


THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR CANDIDACY



BEFORE YOU PROCEED:

- **Download** from the ACAOM website the following three critical references: 1) the “**ACAOM Accreditation Manual: Structure, Scope, Process, Eligibility Requirements and Standards**” and 2) “**The Accreditation Process: ACAOM Policies and Procedures**” located at the link <http://www.acaom.org/Manuals.htm> ; and 3) “**Guide for Preparing the Eligibility Report,**” located at the link <http://www.acaom.org/accdtnforms.htm> .
- **Read** these manuals carefully before beginning your report and before gathering the required supporting documentation. Section 2 of the *Accreditation Manual* outlines the Commission’s process for determining a program’s eligibility for Candidacy status. Special attention should be paid to Sections 4 and 5 of the *Accreditation Manual*, which describe the Commission’s “**21 Eligibility Requirements**” and “**14 Standards**” and Criteria.
- **Review** the following  as you read through the manuals:

1. Scope of ACAOM

The Commission is authorized to accredit programs as listed in Section 1.2 of the *Accreditation Manual*. The Commission is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a specialized accreditation agency that reviews first professional master’s degree and professional master’s-level certificate and diploma programs in acupuncture, and first professional Master’s degree and professional master’s-level certificate and diploma programs in Oriental medicine with a concentration in both acupuncture and herbal therapies. An **acupuncture program** must be at least three (3) academic years in length, following upon at least two (2) years of accredited post-secondary education, and an **Oriental medicine program** must be at least four (4) academic years in length, following upon at least two (2) years of accredited post-secondary education.

The Commission reviews programs within institutions that also offer ACAOM-approved post-graduate doctoral programs in acupuncture and Oriental medicine. Such reviews are not currently within ACAOM’s scope of recognition with the US Secretary of Education.

If your program is located within a multi-purpose institution, please contact the office for additional instructions. (301-313-0855)

2. New and Developing Programs

A program is eligible to apply for Candidacy status if:

- a) The program has students who have been enrolled for **at least one calendar year**;
- b) The program is in compliance with the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements and has adopted and initiated action plans to comply fully with the Standards and Criteria for Accreditation during the Candidacy period;
- c) The program is capable of undertaking and completing the self-study process required for accreditation within three (3) years of achieving Candidacy status;

- d) The program provides documented evidence that it is making progress towards accomplishing its stated objectives and has a plan for assessing its effectiveness and program/student learning outcomes.

Graduation of a class of students from the professional master's-level program is not a requirement for Candidacy status. (*It is a requirement for accreditation.*) In order for a program to be able to show evidence that it is accomplishing its objectives and has a process for measuring its effectiveness, it must have enrolled a sufficient number of students.

We urge all administrators of new and developing programs to use the *Standards, Policies and Procedures Manuals* as guides for the programs' continued development. There is evidence that the Commission's *Standards* have assisted new and developing programs with the development of sound organizational structures upon which they grew and achieved their goals.

3. The Eligibility Process

A program seeking Candidacy with ACAOM must satisfy the following conditions, **in order**:

- Host a "One-Day Orientation Visit" by ACAOM staff (master's-level programs only);
- Submit a "Letter of Intent" to pursue the Candidacy review process;
- Enroll in and attend an ACAOM "Eligibility Workshop," (master's-level programs only).

The three conditions above must be completed prior to submitting an Eligibility Report.

4. The Eligibility Workshop

The Eligibility Workshop is an effective, interactive method for learning and understanding the requirements of the accreditation process. **A representative(s) (preferably administrators responsible for the successful operation and development of the school) must attend an Eligibility Workshop before the Commission will accept an Eligibility Report from your program.** The purpose of the workshop is to provide a step-by-step review of each of the 21 Eligibility Requirements and the 14 Standards and Criteria, outlining what institutional structures must be in place for each, how compliance with each should be documented in the Eligibility Report, and what kind of supportive documentation must accompany the Report. The workshop also provides an opportunity to ask questions relating to your specific program. The Eligibility Workshop is conducted annually by the Commission, either as part of a national AOM meeting or as a separate workshop, for Master's-level programs interested in applying for Candidacy. Information regarding the time and location of workshops and registration instructions are posted to the Commission website, www.acaom.org, under the "News and Meetings" link. Programs must register for the workshop, in advance, by submitting a "Request to Attend an Eligibility Workshop" form, along with the registration fee, to the ACAOM office. Please contact ACAOM staff for a form.

