



# NATIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMISSION FOR ACUPUNCTURE AND ORIENTAL MEDICINE



## Certification Handbook

National Standards of Competence in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

2021

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# NCCAOM® Certification Handbook

## Contents

NCCAOM Diversity Equity and Inclusion Statement .....	4
About the NCCAOM® .....	5
Benefits of NCCAOM® Certification .....	6
Code of Ethics .....	7
NCCAOM Grounds for Professional Discipline.....	8
What’s New in 2021?.....	9
NCCAOM Certification Programs .....	11
Eligibility to Sit for Examinations vs. NCCAOM Certification Requirements .....	11
Steps to NCCAOM Certification .....	13
Guide to NCCAOM® Certification .....	14
Certification Routes .....	15
Route One: Formal Education: United States Applicants .....	16
Route Two: Formal Education: International Applicants .....	17
Route Three: Apprenticeship .....	19
Route Four: Combination of Formal Education and Apprenticeship .....	24
Route Five: Converting to an NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification.....	25
Route Eight: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists .....	25
Clean Needle Technique Requirement .....	25
NCCAOM Request for Information and Appeal Process.....	26
NCCAOM Application for Certification .....	27
How to Create Your NCCAOM Account.....	27
Online Application .....	28
Tracking Your Certification Application.....	28
Document Guidelines .....	29
Accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .....	30
Agent Designation Form .....	32
Veterans Reimbursement .....	32
Name Change .....	32
Changing an NCCAOM Certification Program.....	33
NCCAOM Certification and Examination Fee Schedule.....	34



NCCAOM Examinations..... 35

NCCAOM Examination Preparation and Resources ..... 35

NCCAOM Examination Format ..... 36

NCCAOM Examination Policies ..... 37

Scheduling an NCCAOM Examination..... 41

Examination Day – *Be Prepared!* ..... 42

Inclement Weather, Power Failure or Emergency..... 42

Examination Results Notification ..... 44

Retaking an Examination ..... 45

NCCAOM Certified, Active Diplomate Status! ..... 45

NCCAOM Diplomate Benefits ..... 46

Maintaining NCCAOM Certification ..... 47

NCCAOM Certification vs. State Licensure ..... 47

Examination Results and Certification Verification to State Acupuncture Board ..... 47



## NCCAOM® Mission

To assure the safety and well-being of the public and to advance the professional practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine by establishing and promoting national, evidence-based standards of competence and credentialing.

## NCCAOM® Vision

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine provided by NCCAOM credentialed practitioners will be integral to healthcare and accessible to all members of the public.

## NCCAOM Diversity Equity and Inclusion Statement

The NCCAOM actively promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strive to embed these principles in all we do, creating an environment where all can thrive. We believe that...

**D**iversity is the representation of many different demographic backgrounds, identities (both innate and selected), and the collective strengths of their experiences, beliefs, values, skills, and perspectives.

An **E**quitable environment recognizes and eliminates barriers to full participation at individual and systemic levels, challenges intentional and unintentional forms of bias, harassment, and discrimination.

**I**nclusion is the act of establishing philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures so that organizations and individuals contributing to the association's success have fair, equal, and unbiased access to opportunities, information, and resources.

We commit to fostering a culture where every member of the NCCAOM community feels valued, supported, and inspired to achieve individual and common goals and who are comfortable contributing their unique wisdom, perspectives, and experiences.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

The NCCAOM does not discriminate based on race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, handicap, marital status, national origin, or ancestry.



## About the NCCAOM<sup>®</sup>

Founded in 1982 as a non-profit certification organization, the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM<sup>®</sup>) is widely accepted as the most influential leader in the field of certification for acupuncture and Oriental medicine. There are currently over 19,500 active NCCAOM Diplomates (NCCAOM certificate holders) practicing with a current NCCAOM certification. The NCCAOM is responsible for the development and administration of the Acupuncture, Chinese Herbology, and Oriental Medicine Certification Programs. The NCCAOM evaluates and attests to the competency of its National Board-Certified Acupuncturists<sup>™</sup> through rigorous eligibility standards and demonstration and assessment of the core knowledge, skills and abilities expected for an entry level practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

The NCCAOM Acupuncture, Chinese Herbology and Oriental Medicine certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and carry the NCCA seal.



For the NCCAOM certification programs in Acupuncture, Chinese Herbology, and Oriental Medicine to remain accredited by the NCCA, the NCCAOM must adhere to strict national accreditation standards for administration of the certification programs and examination development. All Diplomate level certification examinations must meet content validity standards set forth by NCCA. As a requirement of accreditation for the NCCAOM certification programs, the NCCAOM must submit annual reports to the NCCA, and the certification programs must undergo a full NCCA reaccreditation every five years (last completed in 2017). Additional information is available at the Institute for Credentialing Excellence's website at [www.credentialingexcellence.org](http://www.credentialingexcellence.org).

All practitioners certified by the NCCAOM are committed to responsible and ethical practice, to the growth of the profession within the broad spectrum of American healthcare, and to their own professional growth. All Diplomates, applicants and candidates for certification are bound by the [NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Code of Ethics](#) and the [NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Grounds for Professional Discipline](#).



## Benefits of NCCAOM® Certification

- Proudly display you are a National Board-Certified Acupuncturist™, and use one or more of the four new Digital Badges below:



- Consumers and professionals can find you in the NCCAOM® [Find a Practitioner Directory](#).
- Be promoted as a *NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist™* to the media and public through the national public educational campaign.
- Verify your certification status through the *NCCAOM® Registry*.
- Be eligible to apply for a job at the Veteran’s Health Administration, which requires NCCAOM Board Certification as an essential part of ensuring safe and high-quality acupuncture treatment.
- Be promoted by the *NCCAOM® Advocacy Team*, advancing NCCAOM certification at federal and state levels.
- Create a free ADA compliant website from Chi Online and access discounted wall-mounted frames for displaying your *NCCAOM® Certificate*.
- Join NCCAOM as a Volunteer & serve on a committee, panel, or taskforce with your peers.
- Receive issues of the NCCAOM newsletter, [The Diplomat: E-news You Can Use](#) and the [NCCAOM® Advocacy Update](#).
- Be eligible for reduced fees for services offered by NCCAOM and its strategic partners.



## Code of Ethics

As a Diplomate of the NCCAOM, I hereby pledge my commitment to the following principles:

Respect the rights, privacy and dignity of my patients and always maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries.

Treat within the lawful scope of my practice and training, and only if I can safely, competently, and effectively do so.

Allow my patients to fully participate in decisions related to their healthcare by documenting and keeping them informed of my treatments and outcomes.

Accept and treat those seeking my services in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

Render the highest quality of care and make timely referrals to other health care professionals as may be appropriate.

Continue to advance my knowledge through education, training, and collaboration with my colleagues to maintain excellence and high ethical standards in our profession.

Support my medicine's access to all people and its growth in the broad spectrum of U.S. health care.

Assist in the professional development and advancement of my colleagues.

Participate in activities that contribute to the betterment of my community.



*Effective January 1, 2016*



## NCCAOM Grounds for Professional Discipline

Protection of the public is the highest priority of the NCCAOM. To fulfill this mission, the NCCAOM reserves the right to take and publish disciplinary actions taken against Respondents, (as defined by Section one of the *Procedures for Upholding Professional Conduct*), in accordance with its *Procedures for Upholding Professional Conduct* for violations of the following:

1. Failing to cooperate with a disciplinary investigation.
2. Providing false or deceptive information on an application for NCCAOM certification, recertification, PDA providership, or disciplinary investigation.
3. Violating NCCAOM policies, regulations, or procedures, including but not limited to complying with continuing education requirements.
4. Misrepresenting professional credentials or titles.
5. Advertising false or misleading information.
6. Exceeding the scope of practice as defined by state or federal statute or regulation.
7. Obtaining or attempting to obtain compensation or reimbursement through fraud.
8. Failing to notify the NCCAOM within thirty calendar days of any of the following:
  - a. Notice of a disciplinary investigation in any jurisdiction pertaining to a healthcare practice.
  - b. Any order issued by any jurisdiction pertaining to a healthcare practice.
  - c. Violent felony charges.
  - d. Violent or non-violent felony convictions.
  - e. Misdemeanor criminal convictions related to a healthcare practice.
9. Being convicted of a felony. (Note: Pursuant to Section three, #10 of the *Procedures for Upholding Professional Conduct*, serious violent felonies may deem a candidate permanently ineligible for NCCAOM certification, recertification, or PDA providership).
10. Being convicted of a misdemeanor related to a healthcare practice.
11. Being the subject of disciplinary or administrative action taken by a licensing board or health-related regulatory agency or school.
12. Failing to maintain proper records as required by state or federal statute or regulation.
13. Performing services without informed consent as required by state or federal statute or regulation.
14. Failing to maintain patient/practitioner confidentiality.



15. Failing to maintain professional boundaries in relationships with patients, or in any way exploiting the practitioner/patient trust.
16. Engaging in sexual contact with a current patient if the contact commences after the practitioner/patient relationship is established.
17. Engaging in sexual contact with a former patient unless a period of six months has elapsed since the date that the professional relationship ended.
18. Gross negligence or a pattern of negligence in your practice or under your supervision.
19. Being unable to engage in practice safely and effectively, due to substance abuse, physical or psychological impairment. \*

\*Summary of PEDC Substance Abuse Policy Statement: A Respondent whose capacity to treat patients safely and effectively has been diminished because of drug or alcohol abuse which has not resulted in harm to a patient, may temporarily and voluntarily surrender NCCAOM certification by forwarding his/her certificate to NCCAOM and temporarily withdrawing from practicing to complete an agreed upon treatment plan as decided by the PEDC. Upon the PEDC's receipt of a certificate of disposition from the pre-approved treatment facility, Respondent shall be returned their NCCAOM certificate and resume practice. A surrender of certification under this provision shall be confidential and shall not be considered an admission of abuse, disability, or a violation of the Ground for Professional Discipline number twenty-one. However, this surrender shall not confer immunity upon Respondent with respect to any other Grounds for Professional Discipline and is unilaterally revocable by PEDC in the event the agreed treatment was not completed or harm to a patient has occurred.)

