



The Foundations of Oriental Medicine Expanded Content Outline

(Effective as of February 1, 2014)

Note to Candidate: This document serves as a guide to assist in examination preparation for candidates who have met NCCAOM® eligibility requirements. Below is the content outline for the Foundations of Oriental Medicine examination, along with the competency statements.

DOMAIN I: Clinical Examination Methods (10% of Total Exam)

Collect and recognize clinically significant signs and symptoms.

A. Looking (Wang)

1. Spirit (Shen) appearance (including color)

- Observe outward manifestation of Shen (Spirit) (e.g., complexion, expression, demeanor, and general behavior)
- Identify and relate Shen (Spirit) to pattern/syndrome differentiation*

2. Face, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, lips, teeth, and throat

- Observe normal and abnormal conditions and changes of the face and complexion (including color, moisture, texture, and organ-indicative locations), eyes, nose, ear, mouth, lips, teeth and throat
- Identify and relate facial features to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological manifestations of the face, including color, moisture, texture, and organ-indicative locations

3. Tongue (body and coating)

- Observe normal and abnormal manifestations, patterns, conditions, and changes of the tongue and sub-lingual area
- Identify and relate features of the tongue to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological manifestations of the tongue and tongue coating, including color, size, moisture, texture, shape, position, movement, organ-indicative locations

4. Physical characteristics of the body

- Observe form, movement, and physical characteristics (e.g., head, hair, neck, back,



- chest, abdomen, extremities, nails)
- Identify and relate form, movement, and physical characteristics to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of form, movement, and physical characteristics
- Observe conditions and changes of the skin
- Identify and relate conditions and changes of the skin to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of conditions and changes of the skin
- Observe normal and abnormal excretions (e.g., phlegm, sputum, saliva, sweat, discharge, stool, urine)
- Identify and relate conditions and changes of excretions to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of excretions

B. Listening and Smelling (Wen)

1. Sounds

- Listen to respiratory sounds
- Identify and relate respiratory sounds to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of respiratory sounds
- Listen to tonal qualities, voice, and speech
- Identify and relate tonal qualities, voice, and speech to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of tonal qualities, voice, and speech
- Listen to abdominal sounds
- Identify and relate abdominal sounds to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of abdominal sounds

2. Odors

- Smell body odors
- Identify and relate body odors to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of body odors



- Smell breath and mouth odors
- Identify and relate breath and mouth odors to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of breath and mouth odors
- Smell excretions (e.g., sweat, urine, feces, leukorrhea, flatulence, wound exudates)
- Identify and relate excretions to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Recognize pathological significance of excretions

C. Asking (Wen)

1. Chief complaint

- Inquire about presenting complaint (onset, duration, location, nature, alleviation, aggravation)
- Inquire about the history and development of chief complaint
- Identify and relate chief complaint to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Identify appropriate additional questions based on examination findings and patients' response to inquiries

2. Current health conditions

- Conduct a review of systems, including the "Ten Questions" (Shi Wen)
- Identify and relate current health conditions to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Identify appropriate additional questions based on examination findings and patients' response to inquiries

3. Health history

- Inquire about personal health history, including previous symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments
- Inquire about familial history
- Identify and relate health history to pattern/syndrome differentiation*
- Identify appropriate additional questions based on examination findings and patients' response to inquiries



D. Touching (Palpation) (Qie)

1. Radial pulses (including the 28 Qualities)

- Identify the location of radial pulses
- Identify qualities of radial pulses (including rate, depth, strength, and shape) as indicators of patterns of disharmony and of normal and abnormal states of organ and meridian function
- Identify and relate radial pulses to pattern/syndrome differentiation*

2. Abdomen

- Identify, through palpation, normal and abnormal conditions of the abdomen (e.g., temperature, texture, shape, and pain)
- Identify abdominal regions representing organs and meridians
- Identify and relate abdominal palpation findings to pattern/syndrome differentiation*

3. Meridians

- Identify, through palpation, findings along the meridians (e.g., nodules, tenderness, numbness, temperature, sensitivity)
- Identify and relate meridian palpation findings to pattern/syndrome differentiation*

