



**National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine  
(NCCAOM®)  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)  
Information about Route 8: Reciprocal Certification for California Licensed  
Acupuncturists**

**Updated 12/21/2018**

Beginning February 1, 2019, the NCCAOM will open **Route 8: Reciprocal Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists**. This will be a time-limited route that will close on **December 31, 2020**. Applicants who meet all **revised** eligibility requirements of Route 8 will be granted NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification without the requirement of taking the NCCAOM examinations.

Please read below for a compilation of frequently asked questions and answers about the new, time-limited CA Reciprocal Route. Any questions or comments should be directed to [publicrelations@thenccaom.org](mailto:publicrelations@thenccaom.org).

**Q1: What are the updated, requirements to become NCCAOM Board-Certified through Route 8: Reciprocal Certification in Oriental Medicine?**

**Answer 1:** Due to the concerns received from stakeholders, the NCCAOM requested approval from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) to extend the qualifying date for CA licensed acupuncturists to be eligible for the NCCAOM Reciprocal Eligibility Route for CA Licensed Acupuncturists. Applicants wishing to become NCCAOM Board-Certified in Oriental Medicine through the CA Reciprocal Route must:

1. **Revised** - Hold an active California Acupuncture license that is in good standing and was obtained on or before **January 31, 2019**;
2. Submit an NCCAOM Reciprocal Route application and pay the application fee;
3. **Clarified** - Clean Needle Technique requirements:
  - a) Have on file with the NCCAOM a certificate of completion for the face-to-face clean needle technique course offered by the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM).



- b) Complete the [CCAOM CNT and Blood Borne Pathogen Review Course](#) if the certificate of completion for the face-to-face clean needle technique course offered by the CCAOM indicates this course was completed more than six years prior to the date of application for the new route.
- c) All certificates of completion for the face-to-face CNT course and the CNT and Blood Borne Pathogen Review Course must be sent to the NCCAOM directly from the CCAOM.

### **Q2: I was licensed after January 31, 2019 why can't I apply for NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification through CA Reciprocal Route?**

**A2:** The CA Reciprocal Route is not open to practitioners who obtained their CA license after January 31, 2019. All three of the NCCAOM's certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). To maintain their accreditation status with the NCCA, the NCCAOM was required to provide evidence of the same process, and substantial equivalency of the certification (i.e. initial licensing) and recertification (i.e. re-licensure) requirements from the California Acupuncture Board compared to the NCCAOM's certification and recertification requirements for Oriental Medicine. NCCAOM submitted evidence of both initial and re-licensure requirements in order for this route to be approved by the NCCA. Not only did the NCCAOM submit evidence of the linkage study between the content of the NCCAOM examinations and the California Acupuncture Licensing Exam (CALE), but also NCCAOM had to show that the candidates from CA had the same eligibility requirements to include a Clean Needle Technique Course (current) and that the requirements for CEU in CA are the same (CA requires 50 CEUs every 2 years and NCCAOM requires 60 CEUs (PDAs) every 4 years). The NCCAOM's proposal was approved by the NCCA Board, with the caveat that all California licensed acupuncturists who apply for this route must have a current, valid unrestricted CA license.

### **Q3: I was licensed to practice in CA on or before January 31, 2019 and have continued to maintain an active CA license but, I don't currently live in California. May I apply under CA Reciprocal Route?**

**A3:** Yes, you are eligible. The key is the substantial equivalency of the passed CALE exam and the NCCAOM certification exams, the CNT requirement by both CA and the NCCAOM, and



California's re-licensure requirements are greater than or equal to the NCCAOM recertification requirements. (See Q7 if your CA license is currently inactive)

**Q4: I meet the eligibility requirements for CA Reciprocal Route, and I am an active Diplomat of Acupuncture (NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>. I want to become NCCAOM Certified in Oriental Medicine through CA Reciprocal Route so that I don't have to take the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology Certification exam. How do I proceed?**

**A4:** You will need to complete the online application for CA Reciprocal Route and pay the application fee specifically set for NCCAOM Diplomates in Acupuncture converting through the CA Reciprocal Route. You will also need to submit all eligibility requirements for CA Reciprocal Route that have not already been met. Please see **Q12** for the answer concerning state mobility when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Reciprocal Route as some states require the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology exam to obtain a license to practice.