20. Violating federal or state statute or regulation relating to safe, ethical, and/or competent practice.

## What's New in 2021?

**Route Eight: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists** - The NCCAOM extended the application deadline for Route 8: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists. Applicants must meet and complete all eligibility requirements by September 1, 2021 to achieve NCCAOM certification.

Route Eight: NCCAOM Route for California License Acupuncturists eligibility requirements are available on the NCCAOM website [CA Route Certification](#). Answers to questions can be obtained by accessing the [CA Route FAQ \(PDF\)](#). Additional questions or comments should be directed to email address [publicrelations@thenccaom.org](mailto:publicrelations@thenccaom.org).



## NCCAOM Temporary Exception Extended through 2021

Considering the continued pandemic and the effects it has for graduating students, the NCCAOM has extended the Temporary Exception until December 31, 2021. As we did last year, each ACAOM school is asked to follow the steps below.

- Each ACAOM School is to complete the [ACAOM School Temporary Exception Form](#) and upload list of graduates.
- Each student will receive an email invitation to submit an NCCAOM application no earlier than sixty days prior to their anticipated graduation date as provided by the school in their uploaded document.
- After the NCCAOM certification application is submitted, the student's name will appear on the School's Portal.
- The school official will then upload the student's transcript and the [NCCAOM® Student Graduation Verification Form\(PDF\)](#). The two documents must be uploaded as one file.

Questions? Contact Jennifer Nemeth at [jnemeth@thenccaom.org](mailto:jnemeth@thenccaom.org)

## NCCAOM Exam Retake Policy

Effective December 2, 2020, the NCCAOM revised the Exam Retake Policy by removing the maximum cap (limit of five times) from the number of exam retakes for the purpose of certification. This change will affect several different applicant groups within the pipeline of certification, each with differing scenarios and each with different criteria for retesting to ensure candidate preparedness and exam security.

After five unsuccessful exam attempts, the NCCAOM will afford additional exam attempts to those who meet the specific criteria (continuing education) and who have petitioned the NCCAOM with their request. More details are available on the NCCAOM website at [NCCAOM Exam Retake Policy](#).

## Exam Validity Policy Change

Continued Active Diplomate status through initial certification and continued recertification ensures that exam results remain valid. A limit is placed on the number of years an exam result is valid for the purpose of NCCAOM certification. The NCCAOM grants up to twelve years (previously eight years) for first time candidate exam validity. For additional details, click the *Answers to frequently asked questions* on the NCCAOM website to access the [NCCAOM® Examination Frequently Asked Questions and Answers \(FAQ\)](#).



## NCCAOM Certification Programs

### Oriental Medicine

A Diplomate of Oriental Medicine is a professional educated in acupuncture and Chinese herbology who is certified by the NCCAOM. It is a considerable professional achievement to earn the designation.

Dipl. O.M. (NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>. NCCAOM certification indicates to employers, patients, and peers that one has met national standards for the safe and competent practice of both acupuncture and Chinese herbology as defined by the acupuncture and herbal medicine profession. National board certification in Oriental medicine has been the mark of excellence since the inception of NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification in 2003.

### Acupuncture

A Diplomate of Acupuncture is a professional educated in acupuncture who is certified by the NCCAOM. It is a considerable professional achievement to earn the designation Dipl. Ac. (NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>. NCCAOM certification indicates to employers, patients, and peers that one has met national standards for the safe and competent practice of acupuncture as defined by the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession. National board certification in acupuncture has been the mark of excellence since the inception of the NCCA Commission in 1982.

### Chinese Herbology

A Diplomate of Chinese Herbology is a professional educated in Chinese herbology who is certified by the NCCAOM. It is a considerable professional achievement to earn the designation Dipl. C.H. (NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>. NCCAOM certification indicates to employers, patients, and peers that one has met national standards for the safe and competent practice of Chinese herbology as defined by the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession. National board certification in Chinese Herbology has been the mark of excellence since the inception of the NCCAOM Chinese Herbology Certification in 1996.

## Eligibility to Sit for Examinations vs. NCCAOM Certification Requirements

It is important to understand that the eligibility to sit for examinations comes first and is a different process than the requirements for NCCAOM Certification.

### Eligibility to Sit for Examinations

1. Education/Training eligibility is determined by the Route chosen during the application process.
2. Graduation transcript – uploaded directly from the school/ICD to NCCAOM



(Routes one, two, four, and five).

3. Approval of all apprenticeship documentation (Route three and Route four).
4. Clean Needle Technique (CNT) Certificate of Completion – uploaded directly from CCAHM to NCCAOM (All routes).
5. ADA documentation if applicable (All Routes).

Once approved to sit for the examinations, an NCCAOM® Authorization to Test (ATT) Letter is issued. The candidate will be notified via email that the NCCAOM® Authorization to Test (ATT) Letter has been uploaded to the candidate’s profile, which will allow them to schedule their examinations at a Pearson VUE Testing Center. The ATT letter is required for entrance into the testing center. The application for certification is open for four years from the date the payment is processed at NCCAOM. New education eligibility requirements implemented after the application’s payment date will not affect the applicant.

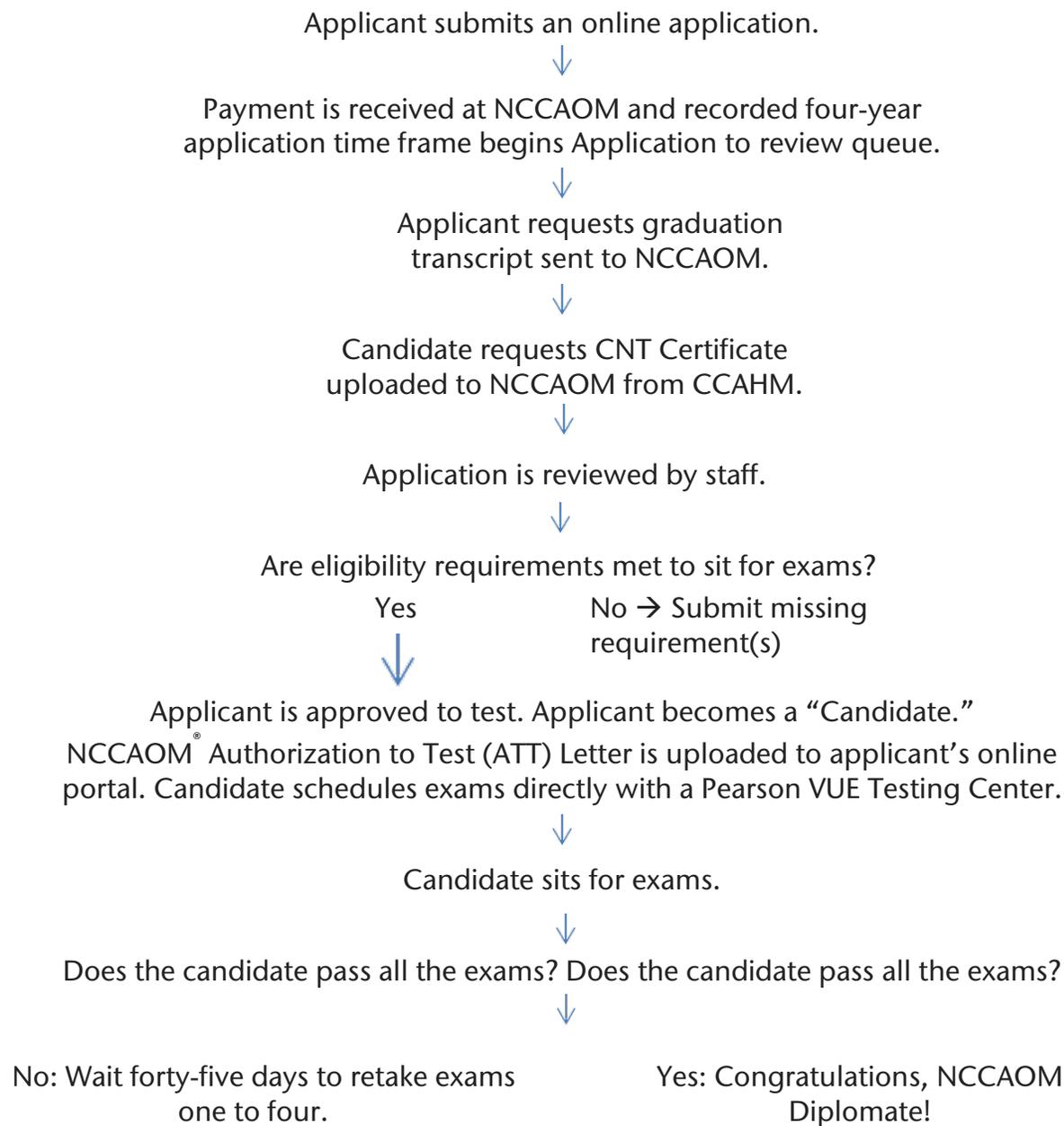
### **NCCAOM Certification Requirements**

1. Successfully pass all NCCAOM examinations for the respective certification.
2. Complete a background check (for reinstatement only).
3. Complete CPR and PDA courses (for reinstatement only).

The candidate is responsible to meet any new certification requirement (e.g., new examination) that is implemented during the four-year application timeframe.



## Steps to NCCAOM Certification



To send certification & exam verification to a State Acupuncture Board(s), submit the NCCAOM® Examination Results and Certification Verification Form to NCCAOM from your NCCAOM account on the online portal, by clicking on the orange ‘Request State Verification’ button.