4. Other body areas

- Identify, through palpation, pain, body sensations (e.g., numbness, tingling, sensitivity), temperature changes, and quality of tissue (e.g., edema, hardness/softness, tension/flaccidity)
- Identify and relate palpation findings to pattern/syndrome differentiation*

*Pattern/Syndrome Differentiation:

- Eight Principles (Ba Geng)
- Organs (Zang Fu)
- Meridian/Channel (Jing Luo)
- Six Stages (Liu Jing)
- Four Levels (Wei, Qi, Ying, Xue)
- Five Elements (Wu Xing)
- Qi, Blood, Body Fluids (Qi, Xue, Jin Ye)
- Triple Burner (San Jiao)



DOMAIN II: Assessment, Analysis, and Differential Diagnosis Based Upon Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Theory (45% of Total Exam)

Formulate a differential diagnosis (Bian Zheng).

A. Knowledge and Application of Fundamental Theory of TCM Physiology (Sheng Li), Etiology (Bing Yin), and Pathogenesis (Bing Ji)

1. Yin/Yang theory (e.g., Interior/Exterior, Cold/Heat, Deficient/ Excess)

- Describe Yin/Yang theory
- Evaluate symptoms according to Yin/Yang theory
- Identify pathologies according to Yin/Yang theory
- Apply Yin/Yang theory to clinical assessment

2. Five Elements theory (Five Phases/Wu Xing)

- Describe Five Elements theory
- Evaluate symptoms according to Five Elements theory
- Identify pathologies according to Five Elements theory
- Apply Five Elements theory to clinical assessment

3. Organ theory (Zang Fu)

- Describe Organ theory
- Evaluate symptoms according to Organ theory
- Identify pathologies according to Organ theory
- Apply Organ theory to clinical assessment

4. Channel theory (Jing Luo) (including Regular channels, Extraordinary channels, Luo-connecting channels, divergent channels, muscle channels, and skin regions)

- Describe Channel theory
- Evaluate symptoms according to Channel theory
- Identify pathologies according to Channel theory
- Apply Channel theory to clinical assessment



5. Essential Substances theory [Qi, Blood (Xue), Fluids (Jin Ye), Essence (Jing), Spirit (Shen)]

- Describe Qi, Blood (Xue), Body Fluids (Jin Ye), Essence (Jing), Spirit (Shen)
- Evaluate symptoms according to Qi, Blood (Xue), Body Fluids (Jin Ye), Essence (Jing), Spirit (Shen)
- Identify pathologies according to Qi, Blood (Xue), Body Fluids (Jin Ye), Essence (Jing), Spirit (Shen)
- Apply Qi, Blood (Xue), Body Fluids (Jin Ye), Essence (Jing), Spirit (Shen) to clinical assessment

6. Causes of Disease: External (Six Excesses [Liu Yin]), Internal (Seven Emotions), and Miscellaneous (diet, excessive sexual activity, excessive physical work or lack of exercise, trauma, bites, parasites, Phlegm, Blood stasis)

- Describe Causes of Disease
- Evaluate symptoms according to Causes of Disease
- Identify pathologies according to Causes of Disease
- Apply Causes of Disease to clinical assessment

B. Formulation of a Differential Diagnosis Based upon Chief Complaint (Zhu Su), Prioritization of Major Symptoms (Zhu Zheng), Knowledge of TCM Diseases (Bian Bing), and Pattern Identification (Bian Zheng)

1. Eight Principles (Ba Gang) (i.e., Yin/Yang, Interior/Exterior, Cold/Heat, Deficient/ Excess)

- Describe Eight Principles differentiation
- Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Eight Principles differentiation
- Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Eight Principles differentiation

2. Organ theory (Zang Fu)

- Describe Organ pattern differentiation
- Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Organ differentiation
- Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Organ differentiation



3. Channel theory (Jing Luo) (including Regular channels, Extraordinary channels, Luo-connecting channels, divergent channels, muscle channels, and skin regions)
 - Describe Channel theory
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Channel theory
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Channel theory

4. Six Stages (Tai Yang, Yang Ming, Shao Yang, Tai Yin, Shao Yin, Jue Yin)
 - Describe the Six Stages differentiation
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Six Stages differentiation
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Six Stages differentiation

