



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

Updated 03/29/2019

Introduction: On February 1, 2019, the NCCAOM opened a new temporary route to certification called - Route 8: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists. This is a time-limited route that will close on December 31, 2020. Applicants who meet all 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 NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists. Any questions or comments should be directed to [publicrelations@thenccaom.org](mailto:publicrelations@thenccaom.org).

**Q1: What are the, requirements to become NCCAOM Board-Certified through Route 8: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists?**

**A1:** The NCCAOM received requests from a number of stakeholders to extend the date for CA licensed acupuncturists to qualify for this new route to certification in OM. 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 Eligibility Route for CA Licensed Acupuncturists. Applicants wishing to become NCCAOM Board-Certified in Oriental Medicine through the CA Route must:

1. Hold an active California Acupuncture license that is in good standing and was obtained on or before January 31, 2019;
2. Submit an NCCAOM CA Route application and pay the Application Fee for CA Route of \$750.



Note: NCCAOM Certified Diplomate applicants for CA Route holding an active NCCAOM Certification in Acupuncture or Chinese Herbology, are eligible for an application reduced fee of \$400; also all candidates with an open, non-expired application on file submitted through a different Route of Eligibility, must contact NCCAOM for an application fee reduction adjustment via email [caroute@thenccaom.org](mailto:caroute@thenccaom.org).

3. Document Current Clean Needle Technique (CNT) Requirement:

All applicants must 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) that has been taken within the last six years of application. If the CNT Certificate is older than six years the applicant must either complete the face-to-face CCAOM CNT Course or complete the *online CCAOM CNT and Blood Borne Pathogen Review Course*. 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.

PLEASE NOTE: The Application for CA Route is valid for one year from the application submission date. For assistance contact Ph: (202) 381-1140 or email: [caroute@thenccaom.org](mailto:caroute@thenccaom.org).

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

A 2: The CA 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, 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. 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 Route?

A3: Yes, you are eligible. The key is the evidence of the same process, of the certification (i.e. initial licensing), 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 Route, and I am an active Diplomate of Acupuncture (NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>. I want to become NCCAOM Certified in Oriental Medicine through CA 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 Route and pay the \$400 application fee specifically set for NCCAOM Diplomates in Acupuncture converting through the CA Route. You will also need to submit all eligibility requirements for CA Route that have not already been met. Please see Q12 for the answer concerning state portability when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Route as some states require the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology exam to obtain a license to practice. You must verify licensure requirements with each state in which you want to practice.

Q5: I meet the eligibility requirements for the CA 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 Route so I don't have to finish taking (or take any of) the exams. What do I need to do?

A5: You will need to meet all eligibility requirements for the CA Route that have not already been submitted and maintained as part of your NCCAOM certification file. All candidates with an open non-expired application on file submitted through a different Route of Eligibility, must contact NCCAOM for an application fee adjustment via email [caroute@thenccaom.org](mailto:caroute@thenccaom.org). After you have contacted NCCAOM by email you will need to complete the online application for CA Route and pay the adjusted application fee. If you have completed certification exams and become certified through CA 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 portability when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Route. This route may or may not allow successful CA Route applicants who become NCCAOM Diplomates to apply for licensure in other states. You must verify licensure requirements with each state in which you want to practice.

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

A6: Yes, you will need to meet all eligibility requirements for CA Route. You will also need to complete the online application for CA Route and pay the \$750 application fee. Once certified 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 portability when achieving NCCAOM certification through CA Route as some states require the NCAOM Chinese Herbology exam



to obtain a license to practice. It is your responsibility to verify licensure requirements with each state in which you want to practice before you apply for this route.

**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 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 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 Route application be available online?**

**A8:** The application is now available online from the NCCAOM website ([www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org)). The CA Route was implemented, on 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 Route application expires 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 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 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: A California license to practice and NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification are two completely different processes. Maintaining 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 Route?

A12: This route may or may not allow successful CA 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 portability to practice in any other state for CA Route applicants. For details on each state's regulatory requirements for licensure as an acupuncturist, please see the interactive [NCCAOM State Regulatory Map](#).