## Guide to NCCAOM Certification

		Oriental Medicine Dip. O.M. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>	Acupuncture Dip. Ac. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>	Chinese Herbology Dipl. C.H. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>
<b>NCCAOM Examinations</b>				
Foundations of Oriental Medicine Acupuncture with Point Location	FOM ACPL	FOM, ACPL, CH, BIO	FOM, ACPL, BIO	FOM, CH, BIO
Chinese Herbology Biomedicine	CH BIO			
<b>Eligibility to Take Exams and Exams Required for NCCAOM Certification by Program</b>				
Route One Formal education – United States Program (Masters, or Professional Doctorate)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Route Two Formal education - International Program		Yes	Yes	Yes
Route Three Apprenticeship		Not eligible	Yes	Not eligible
Route Four Combination of Apprenticeship & Acupuncture Formal Degree Education Program		Not eligible	Yes	Not eligible
Route Five Conversion to Oriental Medicine		Yes	Not applicable	Not applicable
Route Eight NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists (Passed the CALE exam before January 13, 2020)		Yes Exams not required for NCCAOM Certification purposes	Not applicable	Not applicable
CCAOM Original Clean Needle Technique Certificate of Completion		Yes	Yes	No
Graduate Transcript (Routes One, Two, Four, and Five)		Yes	Yes	Yes



NCCAOM Formal Education Requirements			
Formal Education (Minimum Masters Level)	Four-year degree 2625 hrs. 146 credits	Three-year degree 1905 hrs. 105 credits	Three-year Ac degree plus CH Certificate 660 hrs. & recognized by ACAOM

## Certification Routes

### Formal Education

Applicants applying under Routes one (United States) and two (International) must meet the requirements below to sit for the NCCAOM examinations.

1. The educational program must have oversight by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) (Route 1) or an international government, private agency, or association, society, or organization (Route 2).
2. The applicant must graduate from a program that meets the education standards set by ACAOM. See the table below:

### Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (ACAOM)

#### Hours/credits Program

##### Oriental Medicine Program

Minimum four-year master's degree, diploma, or certificate program with 2,625 Hours or 146 Credits consisting of the following breakdown:

- Oriental Medicine/Acupuncture Theory = 705 Hrs. / 47 credits
- Didactic Oriental Herbal Studies = 450 Hrs. / 30 credits
- \*Acupuncture/Chinese Herbology Clinic = 870 Hrs. / 29 credits
- Biomedicine = 510 Hrs. / 34 credits
- Counseling, Communications, Ethics Practice Management = 90 Hrs. / 6 credits



### **Acupuncture Program**

Minimum 3-Year master's degree, diploma, or certificate program with 1905 Hours or 105 Credits consisting of the following breakdown:

- Oriental Medicine/Acupuncture Theory = 705 Hrs. / 47 credits
- Acupuncture Clinic = 660 Hrs. / 22 credits
- Biomedicine = 450 Hrs. / 30 credits
- Counseling, Communications, Ethics, Practice Management = 90 Hrs. / 6 credits

### **Chinese Herbology Program**

\*ACAOM Guideline: The Chinese herbal certificate training program for Master of Acupuncture students and practitioners will be a minimum of 450 hours of didactic instruction in herbs, and 210 hours of herbal clinical training.

## **Route One: Formal Education: United States Applicants**

Applicants applying under Route 1 are graduates from a master's or Professional Doctorate (PD) program accredited or in candidacy status by ACAOM. If the PD program has not yet achieved candidacy, then the PD program must follow the following criteria:

1. Has an ACAOM accredited Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine master's degree program that follows ACAOM standards.
2. Has submitted a substantive change request to ACAOM to begin the PD program,
3. Has had the PD program curriculum verified by ACAOM staff, to include all the master's degree competencies for the Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine program.

Initial NCCAOM Certification requires that the applicant meet the ACAOM educational requirements (page fifteen) and complete an accredited degree, diploma, or certificate program for the respective NCCAOM certification program.

- *NCCAOM Certification in Oriental Medicine:* Minimum four-year master's or PD program in Oriental Medicine.
- *NCCAOM Certification in Acupuncture:* Minimum three-year master's or PD program in Acupuncture.
- *NCCAOM Certification in Chinese Herbology:* Minimum four-year master's or PD program in Oriental Medicine OR a master's or Professional Doctorate in Acupuncture and a post-graduate Chinese Herbal Certificate Program recognized by ACAOM.



Additional eligibility requirements to receive an authorization to test letter:

1. Graduation transcript, uploaded directly from the school to NCCAOM,
2. CCAOM Clean Needle Technique (CNT) Certificate of Completion, uploaded directly from CCAHM to NCCAOM,
3. ADA documentation if applicable.

The NCCAOM® *Application for Certification* is valid for four years from the date submitted and is available from the candidate's profile on the online certification portal.

### Route Two: Formal Education: International Applicants

Applicants applying under the international route must have a degree/diploma in Oriental Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine or Acupuncture from an academic institution that meets the following requirements.

1. Government Oversight or Private Accreditation:
  - A. The program is approved by a foreign government's Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, or equivalent agency.
  - B. The school is approved by an international private accreditation agency with standards that are comparable to those of ACAOM and are recognized for that purpose by the respective government entity.
  - C. The school is approved by an acupuncture and/or herbal medicine professional society, association or organization that sets acupuncture and herbal medicine education standards which are comparable to those of ACAOM, are recognized for that purpose, and has an enforcement agency that ensures standards are met and maintained.
2. Graduate Transcript: Documentation from a third-party review agency authenticating the distribution of academic hours/credits per program that are comparable to ACAOM standards.
3. CCAHM Clean Needle Technique (CNT) Certificate of Completion – uploaded directly from CCAHM to NCCAOM.

The NCCAOM® *Application for Certification* is valid for four years from the date submitted and is available from the candidate's profile on the online certification portal.

### Third-Party Education Review

NCCAOM requires international applicants to have their education program and



transcript reviewed by a third-party agency to confirm document authenticity. Please note that the agency does not ‘approve’ the educational program but verifies the authenticity of documents and provides a course-by-course comparability evaluation of the graduate transcript. The foreign education review process typically takes six months to complete.

International applicants are to create an account on the NCCAOM Certification Portal to obtain a NCCAOM ID number. Once the NCCAOM online account is created click on the orange “International Verification” button, which will direct you to the International Consultants of Delaware (ICD) website to complete the ICD application. International applicants are advised to complete the third-party agency review before applying to NCCAOM.

Once you have received your NCCAOM ID you may register with the Council of Colleges for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (CCAHM) for the [Clean Needle Technique \(CNT\) program](#).

### Third-Party Review Agency Accepted by NCCAOM

NCCAOM requires a course-by-course comparability evaluation from International Consultants of Delaware (ICD). Applicants can access the website through their online portal or at [NCCAOM Credential Assessment](#) to apply for a credential evaluation online. The ICD application process requires an original foreign language and an English translation of the graduate transcript to include a breakdown of clinical practice credits/hours by department and submission of course descriptions/syllabi. ICD provides all supporting documents to the NCCAOM along with the credential evaluation report. Applicants are advised to wait until after NCCAOM receives the ICD credential evaluation report to apply for certification. Once the NCCAOM application has been submitted, the Customer Relations Team will review the documents received from ICD and, if approved will issue the authorization to sit for the National Board Exams.

After submitting the NCCAOM application for certification go to the [CCAHM website](#), and submit to CCAHM the CNT Certificate, Verification Request to have your CNT certificate of completion sent directly from the CCAHM to NCCAOM. The CNT certificate of completion is required to be on file with the NCCAOM for authorization to take the certification exams.

**Important notice:** World Education Services (WES) transcript evaluations applied for and begun after December 31, 2017, are no longer acceptable for education eligibility.



NCCAOM Examinations administered at international locations are only offered by “official” level one Pearson VUE Testing Centers. For detailed information, access the [Pearson VUE website](#).

### Supplemental Education for International Students

International applicants who are denied eligibility to sit for NCCAOM examinations based on a shortage in academic hours may elect to complete supplemental education in the United States or abroad. The following guidelines should be considered and followed:

1. The supplemental education is subject to review and approval by the NCCAOM® Eligibility Committee.
2. The supplemental education cannot exceed 660 academic hours.
3. All coursework for supplemental education in Oriental Medicine/ Acupuncture Theory, Chinese herbal studies or Acupuncture/Herbal clinic must be completed at a school accredited or in candidacy status with ACAOM or from an international institution that meets the foreign institution oversight requirements as stated in Route 2. The supplemental education may be obtained at more than one accredited school.
4. Course work in biomedicine, communication, counseling, ethics, and/or safety may be completed at one of the following.
  - A. an ACAOM accredited program
  - B. a non-vocational school regionally accredited by an agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education
  - C. a non-vocational accredited institution recognized by a foreign government’s Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, or equivalent agency.

For examples of supplemental coursework content that will meet eligibility requirements in the areas of biomedicine, communication, counseling, ethics, and/or safety review the domains listed in the [NCCAOM Biomedicine Exam Content Outline](#).

### Route Three: Apprenticeship

#### Route Three Policy Change Notice

The Apprenticeship for US and International Applicants (Route 3) will be eliminated as of December 31, 2021. The apprenticeship program must be completed and the application for certification as well as all apprenticeship documentation as required must be received by the NCCAOM no later than December 31, 2021.



Apprenticeship is defined as clinical and didactic training completed under a qualified preceptor(s) who assumes responsibility for the theoretical and practical education of the apprentice. The curriculum is designed by the preceptor and should use *the [NCCAOM Exam Content Outlines](#)* as a guideline. Please wait to submit the NCCAOM application and training documentation in an organized, bookmarked portfolio until the apprenticeship is completed (due to file size restrictions, if necessary, create and submit multiple portfolios). The NCCAOM will not accept single unorganized documents.

The *NCCAOM® Application for Certification* is valid for four years and is available from the candidate's profile on the online certification portal.