**Q5: I meet the eligibility requirements for the CA Reciprocal Route, and I have an active, open application for NCCAOM certification under a different route. I have begun the exam process (or have not yet taken any exams). I want to change my application to CA Reciprocal Route so I don't have to finish taking (or take any of) the exams. What do I need to do?**

**A5:** You will also need to meet all eligibility requirements for the CA Reciprocal Route that have not already been submitted and maintained as part of your NCCAOM certification file. You will need to complete the online application for CA Reciprocal Route and pay the difference between your currently paid certification application fee and the CA Reciprocal Route application fee. If you have completed certification exams and become certified through CA Reciprocal Route the exams you completed will remain valid. If you choose to practice outside the state of California your completed exams will be sent to a state, upon your request, for *State Certification and Verification*, which is part of state's licensure process. Please see **Q12** for the answer concerning state mobility when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Reciprocal Route.



**Q6: I meet the eligibility requirement for CA Reciprocal Route, and I was previously certified by the NCCAOM; however, my certification is now terminated. May I use CA Reciprocal Route to reinstate my certification?**

**A6:** Yes, you will need to meet all eligibility requirements for CA Reciprocal Route. You will also need to complete the online application for CA Reciprocal Route and pay the application fee. Once recertified in Oriental Medicine the certification exams passed at the time of initial certification will be revalidated. Please note if you were initially certified in Acupuncture with the NCCAOM and are now certified in Oriental Medicine, not having taken the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology Certification exam, you will want to refer to **Q12** for the answer concerning state mobility when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Reciprocal Route as some states require the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology exam to obtain a license to practice.

**Q7: I was licensed to practice in CA on or before January 31, 2019; however, I currently hold an inactive CA license because I don't live or practice in California. May I apply under CA Reciprocal Route?**

**A7:** Yes, you are eligible once you return your CA license to active status. For initial CA licensure, obtained on or before January 31, 2019, you met the key elements of substantial equivalency of the CALE exam and the NCCAOM certification exams, the CNT requirement by both CA (for initial licensure) and the NCCAOM (for initial certification). To return to active status license in California you must submit CEUs whose requirements are greater than or equal to the NCCAOM recertification requirements. The NCCAOM also requires that your re-activated license be clear and valid, and free of any holds.

**Q8: I want to apply now. When will the CA Reciprocal Route application be available online?**

**A8:** The application will be available online from the NCCAOM website ([www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org)) on the day CA Reciprocal Route is implemented, which will be by **February 1, 2019**. The NCCAOM will continue to update this FAQ as more information becomes available and will also announce the additional information on the NCCAOM website.



**Q9: Once I apply, how long do I have to complete the eligibility requirements before my application expires?**

**A9:** The CA Reciprocal Route applications expire **one year** from the date of submission. All certification requirements must be met within the year or a new application must be submitted when the original application expires. **Please Note:** The CA Reciprocal Route will close on **December 31, 2020**. Applications in process as of December 31, 2020 will be finalized if all requirements have been met. Any applicant who has not submitted all requirements as of December 31, 2020 will not be able to complete the certification process. Application fees are non-refundable.

**Q10: After I satisfy all requirements of CA Reciprocal Route and become an NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist, what else do I need to do to maintain my NCCAOM certification?**

**A10:** Once NCCAOM certification is achieved, Diplomates must recertify with the NCCAOM every four (4) years and meet all recertification requirements in place at that time. Information concerning current NCCAOM recertification requirements can be found on our website at [www.nccaom.org/diplomates/certification-renewal/](http://www.nccaom.org/diplomates/certification-renewal/).

**Q11: When I renew my California Acupuncture License will I still have to recertify with the NCCAOM to maintain my NCCAOM certification?**

**A11:** Maintaining your California license to practice and renewing NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification are two completely different processes. One does not substitute for the other. To maintain your California license to practice you must renew your CA license by submitting the California licensure renewal application and meeting all requirements. To maintain your NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification you must recertify every four (4) years by submitting the NCCAOM Recertification Application and complete all requirements.

