

FAQ: COMMON QUESTIONS FROM NEW PROGRAMS/INSTITUTIONS

1. What is the process for starting an acupuncture school?

As an accreditation agency, ACAHM provides a set of standards and criteria for professional acupuncture programs; a self- and peer-evaluation process for program quality assurance and improvement; and for freestanding institutions for acupuncture and Oriental medicine, a pathway for participation in Title IV Federal financial aid programs.

Educational programs and institutions generally engage with ACAHM after their initial formation. ACAHM does not provide specific guidance or counsel on how to form institutions, acquire administrators or faculty, or otherwise accomplish the operational steps necessary to establish a program or institution.

ACAHM's minimum eligibility requirements, accreditation [Standards and Criteria](#) are available online. Potential institutions are advised to take these into account as they develop a corporate structure, craft an educational curriculum, and seek authorization to conduct operations from a recognized state higher education approval agency. Potential institutions may find it helpful to seek out an experienced administrator or faculty member with substantial experience at an ACAHM-accredited program or institution, for specific advice and counsel. There are also attorneys who specialize in higher education, who may be able to provide useful advice regarding the legal formation of and regulatory concerns for a new program or institution. ACAHM does not and cannot make recommendations for expert assistance.

Once a program or institution is formed, it may reach out to ACAHM to initiate a formal relationship. See ACAHM's [Accreditation Procedures policy](#), specifically "*Eligibility Phase: Preparing for pre-accreditation*" (page 2 of 8).

While new programs/institutions are expected to familiarize themselves with all ACAHM policies and resources, ACAHM encourages special attention be given to the following:

- [Glossary](#)
- [Schedule of Fees and Dues](#)
- [Self-Study Guide \[for self-study process and preparation\]](#)
- [Site Visit Manual: A guide for institutions and site visitors](#)

If you have specific questions after review of these materials, feel free to contact ACAHM with further general questions regarding ACAHM's standards, criteria and policies. However, ACAHM will not provide additional advisory assistance regarding business start-up or operational decision making.

2. What is the process for getting an existing school/program accredited by ACAHM?

If an institution has achieved institutional accreditation from another U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency and is interested in offering an ACAHM-accreditable program (see [Glossary](#)), it may reach out to ACAHM to initiate a formal relationship. See ACAHM's [Accreditation Procedures policy](#), specifically "*Eligibility Phase: Preparing for pre-accreditation*" (page 2 of 8).

3. How does an institution/program determine if they are prepared to apply for ACAHM pre-accreditation?

The sole reference points for ACAHM pre-accreditation decisions are ACAHM's [Standards and Criteria](#). A good starting point for programs interested in seeking ACAHM pre-accreditation is to conduct a comparison of the existing program with the ACAHM Standards and Criteria to determine which standards are being addressed, which are being partially addressed, and which are not being addressed. Eligibility Requirements are select accreditation criteria further classified by the Commission as ACAHM's basic threshold requirements for master's-level and doctoral programs to achieve and maintain ACAHM pre-accreditation and accreditation status. An institution/program seeking pre-accreditation must demonstrate that it complies with these select accreditation criteria further classified by the Commission as *Eligibility Requirements*. While all accreditation standards and criteria are assessed during the eligibility phase, compliance with the criteria designated as *Eligibility Requirements* is a requirement for achieving pre-accreditation status. (see the Introduction to ACAHM's [Standards and Criteria](#))

4. How long does the ACAHM accreditation process take?

As outlined in ACAHM's [Accreditation Procedures Policy](#), the Commission meets twice a year to render accreditation decisions. Self-study reports submitted in the format and manner prescribed by the Commission, along with a non-refundable review fee outlined in ACAHM's Fees and Dues Schedule, to the ACAHM office by October 1 are considered at the Commission's summer meeting in the next calendar year, or by April 1 for the Commission's winter meeting in the next calendar year.

5. Who makes accreditation decisions for ACAHM?

The ACAHM accreditation process is a multi-stage process involving initial reviewers, site team visitors, and the Commission. All reviewers provide input into the process at various stages of the review process. The ultimate authority for the rendering of accreditation decisions rests with voting members of the Commission.

6. How often are institutions/programs reviewed?

The Commission meets twice annually, typically in February and August. Schools who achieve ACAHM accreditation are awarded between 3 and 7 years of recognition, which

determines the time of their next review. In addition, schools submit annual reports which provide an overview on enrollment, retention, graduation and significant changes at the institution that have occurred within the past 12 months.

7. How long is an ACAHM accreditation cycle?

As outlined in ACAHM's [Commissions Actions Policy](#):

- initial pre-accreditation status is typically granted for a period of three (3) years.
- initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation is for a period not to exceed seven (7) years before the next comprehensive review.

8. What if students graduate before an institution/program is accredited?

ACAHM's [Recognition of Graduates Policy](#) outlines the recognition of graduates of programs that are in pursuit of ACAHM pre-accreditation/accreditation. ACAHM strongly encourages programs to clearly convey the implications of timelines and information about where a program is in terms of applying or in the review process so that students do not have unrealistic or inaccurate expectations in terms of being potential graduates of an ACAHM-accredited program.

9. What are ACAHM's accreditation fees?

Refer to the Policies tab on ACAHM's website for the full [Schedule of Fees & Dues](#).

10. Does ACAHM accredit schools internationally?

Not at this time. ACAHM's scope of recognition from the United States Department of Education is:

*The accreditation and pre-accreditation ("Candidacy") **throughout the United States** of professional non-degree and graduate degree programs, including professional doctoral programs, in the field of acupuncture and/or Oriental medicine, as well as freestanding institutions and colleges of acupuncture and/or Oriental Medicine that offer such programs.*

11. What is the best way to stay informed about ACAHM?

The ACAHM website is updated on a regular basis. You may stay abreast of noteworthy items in the "[News](#)" section of the website. In addition, the ACAHM [Policies](#) tab lists most recent Updates and each policy/resource, including the accreditation Standards and Criteria, includes a comprehensive Revision History table.