5. Four Levels (Wei, Qi, Ying, Xue)
 - Describe the Four Levels differentiation
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Four Levels differentiation
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Four Levels differentiation

6. Five Elements (Five Phases/Wu Xing)
 - Describe Five Elements differentiation
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Five Elements differentiation
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Five Elements differentiation

7. Qi, Blood, Body Fluids (Qi, Xue, Jin Ye)
 - Describe Qi, Blood, Body Fluids differentiation
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Qi, Blood, Body Fluids differentiation
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Qi, Blood, Body Fluids differentiation

8. Triple Burner (San Jiao)
 - Describe Triple Burner differentiation
 - Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Triple Burner differentiation
 - Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Triple Burner differentiation



9. Six Excesses (Liu Yin)

- Describe Six Excesses
- Assess and analyze signs and symptoms according to Six Excesses
- Formulate a diagnosis based on the analysis of Six Excesses

DOMAIN III: Treatment Principle (Zhi Ze) and Strategy (Zhi Fa) (45% of Total Exam)

Formulate treatment principle and strategy based upon differential diagnosis (Bian Zheng).

A. Treatment Principle Based upon Differential Diagnosis

1. Eight Principles (Ba Gang)
2. Organs (Zang Fu)
3. Meridian/Channel (Jing Luo)
4. Six Stages (Liu Jing)
5. Four Levels (Wei, Qi, Ying, Xue)
6. Five Elements (Wu Xing)
7. Qi, Blood, Body Fluids (Qi, Xue, Jin Ye)
8. Triple Burner (San Jiao)
9. Causes of Disease: External (Six Excesses [Liu Yin]), Internal (Seven Emotions), and Miscellaneous (diet, excessive sexual activity, excessive physical work or lack of exercise, trauma, bites, parasites, Phlegm, Blood stasis)
 - Select appropriate treatment principle based on pattern/syndrome differential diagnosis

B. Treatment Strategy to Accomplish Treatment Principle

- Select appropriate treatment strategy (e.g., disperse, tonify, cool, warm) to accomplish treatment principle
- Prioritize treatment focus [e.g., Root and Branch (Biao Ben), acute/chronic, external/internal, Pathogenic Factors, constitutional, seasonal]
- Adjust treatment principle and/or strategy based on patient's response, disease progression, and lifestyle (e.g., substance use, smoking, exercise, diet)



Foundations of Oriental Medicine Bibliography

The Content Outline is the primary resource for studying for this examination. The purpose of this Bibliography is only to provide the candidate with suggested resources to utilize in preparation for the examination. Candidates should feel free to consider other resources that cover the material in the Content Outline.

There is no single text recommended by NCCAOM. All NCCAOM modules and examinations reflect practice in the United States as determined by the most recent job analysis.

NCCAOM's item writers and examination development committee members frequently use the following texts as resources; however, the sources used are not limited to the books listed here. The NCCAOM® does not endorse any third-party study/preparation guides.

Cheng, Xinnong, ed. *Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion*. 3rd ed. Fifteenth Printing 2014. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2012.

Clavey, Steven. *Fluid Physiology and Pathology in Traditional Chinese Medicine*. 2nd ed. Churchill Livingstone, 2003.

Deng, Tietao. *Practical Diagnosis in Traditional Chinese Medicine*. London: Churchill Livingstone, 1999.

Kaptchuk, Ted J. *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Maciocia, Giovanni. *Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine: A Comprehensive Guide*. Philadelphia: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, 2004.

---. *The Foundations of Chinese Medicine: A Comprehensive Text for Acupuncturists and Herbalists*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, 2015.

---. *The Practice of Chinese Medicine: The Treatment of Diseases with Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, 2007.

Scheid, Volker, Dan Bensky, Andrew Ellis, and Randall Barolet. *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Formulas and Strategies*. 2nd ed. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press, 2009.

Wiseman, Nigel, and Andy Ellis. *Fundamentals of Chinese Medicine*. Revised Edition. Brookline, MA: Paradigm Publications, 1995.

Wu, Yan, and Warren Fischer. *Practical Therapeutics of Traditional Chinese Medicine*. Ed. Jake P. Fratkin. Brookline, MA: Paradigm Publications, 1997.