in a session with your student/customer/client and discussing topics such as resources, action plans, barrier reduction, goal setting and outcomes (or any other relevant topic in your setting). We encourage you to draw upon your everyday experience as well as your Facilitating Career Development course to formulate real-world responses to each scenario. 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 will "Competency" be measured in your responses as it applies to the CSCDA credential?

The CSCDA credential is based on the 12 current competencies of the Facilitating Career Development curriculum. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate a comprehensive level of understanding surrounding those competencies by providing necessary documentation and completing the 4 scenarios. This material will then be assessed, via rubric, by a trained, qualified reviewer through a "blind review" process (the reviewer will not know your identity).

What will the assessment look like?

In the application process, demonstration of the competencies will be gathered in these ways:

- Your instructor and reference (via a checklist) will be asked if you have achieved competency in the 12 competencies above.
- You will also respond to a scenario in each of these areas: working with a class, working with employers, setting up a career information program, and one on one advising.

For each scenario, you will have a brief description of a situation and client (the scenario). You will be asked to write 2-5 paragraphs responding to a focused question based on that case.

In preparation for this portion of your application, you may wish to review the competencies in relation to the scenario areas described above. You may also want to practice using some of the exercises with scenarios that you find in your manual.

In preparation for the assessment portion of your application, you may wish to review the competencies outlined in the facilitating Career Development curriculum in relation to these 4 areas:

- working with a class,
- working with employers,
- setting up a career information program, and
- one on one advising.

You may also want to practice using some of the exercises with case studies that you find in your training manuals.

* Writing your Response* .

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 we 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 submit them to make sure you 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. 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 first 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 you 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 the 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) 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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