Q13: If I become certified through the NCCAOM Route why can't I go to any other state that requires NCCAOM certification and/or exams and get a license to practice?

A13: The California Acupuncture Board (CAB), CA Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) performed a comparative analysis of the CA Acupuncture Examination (CALE) to the NCCAOM modular exams to ensure that the NCCAOM is testing to all the entry level competencies collectively with the Foundations of oriental Medicine, Biomedicine, Acupuncture with Point Location and the Chinese herbology Exams as part of their research to determine whether they will accept the passing of the NCCAOM national certification exams as one of the regulatory requirements for competency to become licensed in California as an acupuncturist. All states, other than California, that regulate acupuncture use the NCCAOM modular exams as part of their licensure process.

The NCCAOM never conducted a comparative analysis to determine if the CALE meets the NCCAOM entry level competencies required to become a National Board-Certified Acupuncturists. Since the NCCAOM's entry level competency exams are broken down into specific topic modules; Foundations of Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture with Point Location, Biomedicine, and Chinese Herbology, a candidate for certification must pass each exam module independently to become certified. The CALE is a single comprehensive examination that contains domains of foundations, acupuncture, biomedicine and Chinese Herbology; therefore, an individual can fail any of the individual domains and pass the exam overall to become a California licensed acupuncturist.

For this reason, the states rely on the NCCAOM modular exams to ensure protection of the public and why the NCCAOM cannot guarantee that any state will accept the new CA Route, which does not require any of the NCCAOM modular exams, to obtain a license to practice.

Q14: Why doesn't CA Route applicants have to take any NCCAOM exams to become NCCAOM certified in Oriental Medicine?



A14: 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.

The OPES Team found that the procedures used to establish and support the validity and defensibility of the NCCAOM examination program components (a) occupational/job analysis, (b) exam development, (c) passing scores, (d) test administration, (e) examination performance, and (f) test security procedures, 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.

Although an equivalency study was conducted by California (as stated above), the NCCAOM never conducted a comparative analysis relying on the independent comparative analysis for this time-limited NCCAOM eligibility route; therefore, this was not a two-way study. Also, Individuals who license as an acupuncturist in CA, after the CA Route opens are not eligible. More importantly, the current examination content outlines used for the comparative analysis will no longer be valid when the NCCAOM begins to administer the 2020 certification exams based on the 2017 Job Analysis.

All states, other than California, that regulate acupuncture use the NCCAOM modular exams as part of their licensure process. The NCCAOM exams are even recognized by the Federal government as evidenced by the Veteran’s Administration adoption of the NCCAOM Board-Certified Acupuncturists





who took the NCCAOM modular exams. All states, except CA, rely on the NCCAOM modular exams to ensure protection of the public.

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](#))

**Q15: Why is CA Route open only to CA licensed Acupuncturists and not licensed acupuncturists in other states?**

A15: 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. Currently no other state has an independent licensure exam to be able to undertake this type of endeavor.

**Q16: What are the benefits of becoming NCCAOM certified?**

A16: Becoming an NCCAOM National-Board Certified Acupuncturist has many benefits to include:

- Be eligible to apply for jobs that require NCCAOM certification.
- Have the ability to work with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), who now requires NCCAOM Board-Certification.
- Have consumers and professionals find you in the [NCCAOM's Find a Practitioner](#)



- Have insurance companies and employers verify your certification status through the [NCCAOM Registry](#)
- Be promoted as a NCCAOM National-Board Certified Acupuncturists to the media and public through [national public educational campaign](#).
- Be promoted by the [NCCAOM Advocacy team who are advancing](#) NCCAOM certification at federal and state levels.
- Create a FREE *Website* from [ChiOnline](#) and access discounted [Frames](#) for displaying your NCCAOM certificate of certification.
- Receive issues of the NCCAOM newsletter [The Diplomat: E-news You Can Use](#) and [NCCAOM Advocacy Update](#)
- Join *NCCAOM as a Volunteer* & serve on a committee, panel or taskforce with your peers.
- Be eligible for *reduced fees* for services offered by NCCAOM and its strategic partners