### **Policy Change for Applications Submitted after January 1, 2017:**

All applicants for NCCAOM certification applying through Route three: Apprenticeship U.S. and International are required to satisfactorily complete at least two academic years (sixty semester credits) of formal education in addition to the required apprenticeship contact hours. The sixty semester credits are encouraged to include bio-medical health-related or basic life sciences coursework such as biology, philology, anatomy or see the [NCCAOM Biomedicine Exam Content Outline](#) in qualified domain and coursework content areas from a non- vocational institution of higher education accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or an equivalent accrediting agency in the country in which the education was received. The academic transcript must be submitted, in English, to the NCCAOM directly from the academic institution.

### **Pre-Registration**

The NCCAOM does not approve or accredit educational programs. Applicants are asked to submit the completed and notarized *NCCAOM Preceptor Registration Form*, and the *Apprenticeship Experience Outline* form and email all supporting documents to NCCAOM to [info@thenccaom.org](mailto:info@thenccaom.org) to state their intent to apply for NCCAOM certification via an Apprenticeship Route and to request a copy of the *NCCAOM® Apprenticeship Workbook*.

1. Pre-registration documentation includes the *NCCAOM Preceptor Registration Form*, and the *Apprenticeship Experience Outline* form notarized as applicable from each qualified preceptor requiring:
  - a. A description of preceptor's practice and work environment for the prior five consecutive years, including the type of practice and the number of patient visits per year.
  - b. A statement of the number of apprentices being supervised by the preceptor during the applicant's apprenticeship training.



- c. The preceptor's resume or curriculum vitae
  - d. A copy of the current state license, discipline free
  - e. A copy of a current business license or employee documentation to work in a clinic or hospital.
  - f. Notarized affidavits from two healthcare professionals. The affidavits must include written testimony based on personal knowledge of dates, volume, scope, and type of practice of the preceptor.
2. The NCCAOM® *Apprenticeship Workbook* is available to the applicant and preceptor to plan and document the apprenticeship program.
  3. A maximum of two apprentices may study clinical training under a single qualified preceptor at any one time.

## Preceptor Qualifications

### Disciplinary and Regulatory Oversight

A preceptor in the United States must be an active NCCAOM Diplomate or a licensed acupuncturist in good standing and free from disciplinary action by the NCCAOM and their state acupuncture regulatory board.

An international preceptor must be registered or licensed by a government, oversight agency or association to practice acupuncture, as applicable in the country of his or her practice and be free from disciplinary action by the oversight body.

## Preceptor Practice

1. During each of the five consecutive years immediately prior to becoming the applicant's preceptor, the preceptor must have practiced a minimum of 500 treatments\* on a minimum of 100 different patients.

**OR**

During their career to-date, the preceptor must have completed a minimum of 5,000 treatments\* on a minimum of 250 different patients.

2. The preceptor may be in a solo practice, a group practice, a hospital or community clinic, or an integrative healthcare setting. During each year of the apprenticeship program, the preceptor must practice a minimum of 500 treatments\* to a minimum of 100 different patients.

**NOTE:** Specialized practice (e.g., treatment for addiction or smoking withdrawal) may be included in the preceptor's practice; however, such specialized limited treatments do not count toward the required 500 patient visits per year.

\*Acupuncture treatments for initial certification.



\*Chinese herbology consultations/prescriptions for conversion to Oriental Medicine.

## Apprenticeship Program Requirements

### 1. Contact Hours

Contact hours are defined as clock hours that the apprentice spends under the direct supervision of the preceptor. Off-site supervision is not included.

- A. Acupuncture program: a minimum of 3,000 contact hours in no less than three years and no more than six years.
- B. Chinese Herbology (for Diplomates of Acupuncture only converting to Oriental Medicine certification): 1,000 contact hours which must take place over a minimum of one year and no more than two years. Each contact hour may incorporate didactic and clinical training related specifically to Chinese herbology knowledge and treatments.

### 2. Increasing Responsibilities

The apprentice's patient contact responsibilities must increase over the course of the program. By completion of the program, the apprentice shall have demonstrated the ability to perform comprehensive patient interviews, diagnoses, and treatments under the preceptor's supervision.

### 3. Apprenticeship Training Documentation for Initial NCCAOM Certification in Acupuncture or for Conversion to Oriental Medicine

The program documentation demonstrates evidence of consistent growth in knowledge and clinical professionalism. All documentation submitted will be reviewed by subject matter experts (SMEs) who may request additional feedback and/or information.

### 4. Preceptor's Documentation

A. *Apprenticeship Experience Outline* - A descriptive record of the didactic and clinical portions of the apprenticeship including actual:

Pre-registration:

- Apprenticeship's start and end dates.
- Breaks from instruction. A break longer than one month requires further explanation.
- Estimated number of contact hours to be completed by the apprentice per year.

Submit with Apprenticeship Portfolio:

- Curriculum design/educational training outline to include a timeline, areas of



study, competencies (knowledge/skills/abilities to be learned in each area of study and bibliography of text(s).

- \*Student Evaluations (Report Card), six-month intervals
- Copy of time sheets for tracking apprenticeship contact hours. Provide total contact hours for each year.

\*Track/document the course of study to include:

- Course Name, course objective(s), core concept(s) and verification the of the competencies and level of competencies learned by the apprentice.
- Dates of instruction and number of hours of instruction on each core concept.

B. *\*Clinical Objectives Worksheet*: Description of the preceptor’s clinical supervision and explanation of the apprentice’s increasing responsibilities for performing patient interviews, diagnoses, and treatments.

C. A minimum of five assessments passed by the apprentice for each 1,000 apprenticeship contact hours (actual scored quizzes/exams/written assignments that reflect the right and wrong answers). The quizzes/exams/written assignments must demonstrate the apprentice’s achievement of the course objectives (i.e., 15 exams, quizzes, or written assignments over the course of the full 3,000-hour apprenticeship).

## 5. Apprentice’s Documentation

Submit in the Apprenticeship Portfolio:

- A. Representative sample of the apprentice’s notes (typewritten) demonstrating core concepts learned over the term of the apprenticeship program demonstrating increased levels of knowledge and responsibilities.
- B. \*Five new patient records for each 1,000 apprenticeship contact hours including a follow-up patient record for each of the five patients (i.e., fifteen new patient records and fifteen follow-up patient records over the course of the full 3,000-hour apprenticeship program).
- C. \*Three unique case studies for each 1,000 apprenticeship contact hours (i.e., a total of nine case studies over the course of the full 3,000-hour apprenticeship program).

**NOTE:** The case studies must be of patients OTHER than the patients included in #B above.

- D. Proof of completion of the [Clean Needle Technique \(CNT\) course offered by the Council of Colleges for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine \(CCAHM\)](#).

\* The asterisk indicates guideline templates that the applicant can request from NCCAOM.



## Route Four: Combination of Formal Education and Apprenticeship

Applicants using Route four to reach eligibility to sit for NCCAOM examinations for initial certification in Acupuncture are awarded points for meeting the requirements in the Formal Education and Apprenticeship Routes. Applicants must earn a combination of points from each category.

### Point Allocation

#### Formal Education

- A. Applicants are awarded ten points for each full year (635 hours) of formal education. Hours are not prorated: 635 = one-year; 1,270 = two-years
- B. The formal education program must meet the criteria described in Route one: Formal Education: United States or Route two: Formal Education: International Applicants.

#### Apprenticeship

- A. Applicants are awarded ten points per minimum 1,000 contact hours during a twelve-month period with a qualified preceptor.
- B. A maximum of ten points may be earned per calendar year or a twelve consecutive month period. Hours more than 1,000 during a twelve-month period are not awarded additional points.
- C. The apprenticeship contact hours, qualified preceptor requirements and documentation must meet the criteria described under Route three: Apprenticeship for United States or International Applicants.

NCCAOM Diplomates of Acupuncture – who are applicants using apprenticeship training for Conversion to NCCAOM Oriental Medicine certification must complete a one-year apprenticeship in Chinese Herbal Medicine.

- A. A minimum of 1,000 contact hours, which must take place over a minimum of one year and no more than two years. Each contact hour may incorporate didactic and clinical training related specifically to Chinese herbology knowledge and treatments.

The NCCAOM® *Application for Certification* is valid for four years and is available from the candidate's profile on the online certification portal.

For additional information on this route of eligibility please contact NCCAOM by email at [info@thencanaom.org](mailto:info@thencanaom.org).



## Route Five: Converting to an NCCAOM Oriental Medicine Certification

A Diplomate in Acupuncture and/or Chinese Herbology may apply for a new NCCAOM Certification in Oriental Medicine. The details can be found in the *NCCAOM Conversion to Oriental Medicine Handbook* found on the NCCAOM website on the [Diplomate Resources, Forms page](#) by clicking on the Handbooks icon.

## Route Eight: NCCAOM Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists

The NCCAOM has on its website [Information for California Stakeholders](#). There is also a page on the website dedicated to the [NCCAOM Route for California Licensed Acupuncturists](#). A list of [frequently asked questions and answers \(PDF\)](#) about the time-limited Route for CA Licensed Acupuncturists is available. Any additional questions or comments should be emailed to [publicrelations@thenccaom.org](mailto:publicrelations@thenccaom.org). Applicants must apply by September 30, 2021 and meet and complete all eligibility requirements to achieve NCCAOM certification no later than December 31, 2021.

### Eligibility Requirements

1. Hold an active California Acupuncture license that is in good standing at the time of application submission that was obtained on or before January 12, 2020. Applicants licensed in CA after January 12, 2020, must request electronic proof of having completed the CALE exam on or before January 12, 2020 directly from the California Acupuncture Board (CAB), to be sent directly to the NCCAOM.
2. Submit the NCCAOM Application for Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists and pay the application fee.
3. Demonstrate competency in Clean Needle Technique (See the section **Clean Needle Technique Requirement** found in this handbook after Route eight).

The NCCAOM® *Application for Certification for California Licensed Acupuncturists* is valid for one year, or until December 31, 2021 (whichever comes first) and is available from the candidate's profile on the online certification portal.

