



Policy Title:	Doctoral Programs in Acupuncture and in Oriental Medicine Policy
Approved By:	ACAOM Executive Committee
Document History:	Implementation Date: 2011 Last Updated: 15 November 2016
Related Policies:	ACAOM Standards and Criteria for Accreditation; ACAOM Notification of Change Policy; ACAOM Substantive Change Application; ACAOM Accreditation Procedures; ACAOM Fees and Dues Schedule
References:	
Responsible Official:	ACAOM Executive Director

Policy Summary: This guidance outlines the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine's (ACAOM or Commission) general policy regarding doctoral programs in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Background:

The Commission's scope of recognition with the U.S. Department of Education ("USDE") effective September 22, 2016 is for 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.

In the late 1980's, the Commission adopted the position that accredited and candidate schools could not offer doctoral level education based on its findings that the faculties, curricula, libraries and learning resources of U.S. acupuncture and Oriental medicine institutions were in a developmental stage, and that they were not of a breadth and scope to justify offering credible and accreditable programs in the field of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. This policy acknowledged that the improved quality of U.S. acupuncture and Oriental medicine institutions could justify the development of credible doctoral programs in the future, but that such programs would need to be carefully reviewed relative to professional standards that are reasonably developed, seriously applied and, most importantly, based upon integrity.

In the years since the Commission's adoption of this policy, U.S. acupuncture and Oriental medicine institutions developed sufficiently to justify the Commission's reconsideration of its policy on doctoral-level education. In addition, there was strong and growing support within the Oriental medicine educational and practitioner communities for doctoral education in acupuncture and Oriental medicine within the United States. Based on this support and the maturation of educational institutions within the field, the Commission first developed accreditation standards for post-graduate doctoral programs in acupuncture and in Oriental medicine (DAOM) in May 2000. Two institutions were approved through the substantive change process to begin enrolling students in 2002, candidacy (pre-accreditation) was awarded in October 2005, followed by initial accreditation in August 2007. As of September 2016 twelve DAOM programs have been awarded either pre-accreditation or accreditation.

In collaboration with the community, standards for a first professional doctoral program (FPD) were promulgated in February 2013 and the first program was approved to initiate the accreditation process in September 2014.

In 2016, the Commission submitted a clarification of scope as part of the application for continuing recognition with the U.S. Department of Education. The clarification was approved September 22, 2016 and the FPD was reclassified as a professional doctoral program while the DAOM retained its status as the terminal degree offered as a post-graduate doctoral program to practitioners who had previously earned a Master's degree.

In 2016, the Commission initiated a community wide modified Delphi process to determine whether consensus could be established regarding degree titles. This process is ongoing.

Policy:

The following policy applies to ACAOM-accredited institutions wishing to offer a doctoral program in Oriental medicine:

- A. An institution of sufficient strength and resources may currently begin the initial developmental process of planning to develop a doctoral program in acupuncture or in Oriental medicine.

Note: It is the Commission's position that only the strongest institutions with significant resources and experience in higher education should initiate planning to develop a doctoral program. It is incumbent on schools to engage in a careful self-analysis to assess their ability to offer a credible and accreditable doctoral program in acupuncture or in Oriental medicine before implementing this planning process.

- B. If an institution in the ACAOM accreditation process which has engaged in extensive planning to develop a doctoral program in acupuncture or Oriental medicine wishes to begin such a program, it must notify the Commission of its intent and present to the Commission its comprehensive plans with a full resource analysis pursuant to ACAOM's *Notification of Change Policy*. As a substantive change, the offering of a doctoral program requires the submission of a complete and comprehensive substantive change report, with complete supporting documentation, according to the Commission's Substantive Change Application form. The institution must receive Commission approval of the substantive change prior to advertising, making public representations, accepting admissions applications or otherwise implementing the program.

The Commission's substantive change review will include an analysis of the institution's compliance with relevant eligibility requirements, its plans, the strength of the institution, the proposed curriculum, faculty, administration, academic leadership, record keeping procedures, assessment mechanisms, library and learning resources, its governance structure, proposed student services and activities, physical facilities and equipment, financial resources, proposed publications and advertising, and the general resources available for offering a credible doctoral program in Oriental medicine without adversely impacting the institution's capacity to meet ACAOM *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*. The purpose of this review is to assess the impact of the proposed doctoral program on the institution's continued compliance with ACAOM *Eligibility Requirements and Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*. Based on the Commission's analysis of the institution's substantive change report, the Commission will determine whether to grant approval to begin offering a doctoral program. Substantive change approval does not constitute ACAOM candidacy, accreditation or any other official status with the Commission.

An institution that has been approved to offer a doctoral program pursuant to the Commission's substantive change policies and which seeks to pursue ACAOM accreditation must follow ACAOM's *Accreditation Procedures*.

- C. The Commission will consider the program for pre-accreditation and accreditation status pursuant to compliance with its Eligibility Requirements, its Standards and Criteria for Accreditation, and its policies and procedures.

Revision History

Date Revised	Summary of Revisions	Approved By
161115	Refreshed and Reformatted	ACAOM Executive Director