



## Pre-Graduation Route Elimination and Exam Administration Changes

*Dear NCCAOM Stakeholders:*

During the Spring meeting of the Council of Colleges for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM), the NCCAOM announced the upcoming elimination of the NCCAOM's Pre-Graduation Route 1b and changing the 2019 examinations to a linear (fixed-form) format. The NCCAOM has heard the concerns expressed from our stakeholders and would like to clarify our decisions and changes to these two initiatives, as well as announce a modification to our original plan to allow more time for the students and school officials to prepare for some of the proposed changes.

First, the policy change which eliminates the Pre-Graduation Route 1b will move forward and begin September 1, 2018, as announced. The 'Pre-Grad' route is the only NCCAOM eligibility path that allows candidates who have not completed their education to sit for the NCCAOM exams. All other eligibility routes require graduation from an accredited, governmental, or an apprenticeship program. The NCCAOM's accreditation commission, the [National Commission for Certifying Agencies](#) (NCCA) requires that all candidates have preparation that is substantially equivalent. Elimination of this route will ensure that all candidates are equally prepared for their national-board certification exams and will further avoid the issue of those candidates who pass all of the required exams but do not complete the final steps certification, and later cannot practice in states that require full NCCAOM certification.

Students who meet the hourly requirement for the Pre-Grad route may submit their NCCAOM application up to 12:00 a.m. (midnight) on August 31, 2018. All of these applications will be processed according to the regular Pre-Grad system. Beginning September 1, 2018, the pre-graduation option and process will be discontinued. Students who are close to graduation and qualify under the NCCAOM's Graduation Route 1a - Formal Education U.S. will be able to submit their application sixty (60) days prior to their graduation date.

To assist the schools and the students, the NCCAOM will implement an online transcript submission procedure which will dramatically reduce the turnaround time for approving students to sit for the exams. This new process will help the graduating students to begin sitting for their exams immediately after graduation. In the new system, school officials will login into their online portal and upload graduation transcripts directly to each applicant's profile. This new process will allow NCCAOM staff to authorize board exams immediately for the students. The direct online filing of only one final graduation transcript per student will also reduce the school's processing time and paper costs. Additionally, submission of only one final graduation transcript will ensure increased accuracy in the *NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Program Performance Report* for each program.

Regarding the second initiative of implementing linear testing in 2019, the NCCAOM has received many concerns about the adverse impact it will have on students and the time it will take them to obtain state licensure and begin practicing. **We want you to know we have heard your voices and have decided to hold off implementing this change until January 2020.** Linear testing is necessary for a period of time after the implementation of new content outlines. This is because the passing standards for the examinations

must be evaluated before making candidate scoring decisions, as the current passing standards may no longer be appropriate once content has been removed from or added to the exams.

The NCCAOM is required to conduct a job analysis survey which documents the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are currently being used by AOM practitioners. The outcome of the job analysis survey is then used to generate an updated exam blueprint, (i.e., content outline) for each examination. The NCCAOM 2017 job analysis resulted in major changes to each of the content outlines - Foundations of Oriental Medicine (FOM), Acupuncture and Point Location (ACPL), Chinese Herbology (CH), and Biomedicine (BIO). Due to the changes in the content outlines, it is still necessary to have linear testing for period of time for all exams.

The NCCAOM will administer the exams in a linear format beginning January 2020. The NCCAOM will work with the schools to understand the steps needed to assist their students register for the 2020 linear exam administration. We also plan to gather graduation dates and the number of graduates from the schools and then work closely with Pearson VUE Test Center to finalize 2020 exam windows that will potentially better suit the students time table in acquiring licensure.

To get the word out, NCCAOM is providing several methods of communicating with the schools officials and students. An **NCCAOM School Webinar** is scheduled for **Thursday, June 28, 2018** to review this information and to make sure we all are on the same path forward. Special announcements will be posted to the [School Page of the NCCAOM website](#). In the near future, each school will receive a survey to gather information that will assist in determining the dates for the testing windows for the linear exams. The NCCAOM School Liaison, Jennifer Nemeth is available to assist students and program officials. She can be contacted at [jnemeth@thenccaom.org](mailto:jnemeth@thenccaom.org). Additionally, for more detailed information regarding Pre-Grad Route and Linear Testing, please see the NCCAOM FAQs:

- [Elimination of the NCCAOM Pre-Graduation Route: Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) and
- [NCCAOM Response to All Stakeholders Regarding 2019 and 2020 Exam Administrations](#) on the NCCAOM website.

The NCCAOM has heard your concerns and we look forward to working with you to provide the best possible testing service for students during this time of change, and to accommodate the graduates as best as possible.

Sincerely,



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Chief Executive Officer*

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