### Clean Needle Technique Requirement

#### All Applicants – CCAHM CNT Course:

An NCCAOM approved Clean Needle Technique (CNT), practical course, is required for all applicants (all Routes) for certification in Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine. The Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine's (CCAHM), [Clean Needle Technique \(CNT\) course](#) is the only course approved by the NCCAOM. The CNT course date, as noted on the CNT certificate, must be completed within six years of the



application submission date. To demonstrate CNT competency standards are met, the practical course certificate of completion must be sent directly from the provider and maintained in the applicant’s NCCAOM certification file.

Completion of the online, practical CNT course is required to take the examinations.

**When the CNT Practical Course Date is Not Within Six Years of the Application Date:**

If completion of the practical CNT course documented with NCCAOM is more than six years prior to the date of application; **AND** the applicant has held a continuous license to practice acupuncture within the last three years,

**THEN**

The applicant may document the completion of an NCCAOM approved CNT Review Course (CCAHM CNT Review Course: Acupuncture Safety) taken within six years of the application submission date.

If completion of the practical CNT course documented with NCCAOM is more than six years prior to the date of application; **AND** the applicant has not held a continuous license to practice acupuncture within the last three years,

**THEN**

The applicant must complete the original CNT course with CCAHM and request a verification of the new course to be sent to the NCCAOM directly from CCAHM.

NCCAOM certification cannot be awarded until verification of a valid CNT certificate is received directly from the provider.

Please visit the CCAHM website at [www.ccaom.org](http://www.ccaom.org) for more information on scheduling to take the CNT course or to complete online information for [verification of the CNT certificate](#) to be sent directly to NCCAOM.

**NCCAOM Request for Information and Appeal Process**

NCCAOM provides for a fair and equitable process to review and resolve a certification request or complaint. A candidate or a Diplomate may submit a request or file a complaint to NCCAOM if they believe there has been an error in a certification decision, or if they have comments about specific aspects of the process.

**How to Submit a Request for Information Form**

If an “applicant”, “candidate” or “Diplomate” believes there has been an error in a certification decision or has comments about specific aspects of a process, they may complete the online [NCCAOM® Request Form](#).

An acceptable reason for a request includes a situation that affects life circumstances



(e.g., personal, family, medical, financial, etc.). The candidate/Diplomate should be specific when outlining the request or complaint and submit documentation within thirty days of the event.

Grievous complaints that jeopardize the safety of a patient or the public are forwarded to the Professional Ethics & Discipline Department for their review and potential investigation.

NCCAOM staff will research the request or complaint and, if necessary, seek counsel from senior management for a resolution that meets compliance with the policies of NCCAOM.

NCCAOM staff will communicate the decision, in writing to the candidate/Diplomate within thirty days of the receipt of the request.

## NCCAOM Application for Certification

### How to Create Your NCCAOM Account

On the NCCAOM Home Page, click on the “Log in” button on the top right.



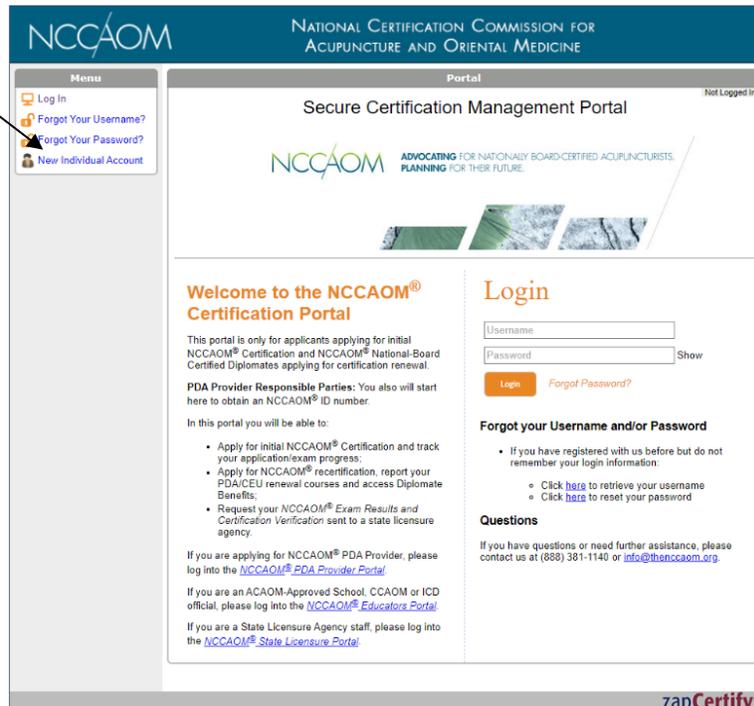
[ADVOCACY/REGULATORY](#) [CERTIFICATION](#) [EDUCATION](#) [RESOURCES](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [LOGIN](#)

FIND A PRACTITIONER SEARCH LOGIN



### Choose *Applicants and Diplomates*

Click on “*New Individual Account*”. To avoid a duplicate record, create a New Account only if this is your first time applying for initial certification.



Complete all fields to create your account. Once your account is created, the system will issue you an ID #. This number is very important and gives you access to your account. Be sure to make a note of your NCCAOM ID number and password.

**Please note**, if you applied with NCCAOM at any point in the past, you already have an NCCAOM online account and ID number. If you do not remember your login credentials, email us at [info@thenccaom.org](mailto:info@thenccaom.org) for assistance. Creation of a duplicate account will cause delays in your application processing.

## Online Application

Once you have created your online account, within your online account click on “Portal Home”, and then “Apply for New Certification” to complete your NCCAOM® Application for Certification. The application process, including payment, must be completed in one session. If not completed, the application will time out and must be re-submitted. School transcripts or CNT certificates cannot be uploaded by the school or CCAHM until an application for NCCAOM certification is submitted and the payment is processed.

For assistance, email [info@thenccaom.org](mailto:info@thenccaom.org).

## Tracking Your Certification Application

All applicants are automatically issued an NCCAOM identification number when an online profile is created. To track their certification progress, exam data, or access the



Authorization to Test Letter, the applicant must log in to their online account.

### Processing Times

Candidates should allow two weeks (U.S. applicants only) for staff to review their eligibility requirements to sit for the NCCAOM examinations. The review will begin after the graduation transcript is uploaded by the school and the CNT certificate of completion is uploaded by the CCAHM. Once approved, the NCCAOM® *Authorization to Test Letter* (ATTL) will be uploaded to the candidate's profile and the candidate will be notified via email.

The ATTL contains important information about testing, including,

- How to schedule/reschedule NCCAOM exams with the testing center,
- Information on time allotment for each exam module,
- Critical information about the Non-Disclosure Agreement.

This will help candidates schedule their examinations at a Pearson VUE Testing Center. Candidates of Routes one, two, four, and five have four years from the date their application payment is processed to complete the NCCAOM Certification.

Submission of an application does not automatically guarantee an applicant is eligible to sit for an NCCAOM examination.

### Document Guidelines

1. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that NCCAOM receives all required documentation and fees.
2. It is imperative that the applicant's legal name on the application matches their legal identification. This ensures that the NCCAOM® *Authorization to Test Letter* (ATTL) has the correct information to allow the applicant entry into the testing site. The applicant will not be admitted to the testing site if the legal identification name does not match the name submitted on the application, and hence the ATT letter.
3. The applicant's name must be included on all supporting documentation.
4. Supporting documents that are not in the English language should be accompanied by an official English translation.
5. Documents submitted as part of the application will be retained in NCCAOM's files and will not be returned. Do not send irreplaceable originals of certificates, diplomas, or other documents.
6. Accuracy and truthful submission and disclosure are essential. Falsification, misrepresentation, or omission of any material fact required on the application or during the certification process is grounds for denial or revocation of certification.
7. The NCCAOM will verify the authenticity of all documents, including international



and translated education documents before determining eligibility to test. This verification process adds time to the application review period. Applicants who are using documentation from outside the United States or documentation that is translated from another language are encouraged to apply well in advance of the time when they are wishing to take examinations.

Submission of an application does not automatically guarantee eligibility to take an examination on any date.

### **Acceptance of the Online *NCCAOM*® *Statement of Acknowledgement***

The 'acceptance' of the online *NCCAOM*® *Statement of Acknowledgement* authorizes NCCAOM to obtain additional information from third parties, if necessary. The acceptance also establishes eligibility for certification and authorizes NCCAOM to release examination scores to ACAOM and the school(s) attended.

### **Accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Passed by Congress in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications. NCCAOM has joined with Pearson VUE Testing Centers to assist with reasonable accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the examinations, jeopardize security validity, or pose an undue financial or administrative burden to the NCCAOM. NCCAOM will review the applicant's request, documentation, and the professional recommendations to determine whether the accommodation is reasonable and appropriate to the testing environment. Requests should be submitted early to avoid undue delay in processing the application. A link containing complete information, forms and procedures for requesting ADA accommodations is available on the NCCAOM website.

Two (2) forms make up the ADA accommodations request and can be found on the NCCAOM website at <http://www.nccaom.org/applicant-forms/> and click on the FORMS button to locate the individual ADA forms. The forms should be completed and submitted along with the *NCCAOM*® *Application for Certification*. The evaluation process cannot begin until all the components to the request are received so plan accordingly:

1. The online [NCCAOM](#)® *ADA Candidate Request Form* describes the disability and the need for specific accommodations. The disability or functional limitation should align with the accommodation so that the adjustment to the testing procedure is applicable to the identified impairment. A functional limitation is defined as the behavioral manifestation of the



disability that impedes the individual's ability to function.

2. The online [NCCAOM® ADA School Confirmation Form](#) documents previous accommodations provided by an educational institutions or other testing agencies. If a candidate received ADA accommodations while attending an ACAOM-approved school, they will have to submit an *NCCAOM® ADA School Confirmation Form completed by their school official*. Those accommodations received by the candidate should be no more than four years from the date the ADA accommodations request is submitted to the NCCAOM.

