

Proposed revision applicable to ACAOM English Language Competency requirements for Masters, Professional Doctorate (PD), and post-Masters Doctorate (DAOM) accreditation standards

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (“ACAOM” or “Commission”) received requests from the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (“CCAOM” or “Council”) and accredited institutions to review standards applicable to English Language Competency and to consider changes based on provided suggestions. ACAOM staff conducted a comprehensive review and presented materials to ACAOM’s Standards & Criteria Committee for consideration. After substantive review and discussion within the Committee and at the October 20-21 Commission meeting the Commission adopted the proposed revisions contained in this document.

The Commission is accepting public comment on the proposed change from November 1, 2017 through December 29, 2017. Although you may comment on any ACAOM standard, criterion or policy at any time, to ensure that the Commission considers your comment before it takes final action on these proposed revisions, you must submit either electronic or written comments on the proposal prior to the close of the public comment period. Comments must be limited to the proposed change; comments that do not pertain specifically to the proposed change will not be considered at this time.

A constructive, information-rich comment that clearly communicates and supports its claims is more likely to have an impact on Commission decision making. There are many resources available on the Internet regarding writing effective public comments, including <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/thought-leadership/taking-the-mystery-out-of-filing-comments-proposed-rules>.

1. BACKGROUND

A. CURRENT STANDARDS

Masters, criterion 6.8: English Language Competency

DAOM, criterion 6.7: English Language Competency

(Note: language for the Masters & DAOM programs is identical)

- a) *English language competency must be required of all students seeking admission to the program taught in English. This may be satisfied by scoring at least 61 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet based test (iBT) which also requires*

- a minimum speaking exam score of 26 and a minimum listening exam score of 22, or a level 6 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam;*
- b) For those who shall complete the program in another language, a TOEFL iBT score of at least 45 must be obtained with a minimum speaking exam score of 18 and a minimum listening exam score of 15, or the student must have completed a two-year (60 semester credits or 90 quarter credits) baccalaureate level education in an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or from an equivalent English language institution in another country. Applicants who do not satisfy this requirement may be considered for admission with English as a second language, but they must satisfy the proficiency requirement in English before beginning the clinical experience.*

PD, criterion 5.2: Standard Admissions, subsection D.

- A. English language competency must be demonstrated by all students seeking admission to the program. Specifically:*
- 1. For programs taught in English, competency may be demonstrated by scoring at least 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and an iBT score of at least 80.*
 - 2. For programs taught in languages other than English, competency may be demonstrated by scoring at least 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and an iBT score of at least 80.*

B. RELEVANT RESEARCH

ACAOM staff reviewed admission requirements for many graduate level health profession programs and English language competency licensing requirements of several agencies including the Boards of physical therapy, pharmacy, and nursing. Admissions and licensing requirements were generally comparable to the VisaScreen requirements.

In addition, ACAOM staff reviewed the following resources:

- Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools, VisaScreen® Service (<http://www.cgfns.org/services/visascreen/#step4>)
The VisaScreen® Service is a comprehensive screening program for health care professionals who are not U.S. citizens and are seeking an occupational visa to work in the United States. Applicants for VisaScreen® must demonstrate oral and written competency of the English language as mandated by federal law. This is demonstrated by achieving acceptable scores in one of two approved examinations, the TOEFL iBT or the IELTS. (This program has minimum scores required for many professions; refer to link above.)
- [Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act](#) (the IIRIRA) of 1996 requires specific health care professionals to complete a screening

program before they can receive either a permanent or temporary occupational visa, including Trade NAFTA status. (This requires a certificate from CGFNS, noted above, or the equivalent.)

- Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT Tests, [January 2016-December 2016 Test Data](#) (provides context for overall TOEFL performance data).

2. COMMISSION APPROVED REVISION

Based upon federal requirements for the level of competence in oral and written English considered by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the U.S. Secretary of Education, to be appropriate for health care work in a variety of health professions, the Commission approved the following revision to standards for all ACAOM programs and language tracks:

English language competency must be demonstrated by all students seeking admission to the program. The program must confirm required oral and written English competency for each student based on one of the following measures:

- 1) *Test of English as a Foreign Language, Internet-Based Test (TOEFL® iBT)*
Acceptable scores:

- *TOEFL iBT Total Score – 80 and TOEFL iBT Speaking Score – 26*

OR

- 2) *International English Language Testing System (IELTS)*
Acceptable scores:

- *IELTS Overall Score – 6.5 (Academic Format) and IELTS Spoken Band – 8.0*

OR

- 3) *Completion of two years (60 semester credits or 90 quarter credits) of baccalaureate or graduate level, English-based education in an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. English must have been the language of instruction and the language of the curriculum used.*

Acknowledging the impact that these changes will have on current master's program recruitment and admissions activities, it is the intent of the Commission to implement these changes for all master's and DAOM degree programs beginning January 1, 2020. As these changes are non-substantive when applied to the Professional Doctorate standards, the implementation date is expected to be concurrent with the effective date of the Commission's adoption of the final revisions.