5. The Eligibility Report

A school or campus seeking candidacy for its master's or doctoral-level program(s) must have had students enrolled in the program for at least one calendar year prior to submitting an Eligibility Report.

The program must submit the **Eligibility Report** to the Commission's office to be considered for Candidacy. Your report must comprehensively address, in narrative form, how the institution complies with each of the Commission's "21 Eligibility Requirements" and the degree to which it meets the "14 Standards" and Criteria for Accreditation. The report must also document that the

program has adopted and initiated action plans to fully comply with the Standards and Criteria during the Candidacy period. To support your factual account of the program's compliance, copies of institutional documents must be appended to the report to serve as a reference for how your program complies with a particular requirement (See, "Guide to Preparing the Eligibility Report" online at the link <http://www.acaom.org/accdtnforms.htm>).

If the report is complete, Commission staff will evaluate your program in relation to its Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Criteria for Accreditation.

6. Supporting Documentation

Please refer to the publication, "Guide to Preparing the Eligibility Report," which lists the documents required to accompany the Eligibility Report. Financial documentation that must accompany an Eligibility Report may take some time to prepare, so do not delay reviewing and arranging for the submission of these items.

7. Application Time Frame

The Commission allows a minimum of ten months to review an Eligibility Report, conduct a site visit to the institution and to act on the Report at its biannual meeting. The timeline for submitting reports is as follows: by **April 1st** for review at the Commission's Winter meeting, or by **October 1st** for review at the Commission's Summer meeting. Upon receipt of the Eligibility Report and Eligibility Report Review Fee, the program is assigned an ACAOM staff reviewer and Review Committee (selected ACAOM Commissioners). The staff reviewer will read the report for completeness and content. The reviewer may consult with the program regarding its contents, particularly if additional information is required to support or clarify the contents of the Eligibility Report. When the staff reviewer determines that the report is complete, a site visit is arranged to verify the report. If the report is rejected, the program may appeal that decision with its Review Committee.

After successfully completed all subsequent phases of the process (including the candidacy site visit and Commission Review), the program is granted Candidacy status. Next, the second stage of the accreditation process will begin: the **Self-Study Process**. The program is given three (3) years (with the possibility of two, one-year extensions under special circumstances) to complete **the process to accreditation**. It should be noted that programs do not have to wait until receiving Candidacy status to begin the institutional self-study process.

8. Cost of Accreditation

For a listing of the various fees associated with the Candidacy process, see, "ACAOM Dues & Fees Schedules," at [www.acaom.org/PdfVersion/ACAOM DUES 061308.pdf](http://www.acaom.org/PdfVersion/ACAOM%20DUES%20061308.pdf) .

9. Application

Submission of the Eligibility Report, supporting documents, and cover sheet, along with the report review fee, constitutes the school's application to the Commission. Application packet materials may be downloaded from the ACAOM website at the "Documents & Forms" link.

Please prepare three (3) copies of your completed *Eligibility Report* to be distributed as follows:

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- a) One copy must be sent to the Commission office at ACAOM, Maryland Trade Center #3, 7501 Greenway Center Drive, Suite 760, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Included with that copy should be a check for the Eligibility Report Review Fee.
- b) The two (2) additional copies are for the Commission's Review Committee. You will be notified later of the two Commissioners to whom these copies should be sent and their mailing addresses.

10. Commission Review Cycles

The Commission holds biannual meetings in the summer and in the winter. To be considered for review for candidacy status, the program must be included on the Commission meeting agenda. ACAOM staff must receive the Eligibility Report **by April 1** in time to schedule a site visit and for consideration at the Commissioners **Winter meeting**, and **by October 1** in time to schedule a site visit and for consideration at the Commissioners for the **Summer meeting**.

11. Technical Assistance

Please contact Commission staff by telephone at 301/313-0855 or by FAX at 301/313-0912.