If the candidate did not receive accommodations from their school or if the accommodations from their school are more than four years, then an evaluation report from a licensed healthcare professional who is qualified to diagnose or treat the examinee's physical or mental health impairments, either authored within the past year or supplemented by a current letter from a licensed healthcare professional must be submitted directly to the NCCAOM by the licensed healthcare professional. If the diagnosis relates to a mental health impairment, the licensed professional should have a primary practice focus on mental health. The licensed professionals who authored the report and, if applicable, the supplemental letter should have a "professional/clinical relationship" with the candidate, having treated and/or consulted with the candidate. If more than one year has passed since the evaluation report was authored, a licensed professional who has treated or evaluated the candidate within the last twelve (12) months must submit a supplemental letter confirming the current accuracy of the evaluation report's conclusions or identifying any relevant changes in the candidate's abilities and limitations. The letter must be on the professional's official letterhead and include their address, telephone number, signature, and credentials.

The report should include:

1. The specific diagnostic procedures or tests administered.  
Diagnostic methods used should be appropriate to the disability and in alignment with current professional protocol.
2. The results of the diagnostic procedures and/or tests and a comprehensive interpretation of the results.
3. The specific diagnosis of the disability, with an accompanying description of the examinee's limitations due to the disability.
4. A statement of how those limitations affect the examinee's ability to meet the NCCAOM's certification and examination requirements.
5. A summary of the complete evaluation with recommendations for the specific accommodations and how they will reduce the impact of identified functional limitation. If alternative accommodations would be sufficient, the report should identify those alternatives.



Please do not submit the following documents: the NCCAOM will not accept them.

1. Handwritten letters from licensed professionals.
2. Handwritten patient records/notes from patient chart.
3. Diagnoses on prescription pad.
4. Self-evaluations found on the Internet or in any print publication.
5. Research articles.
6. Original evaluation/diagnostic documents; submit copies of the original documents if needed.
7. Previous correspondence from the NCCAOM; the NCCAOM maintains copies of all correspondence.
8. Correspondence from educational institutions or testing agencies not directly addressed to the NCCAOM.

Scheduling an NCCAOM examination with a Pearson VUE Testing Center is done after the accommodation has been approved. If you schedule a testing appointment before the approval of testing accommodations, you will be required to reschedule the appointment.

**NOTE:** Testing accommodations cannot be added to a previously scheduled testing appointment.

### Agent Designation Form

Applicants who wish to have another person make inquiries on their behalf should submit an [NCCAOM® Agent Designation Form \(PDF\)](#). The form is available on the [NCCAOM website](#). For security reasons, all inquirers will be asked for identifying data that helps NCCAOM protect the applicant's personal information.

### Veterans Reimbursement

NCCAOM examinations have been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs for reimbursement to military personnel eligible for the G.I. Bill. Veterans should submit their official NCCAOM examination results and a copy of the paid receipt to the appropriate processing center of the Department of Veteran Affairs for reimbursement. Additional information can be found by visiting the license and certification program section of the Department of Veterans Affairs website at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

### Name Change

If candidates have a name change during their four-year application validity time, they must submit an official online [Name Change Request Form](#).



The following documents are required during the Name Change Request Form submission:

1. A copy of the court order authorizing the name change (i.e., marriage license, divorce decree, etc.)
2. A copy of a government issued photo ID (i.e., driver's license, passport) containing the new name.

### Changing an NCCAOM Certification Program

During the NCCAOM application process, the candidate may wish to change to a different certification program. The *NCCAOM Upgrade* (from Acupuncture (AC) to Oriental Medicine (OM)) *Application* must be requested by contacting NCCAOM, via phone at (888) 381-1140, or email at [info@thenccaom.org](mailto:info@thenccaom.org). The *Downgrade* (from OM to AC) *Application* becomes automatically available from the candidate's NCCAOM Portal after the Acupuncture with Point Location, Foundations of Oriental Medicine and Biomedicine exam modules are passed.

NCCAOM staff are happy to assist and can be reached for more information by emailing [info@thenccaom.org](mailto:info@thenccaom.org).



## NCCAOM Certification and Examination Fee Schedule

<b>Application Fee (Paid to NCCAOM)</b>	
Oriental Medicine Certification	\$595
Acupuncture Certification	\$500
Chinese Herbology Certification	\$500
<b>NCCAOM Examination Fee (Paid to Pearson Vue)</b>	
	<b>English &amp; Foreign Language</b>
FOM – Foundations of Oriental Medicine	\$310
ACPL – Acupuncture with Point Location	\$310
CH – Chinese Herbology	\$310
BIO - Biomedicine	\$310
Copy of Records (special request)	\$25
Returned Check Fee	\$35
Duplicate NCCAOM Certificate and ID Card <a href="#">NCCAOM® Duplicate Certificate – ID Card Order Form</a>	\$100
Certification/Examination Results to a State Board	
Diplomates and Candidates with an Open Application	\$45
Former Diplomates Inactive Status	\$75
Former Diplomates Lapsed Status	\$100
Terminated Constituents	\$150
Constituent with Expired Application	\$150
<b>Optional Diplomat Marketing Resources</b>	
NCCAOM Digital Badges	FREE
NCCAOM Certification Booklets	Varies depending on quantity ordered
Consumer Guide Brochure	
Providing National Standards Brochure	

For your protection, only VISA, MC & AMEX payments are accepted for online applications. All payments are non-refundable.



## NCCAOM Examinations

### NCCAOM Examination Preparation and Resources

NCCAOM Examinations	Oriental Medicine Dipl. O.M. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>	Acupuncture Dipl. Ac. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>	Chinese Herbology Dipl. C.H. (NCCAOM) <sup>®</sup>
Foundations of Oriental Medicine (FOM)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Biomedicine (BIO)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acupuncture with Point Location (ACP)	Yes	Yes	No
Chinese Herbology (CH)	Yes	No	Yes

### Linking NCCAOM Job Analysis Survey and Examinations

The NCCAOM conducts a Job Analysis, which consists of a national survey of the acupuncture and herbal medicine profession. The survey is completed by Diplomates and acupuncture and herbal medicine practitioners every five to seven years and tracks the established skills and emerging new tasks in the profession. Specific data is collected to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to successfully perform each task.

Tracking the tasks and KSAs monitors the changes in acupuncture and herbal medicine skills overtime that have an impact on the entry examinations for the profession. Therefore, the NCCAOM Job Analysis is the link that connects the examination content to the core KSAs required for competent practice and national board certification in the profession. NCCAOM completed the most recent Job Analysis in 2017.

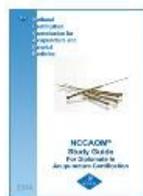
### NCCAOM Candidate Preparation Handbooks and Content Outlines

The NCCAOM has developed Candidate Preparation Handbooks to assist candidates in preparing for the examinations. Each Handbook is based on the most recent Job Analysis which contains the content outlines and suggested bibliographies for each exam module, and the *NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Examination Administration Frequently Asked Questions* to assist candidates with completing the examination process. The



Candidate Preparation Handbooks, based on the 2017 NCCAOM Job Analysis, are effective as of January 2020.

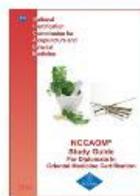
Candidate Preparation Handbooks can be downloaded from the [Examination Preparation Center](#) page on the NCCAOM website at no cost. See an image below of the NCCAOM Exam Preparation Handbooks.



[Acupuncture Certification](#)



[Chinese Herbology Certification](#)



[Oriental Medicine Certification](#)

In addition, the NCCAOM Exam Content Outlines are available in English, Chinese and Korean language for each module.

### NCCAOM Examination Format

The adaptive examinations are offered in English and delivered in a computerized format that consist of 100 multiple choice questions. One question appears at a time on the computer screen and may include visual images. Once the candidate selects their answer, they can move to the next question. It is important to note that the candidate is not able to go back to review or change answers once they have moved to the next question.

In the past, NCCAOM examinations were also offered in Chinese and Korean language.

Due to the current inability to predict the number of candidates taking these exams, along with the inability to offer them in other countries due to the ongoing, international COVID-19 pandemic, the NCCAOM has canceled the administration of the 2021, Chinese and Korean language exams. When offered, foreign language exams are scheduled only when a pre-identified number of candidates are registered per examination. The exams are administered in a linear computerized format that consist of one-hundred multiple choice questions. Unlike the adaptive examinations, at the end of the exam the candidate can go back and review and/or change previously answered questions within the remaining allotted time.

The NCCAOM will offer foreign language exams again at a to be determined, future



date. Please check the [NCCAOM website](#) for dates of examination administrations.

### Computerized Adaptive vs. Linear Exam Formats

Administration Features	Adaptive Format	Linear Format
Adheres to Exam Content Outline	Yes	Yes
Availability	Year round	Specified dates
Exam Length and Allotted Time	100 items 2.5 hours allotted time.	Foreign Language Exam 100 items 2.5 hours allotted time. <u>English Exam</u> 130 items 3.25 hours allotted time
Non-Disclosure Agreement	Yes	Yes
Exam Administration	Unique format for each candidate	Fixed format for all candidates
Ability to Skip Items	No	No
Review Feature	No	Yes, Once all items have been answered.
Preliminary Pass/Fail Status Before End of Exam	Yes	No
Official Results Report	Mailed within 20-30 business days	Mailed within 30-45 business days

### NCCAOM Examination Policies

#### Confidentiality and Policy Violations

NCCAOM is committed to the integrity and security of its examination process. Candidates have a duty to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the content of the examinations and comply with all examination security policies and procedures.



Any breach of confidentiality that may compromise the security of the examination content (e.g., sharing or receiving information about the examination from another person including teachers/professors, before, during, or after the examination) will be grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to denial or revocation of certification by NCCAOM. Likewise, any act, either intentional or unintentional, that violates examination rules will be grounds for disciplinary action by NCCAOM.