**Q12: Will I be able to become licensed in other states if I become NCCAOM Board-Certified through CA Reciprocal Route?**



**A12:** This route may or may not allow successful CA Reciprocal Route applicants who become NCCAOM Diplomates to apply for licensure in other states. Licensure requirements vary from state to state; therefore, it is important to contact the state licensing board before applying for licensure. Some states require that candidates for state licensure send their NCCAOM exam results, while other states only require demonstration of NCCAOM Certification; therefore, the NCCAOM cannot guarantee mobility to practice in any other state for CA Reciprocal Route applicants. For details on each state's regulatory requirements for licensure as an acupuncturist, please see the interactive [NCCAOM State Regulatory Map](#).

**Q13: Why doesn't CA Reciprocal Route applicants have to take any NCCAOM exams to become NCCAOM certified in Oriental Medicine?**

**A13:** At the February 26, 2016 California Acupuncture Board (CAB) Meeting, the CA Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) provided their commissioned report, [Review of the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Examinations](#) within the CAB Board Meeting Agenda Materials. The purpose of the OPES review was to evaluate the suitability of the NCCAOM examinations as part of the requirements for licensure as an acupuncturist in California. This review was conducted jointly by OPES staff psychometricians and two additional psychometric experts working as independent consultants (OPES Team). The OPES and its consultants reviewed documents provided by NCCAOM. A comprehensive evaluation of the documents was made to determine whether the (a) occupational/job analysis, (b) exam development, (c) passing scores, (d) test administration, (e) examination performance, and (f) test security procedures met professional guidelines and technical standards.

The OPES Team found that the procedures used to establish and support the validity and defensibility of the NCCAOM examination program components listed above meet professional guidelines and technical standards outlined in the California Business and Professions Code section 139 and *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* developed jointly by the AERA, APA, and NCME. Additionally, OPES convened a panel of licensed California acupuncturists to serve as subject-matter experts (SMEs) to review the content of each of the four



NCCAOM examinations and to compare this content with the test plan for the California Acupuncture Licensure Examination (CALE), as based on the 2015 California Acupuncture Occupational Analysis (OA) performed by OPES. The results of the review by the SMEs indicated that the NCCAOM examinations are congruent with assessing many of the general areas of entry-level California acupuncture practice, e.g., acupuncture treatment, herbal therapy, diagnostic impressions, etc. This empirical evidence of psychometric validity, reliability and fairness as well as demonstration of a ‘congruent’ link between the content of the CALE and the NCCAOM national exam content, served as two of the key criteria for the NCCAOM to demonstrate substantial equivalency of the two credentialing processes and standards. This linkage data, along with the documentation of the same additional certification and licensing requirement, (1) a current CNT certificate, and (2) a minimum of 60 credits of CE every four years for NCCAOM certification provided the final evidence for substantial equivalency between the two programs, which led to the [National Commission for Certifying Agencies](#) (NCCA) Board, approving this new route for currently active CA licensed acupuncturists to show comparability of their licensing and relicensing requirements as substantial equivalent to NCCAOM’s certification and recertification standards. The NCCA is an independent organization that established and enforces industry standards for certification testing to ensure public protection. Also refer to Q2.

On another note, the completion of this thorough review of the NCCAOM Certification Oriental Medicine Program also resulted in the CAB voting to unanimously recommend implement the NCCAOM certification exams for California licensure no earlier than 2019. ([Please see July 2016 letter](#))

**Q14: Why is CA Reciprocal Route open only to CA licensed Acupuncturists and not licensed acupuncturists in other states?**

**A14:** California is the only state that administers its own comprehensive licensure examination that covers the same content as the Oriental Medicine Certifications examinations. The CA Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) initiated and paid for a review to evaluate the suitability of the NCCAOM examinations as part of the requirements for licensure as an acupuncturist in California. As a result of this review conducted jointly by OPES staff psychometricians and two additional external psychometric experts working as independent



consultants (as part of the OPES Team) it was determined that NCCAOM examinations are congruent with assessing many of the general areas of entry-level California acupuncture practice, e.g., acupuncture treatment, herbal therapy, diagnostic impressions, etc. This empirical evidence of psychometric validity, reliability and fairness as well as demonstration of a ‘congruent” link between the content of the CALE and the NCCAOM national exam content, served as two of the key criteria for the NCCAOM to demonstrate substantial equivalency of the two credentialing processes and standards. Currently no other state has an independent licensure exam to be able to undertake this type of endeavor.