Proctors are responsible for reporting to NCCAOM any candidates who:

1. May have caused a disruption or interruption during the examination period,
2. Violated procedural rules before or during the examination, and/or
3. Appeared to engage in a method of cheating or seeking unfair advantage either before or during the examination.

NCCAOM will review these reports and apply appropriate disciplinary sanctions. Strict adherence to NCCAOM examination policies and procedures is enforced without exception.

Participation in any examination policy violation(s) occurring during or in connection with an examination, may be sufficient cause for NCCAOM, at its sole discretion, to terminate your participation, invalidate the results of your examination, seek monetary compensation, deny your application for certification, or take other appropriate action at any time, including but not limited to disciplinary action such as suspension or revocation of certification.

Violation of examination policies includes but is not limited to the following actions:

1. Talking with anyone, except the proctors, inside or outside the examination room during the examination period.
2. Giving information about the examination to another person before, during, or after the examination. This includes discussion with professors/teachers and memorizing sections of the examination for use by others.
3. Phone calls or communication by electronic or other means with anyone or anything inside or outside of the examination room during the examination period.
4. Passing or attempting to pass information of any type to another candidate during or after the examination administration.
5. Possessing any extraneous items during the examination period, including but not limited to; books, paper (including scrap paper), notes, note cards, post-it notes, measuring devices (including rulers and calculators), dictionaries (electronic or printed), beepers, cell phones, cameras, and other electronic devices.
6. Writing on any part of the body or clothing before or during the examination



period.

7. Communicating with anyone other than a proctor in the case of a site irregularity in which you must exit the examination room (e.g., fire drill, power outage, medical emergency, etc.), except communications as required because of the emergency. This includes communicating with other candidates while waiting to re-enter the test site, looking at notes or books, and/or re-entering the test site without the expressed permission of the proctors.
8. Accessing notes, cell phones, calculators, beepers, other electronic devices, or individuals from any location either inside or outside the examination room including bathrooms, cars, snack areas, etc.
9. Writing on the desk, other furniture, clothing, or body in the examination room before or during the examination.
10. Allowing visitors into unauthorized areas of the examination site.
11. Impersonating, or attempting to impersonate another candidate, or allowing another person to take the examination on behalf of the candidate.

**Failure to report any examination irregularities, cheating, or other inappropriate behavior.**

Cheating of any kind that has taken place before, during or after the examination must be reported. It is a candidate’s responsibility to report to NCCAOM any site irregularities or testing violations before, during, or after the examination takes place.

**Examination Validity Policy**

A limit is placed on the number of years an exam result is valid for the purposes of NCCAOM certification. The NCCAOM grants up to twelve years for first-time candidate exam validity.

<u>Status</u>	<u>Exam Score Validity for Achieving Initial Certification</u>
Diplomate – Certified, Active	No expiration date
Former Diplomate – Inactive	No expiration date
Former Diplomate – Lapsed expiration date	Three years from active certification
Former Diplomate – Terminated	All exam results expired
Candidate - Application in Process	Twelve years from exam date
Candidate – Reapplication in Process	Twelve years from exam date
Candidate – Application Expired	Twelve years from exam date

**Score Verification**

A candidate may request their NCCAOM examination be re-scored within thirty days of receiving initial notification that they failed the exam. Score verification is simply a manual check of the computer’s scoring, conducted by NCCAOM Testing Staff, to



ensure all responses were accurately recorded. Score verification does not constitute a review of examination content or reconsideration of the correct answer to any item. Individual items and exam content will not be discussed or considered during the score verification process. Candidates who would like to submit a score verification request, please complete the online [NCCAOM® Score Verification Request Form](#). An invoice will be issued on your NCCAOM online portal where you will apply payment. There is a \$100 score verification fee per exam.

Please note that the NCCAOM does not encourage score verification requests. We enforce strict quality control procedures to ensure exam results are accurate before they are released to candidates. Every exam is scored independently by two professional testing companies to ensure each item is scored accurately and the overall score is correct. In addition, both testing companies have multiple checks in place to flag anomalies in test data that require investigation. Due to the thoroughness of the NCCAOM's examination scoring procedures, no errors have ever been identified from a score verification request.

### **Examination Content Complaints**

At the test center, a candidate can file an incident report regarding exam content concerns with the test proctor while the item is still fresh in one's mind. The test proctor is only allowed to record the question (item) number, as they are not allowed to record any exam content specifics or description of the exam items. Be sure to obtain a copy of the incident report number. The incident report will be forwarded onto NCCAOM's Testing staff upon request, and the concerns will be reviewed by multiple subject matter experts (licensed Acupuncturists who are considered experts in the exam content).

Candidates may submit concerns, suspected errors in particular questions, or comments about specific aspects of the examination content by emailing the NCCAOM Testing staff at [examcontent@thenccaom.org](mailto:examcontent@thenccaom.org). All concerns must be in writing and received within thirty days of your exam. Please be as specific as possible when challenging a question(s) for the subject matter experts to review (e.g., an item with a pregnant woman had more than one correct answer).

Please note that no specific exam content will be discussed with candidates, including whether your answers were correct or incorrect. The NCCAOM never releases copies of examinations or individual questions. This is considered best practice within the licensure/certification testing industry and the NCCAOM must protect the integrity of the exam – most especially its content. As the NCCAOM's mission is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the public, we take the security of our exam content very seriously and therefore never share any specific information about questions with candidates.

It is important to refrain from discussing content of the exam with anyone other than



the NCCAOM Testing staff at [examcontent@thenccaom.org](mailto:examcontent@thenccaom.org). Otherwise, candidates will be in violation of the Non-Disclosure Agreement accepted at the test center and adherence to the NCCAOM Code of Ethics signed during the application process. The Candidates have a duty to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the content of the examinations and comply with all examination security policies and procedures. Any breach of confidentiality that may compromise the security of the examination content (e.g., sharing or receiving information about the examination from another person including teachers/professors, before, during, or after the examination) will be grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to denial or revocation of certification by the NCCAOM.

### Examination Content Appeal

If a candidate is not satisfied with the decision of the Examination Development Committee, only then may a candidate appeal the Pass/Fail status decision by sending a letter directly to the “Executive Office” at [executiveoffice@thenccaom.org](mailto:executiveoffice@thenccaom.org), describing the rationale for filing the appeal. The NCCAOM must receive the examination appeal within thirty days of the candidate’s receipt of NCCAOM’s initial decision. The Council of Examination Development Committee (CEDC), comprised of the Chairs and Board liaisons of all the EDCs, will review the appeal request at its next meeting. The Chair and Board liaison from the EDC that made the initial decision will recuse themselves from the appeal decision. The candidate will be notified of the CEDC’s decision within thirty days after the meeting at which the appeal was considered.

### Scheduling an NCCAOM Examination

NCCAOM adaptive examinations are scheduled by the candidate and offered year-round at any of the Pearson VUE Testing Centers. Linear examinations are offered during specified administration periods and have a window within which to register. The NCCAOM® Authorization to Test (ATT) Letter is uploaded to the candidate’s profile, where a PDF of the ATT letter can be printed at any time. Therefore, it is imperative that the candidate keep their contact information (electronic/email and physical address) current with the NCCAOM. The ATT letter is very important because it contains the information needed to schedule examinations and gain access to the Pearson VUE testing center. The candidate has the flexibility to select their own schedule and can register by telephone or over the internet.

The NCCAOM assigns a ‘school code’ to institutions for the purpose of internal reporting. The school code is required by Pearson VUE during the registration process. The codes can be found at the candidate’s school or on the NCCAOM website.

Note: The NCCAOM® Certification Application is valid for four years. Missed examinations are not counted as an attempt, however, payment is non-refundable.



## Examination Day – *Be Prepared!*

### Entry Requirements at the Pearson VUE Testing Center

Arrive at the testing center early! Candidates who enter after the appointed time will not be allowed to take the examination and payment will be forfeited. Candidates are advised to read Pearson VUE's policies and instructions carefully. Below are some helpful tips.

### Personal Identification Required

1. NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> *Authorization to Test Letter*
2. Identification (ID) with photo and signature: Driver's license **OR** a government ID with photo and signature and a second ID with a signature.

The name on the NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> *Authorization to Test Letter* must match the name on the ID card. If not, Pearson VUE will not allow the candidate to enter, and the examination payment is forfeited.

Also note, all identification must be current (not expired).

Please make sure the name submitted on the *NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Application for Certification* is the same as on the identification card to be used when entering the testing site.

### Palm Vein Test

The Palm Vein Test (PVT) is a standard procedure at Pearson VUE Testing Centers. Palm Vein Technology:

1. Ensures each test taker has a single record,
2. Represents a virtually error-free identification system that is non-intrusive to the user,
3. Increases accuracy and security around the candidate check-in (and out) process,
4. Verifies repeat test takers and candidates as they enter (or exit) the test center.

### Fingerprints

Additional fingerprints may be taken before sitting at a computer and if the candidate leaves the room at any time during the examination.

### Surveillance

For security purposes, candidates will be audio and videotaped during the examination.

### Inclement Weather, Power Failure or Emergency



In the event of inclement weather, unforeseen emergencies or “Acts of God,” NCCAOM and Pearson VUE will determine whether circumstances warrant the cancellation of an examination administration at a particular site.

The examination will not be rescheduled if the Pearson VUE test center is able to open or if an alternate test location is arranged. Contact Pearson VUE one day prior to the examination to determine if the test site will be opened or closed. Should an examination be canceled, candidates scheduled for that site will receive notification regarding rescheduling the examination date. Additional examination fees will not be incurred if your exam is canceled by NCCAOM or Pearson VUE.

On rare occasions, technical difficulties at the Pearson VUE test center may be encountered. If the test center experiences an unexpected, temporary power outage during an administration, back-up systems are in place, so every reasonable effort will be made to retrieve testing data. The candidate’s examination will restart from the point where it was interrupted, and the candidate continues the examination. Every attempt is made to administer the examination as scheduled; however, should an examination be canceled at a testing center, all scheduled candidates will receive notification regarding rescheduling.

### **Cancellation or Rescheduling an NCCAOM Examination**

The candidate must contact Pearson VUE at [www.vue.com](http://www.vue.com) to cancel and/or reschedule an examination at least twenty-four hours in advance or the payment will be forfeited. Pearson VUE will email the candidate a cancellation confirmation number. If a confirmation number is not received, then the examination has not been cancelled. It is imperative that the candidate keep the cancellation confirmation number in case of a cancellation dispute.

### **NCCAOM® Non-Disclosure Agreement and General Terms of Use for NCCAOM® Exams**

As soon as the proctor logs you into the computer, the NCCAOM® *Non-Disclosure Agreement and General Terms of Use for NCCAOM Examinations* will immediately appear on the computer screen. The testing period has now begun. The candidate must accept the non-disclosure agreement within the first five minutes, or the examination session will terminate, and you will be locked out of the computer. In addition, you will not be allowed to continue with your exam and your fees for that exam will not be refunded.

Pearson VUE rules dictate that you may not begin writing on your note board until your exam has started. Therefore, candidates should not use their note boards until after they have agreed to the Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). If your exam terminates because you were writing on your note board during the NDA, Pearson VUE will not be able to start your exam again, you will forfeit all the fees paid for the



exam, and you will have to reregister and pay full fees for the exam if you wish to take it again.

To help prepare the candidate, the NCCAOM has provided the NCCAOM® Non-Disclosure Agreement below and in the ATT Letter for your review prior to the examination day.

“I have read and understand the Examination Instructions. I have agreed to abide by the NCCAOM® Code of Ethics and acknowledge that if I am caught cheating on this examination, including the sharing of information after the examination is administered, I will face the Professional Ethics and Discipline Committee of NCCAOM®. If I am found to have violated the Code of Ethics, I understand that my scores will be cancelled, and I may not have the opportunity to test again.

Additionally, I understand that this exam is confidential and is protected by trade secret law. It is made available solely for the purpose of becoming certified by the NCCAOM®. I am expressly prohibited from disclosing, publishing, reproducing, or transmitting this exam, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, verbal or written, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose.

I am the candidate whose name appeared on the initial screen. And as an affirmation to the Statement of Acknowledgement I signed when submitting my application, I acknowledge that I am prohibited from transmitting information about NCCAOM® examination questions or content in any form to any person or entity before, during or after the examinations. I also acknowledge that if I suspect a violation on the part of others, it is my responsibility to report the actions to the NCCAOM®.”

## Examination Results Notification

A scaled score of seventy is required to pass each of the NCCAOM examinations. More information is available on scaled scoring on the NCCAOM website page, [When Taking Board Exams](#), under the tab Examination Results. Upon completion of the adaptive examination, the computer will display a preliminary pass/fail status and generate a preliminary pass/fail letter. The candidate is asked to acknowledge that it is a preliminary notice. Upon completion of the linear examination, the computer does NOT display a preliminary pass/fail status. The candidate must wait for the official report to be mailed to them.

The official pass result does not display a numerical score. The failure result, however, provides a numerical scaled score and provides the candidate with a breakdown of sections showing areas of weaknesses. The official pass/fail result is mailed to the



candidate by the U.S. Postal Service within three to four weeks of taking the examination. Candidates can track their examination results online by accessing their NCCAOM online account. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information reported online, the mailed pass/fail result is the official notification.

Note: The candidate's examination results are released to ACAOM and their school. The information is used to evaluate the acupuncture and herbal medicine educational programs which is required as part of the school's accreditation with ACAOM.

## Retaking an Examination

### Forty-five Day Wait Rule

Candidates who fail an exam one to four times must wait forty-five calendar days from their previous attempt before they can take it again. The NCCAOM recommends that you give yourself sufficient time to prepare to retake the exam that you failed. For additional information, click on the link, "Re-taking an Examination" on the [When Taking Board Exams](#) page of the [NCCAOM website](#).

Reminder, [NCCAOM® Candidate Preparation Handbooks](#) are available online.

### Exam Attempts

Candidates have five opportunities to successfully pass an examination once their graduate transcript and CNT Certificate are received by NCCAOM. After the fifth unsuccessful attempt to pass an NCCAOM examination (all formats and/or languages inclusive), the candidate must satisfy additional educational requirements based on multiple factors like certification application validity, etc., to receive additional exam attempts. To identify requirements you must satisfy to continue testing visit the [NCCAOM Exam Retake Policy page](#) on our website.

## NCCAOM Certified, Active Diplomate Status!

Within four to six weeks of completing all required exams and NCCAOM's receipt of all documentation, the NCCAOM Certification will be processed, and the new Diplomate will receive a wall-mountable NCCAOM Certificate, plus an official letter of Certification that contains a wallet-size identification card.



## NCCAOM Diplomate Benefits

- Proudly display you are a “National Board-Certified Acupuncturist”, and use one or more of the NCCAOM [Digital Badges](#) below:



Dipl. O.M.  
(NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>



Dipl. Ac.  
(NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>



Dipl. C.H.  
(NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>



Dipl. ABT  
(NCCAOM)<sup>®</sup>

- Consumers and professionals can find you in the NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> [Find a Practitioner Directory](#).
- Be promoted as a NCCAOM National Board-Certified Acupuncturist™ to the media and public through the national public educational campaign.
- Verify your certification status through the NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Registry.
- Be eligible to apply for a job at the Veteran’s Health Administration, which requires NCCAOM Board Certification as an essential part of ensuring safe and high-quality acupuncture treatment.
- Be promoted by the NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Advocacy Team, advancing NCCAOM certification at federal and state levels.
- Create a free ADA compliant website from Chi Online and access discounted wall-mounted frames for displaying your NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Certificate.
- Join NCCAOM as a Volunteer & serve on a committee, panel, or taskforce with your peers.
- Receive issues of the NCCAOM newsletter, [The Diplomate: E-news You Can Use](#) and the [NCCAOM<sup>®</sup> Advocacy Update](#).
- Be eligible for reduced fees for services offered by NCCAOM and its strategic partners.
- Visit the NCCAOM website to access the [Diplomate Benefits](#) page.



## Maintaining NCCAOM Certification

Achieving NCCAOM certification demonstrates the mastery of specific core competencies, including knowledge, skills, and abilities required within an acupuncture and herbal medicine professional practice. The focus of NCCAOM recertification is to maintain the core competencies and advance the professional growth and development of the Diplomate. To that end, the Diplomate is required to earn sixty hours of continuing education in a four-year period. The Professional Development Activity or “PDA” program was created as NCCAOM’s department of continuing education and to provide an avenue for NCCAOM Diplomates to earn “PDA Points” (CEUs) for participating in recognized programs that apply toward NCCAOM recertification requirements. In turn, the NCCAOM, PDA Department partners with individuals and organizations to provide these quality education programs. It is the responsibility of the NCCAOM Diplomate to confirm with the state, in advance, if they want to use NCCAOM, PDA courses for state licensure renewal. Only the state can verify if the course content is within their state scope of practice, and if the state regulatory board will accept the PDA points.

## NCCAOM Certification vs. State Licensure

The NCCAOM is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides ‘national board certification’ for its Diplomates. Licensure is the process whereby a government (state or local) grants an individual permission to pursue an occupation and/or operate a business. NCCAOM examinations and/or Certification does not guarantee the Diplomate a state acupuncture license. Licensing is regulated by the state in which a Diplomate practices and varies greatly from state to state. For this reason, it is important that the Diplomate plan and become familiar with their State’s Acupuncture Scope of Practice and requirements. [State licensing information](#) is available on the NCCAOM website.

## Examination Results and Certification Verification to State Acupuncture Board

Applicants and Diplomates can now log into their NCCAOM online profile and request to have their examination results and verification of NCCAOM certification sent to a state licensing board or outside agency. Allow seven to ten business days from receipt of the request by the NCCAOM for the report to be sent to the state. The requests should not be submitted until the NCCAOM Certification and licensing requirements are met for each state. It is the applicants and Diplomate’s responsibility to verify licensure deadlines with the state in which they plan to practice.

## Non-candidates and Former Diplomates

NCCAOM will send examination information to state acupuncture boards for non-candidates and former Diplomates. The report will include a disclaimer indicating



examinations over twelve years old are not valid for initial NCCAOM certification.

### How to Appeal an NCCAOM Eligibility Decision

If an applicant, candidate, or Diplomate is not satisfied with an eligibility decision made by the NCCAOM Certification Team/Customer Relations staff, they may appeal it, in writing, by emailing the letter to [applications@thenccaom.org](mailto:applications@thenccaom.org).

The NCCAOM must receive the appeal letter within thirty days of the candidate's receipt of NCCAOM's initial decision. A rational justification is required for filing an appeal.

The applicant, candidate, or Diplomate's appeal will be reviewed by their peers who sit on the NCCAOM Eligibility Committee at the next scheduled meeting where there is an opening on the agenda. The candidate/Diplomate will be notified of the Committee's decision in writing, within thirty days of the meeting.

The candidate/Diplomate can appeal the NCCAOM Eligibility Committee's decision to the NCCAOM Board of Commissioners by emailing a formal letter of appeal to [executiveoffices@thenccaom.org](mailto:executiveoffices@thenccaom.org) within thirty days of the receipt of NCCAOM's Eligibility Committee decision. A rational justification is required for filing an appeal. When reviewing the appeal, the Board will take two items into consideration:

1. Did the Eligibility Committee follow all procedures when making their decision?
2. Did you, as part of your appeal, provide new information and supporting documents that were not part of consideration for the initial Eligibility Committee decision?

The appeal will be reviewed at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Notification of the Board's decision is sent by email in writing within thirty days of the meeting.



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