



MEMORANDUM

TO: CNME-Accredited and Candidate ND Programs
FROM: CNME Board of Directors
RE: Further Extension of Temporary Policies to Address the COVID-19 Situation
DATE: December 15, 2020

Introduction

In its memorandums to CNME-accredited and candidate ND programs dated April 1, 2020, and July 28, 2020, the CNME Board of Directors provided guidance on temporary accommodations/flexibilities that ND programs were allowed to implement to address the external constraints impacting the delivery of naturopathic medical education due to the coronavirus situation, as well as the challenges and impediments this situation presented on a practical level due to public health and other concerns.

Since the coronavirus situation is continuing to impact higher education—and clearly will continue to do so through the remainder of the 2020 – 2021 academic year—the CNME Board has decided to extend the temporary emergency policies set forth in its previous guidance memos, as outlined and modified below. As noted previously, the intent of these temporary policies is two-fold: (i) to provide ND programs the temporary flexibilities they need to effectively plan and deliver the curriculum in light of constraints due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, and (ii) to provide mechanisms by which the CNME can effectively monitor program quality and adherence to accreditation standards during this time.

Recognizing that the coronavirus situation is still evolving, the CNME Board will continue to review the situation taking into account any updated guidance from the US Department of Education, and will issue further temporary emergency policies, if that becomes necessary under the circumstances.

*Please note one important change from the July 28, 2020 memo: The CNME has **rescinded** the requirement stated in the July 28th memo that programs wishing to extend previously implemented coronavirus-related accommodations into 2021 would be required to submit a substantive change application prior to doing so. Programs may now extend these accommodations through June 30, 2021, without seeking permission from the CNME.*

COUNCIL ON NATUROPATHIC MEDICAL EDUCATION



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Temporary Emergency Policies Pertaining to Clinical Training

The temporary emergency CNME policies regarding delivery of the *clinical* portion of an ND program outlined in the April 1, 2020 memo shall remain in effect through June 30, 2021, with the following provisions:

- The temporary emergency policies contained in the April 1, 2020 memo may be extended to students in all phases of the clinical training program. The CNME expects programs to provide as comprehensive and robust a clinical training experience as possible within the legal and practical constraints due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, and to strive to remedy any deficiencies in clinical training as circumstances and students' remaining time in the program allow.
- As soon as external governmental constraints (e.g., regulations, guidance) regarding offering in-person clinical instruction and clinical internship training both on campus and at affiliated training sites are reduced or lifted entirely, ND programs will be required to restart their normal clinical training programs as quickly as possible with the goal of restoring clinical training in accordance with CNME accreditation requirements.
- The CNME understands that restoring the in-person clinical training program will likely take some time due to a variety of factors, including the impact of shutting down clinics in the first place, patient concerns about in-person medical visits, and so on. Thus, the CNME expects a steady return to normal with a period during which clinical instruction will need to be delivered using a hybrid approach; this period of returning to a more normal, pre-coronavirus level may extend through the entire 2021 calendar year.
- Programs may, at their discretion, vary the scheduling of classes and the sequencing of material to facilitate the process of restoring in-person clinical training, and may postpone instruction to a later date where that may support more comprehensive training.
- The CNME notes that in the future it may revise its accreditation requirements regarding clinical instruction to accommodate the use of technologies, such as telemedicine, that allow for remote interactions with patients. However, the current accreditation requirements will continue in effect until revised.

Temporary Emergency Policies Pertaining to Didactic Coursework

Through June 30, 2021, ND programs may continue to deliver some or all of their *didactic/academic* coursework via online/distance education. As noted in the April 1 memo, the CNME allows for use of distance/online delivery of education within the context of a primarily residential program (see the "Guidelines on the Use of Information & Communication Technology in Naturopathic Medical Education" on page 52 of the CNME *Handbook of Accreditation*); these guidelines must be observed.

Reporting Requirements

The U.S. Department of Education requires recognized accrediting agencies, such as the CNME, to engage in ongoing monitoring and oversight of accredited and candidate programs. The CNME will continue to exercise its monitoring responsibility by requiring submission of reports, as follows:

Report Due by January 31, 2021. CNME-accredited and candidate programs must submit a brief report (5-page limit), included with the 2020 annual report (due 1/31/2021), containing the following information:

- A summary of the temporary modifications the program made to curriculum content and delivery during the fall 2020 semester (or equivalent term) and its plans for the spring 2021 semester (or equivalent term).
- A preliminary evaluation of the impact that coronavirus-related program modifications have had on student learning outcomes, including any observed deficiencies that may have resulted.
- An outline of steps the program intends to take to address any educational deficiencies that may have resulted from program modifications.
- Specific coronavirus-related legal/regulatory requirements that the program believes will apply to the program during **2021**, with relevant documents provided as appendices.

Report Due by September 30, 2021. CNME-accredited and candidate programs must submit a follow-up report (5-page limit) to CNME, containing the following information:

- A summary of the temporary modifications the program ended up making to curriculum content and delivery during the spring 2021 semester (or equivalent term).
- A summary of student feedback solicited by the program on students' experience of their naturopathic education in light of the modifications.
- A detailed assessment of student learning outcomes for students in all years of the program, including (i) an analysis of any deficiencies due to changes/accommodations in course delivery mechanisms to address the coronavirus situation, and (ii) an analysis of any areas where outcomes may have been beneficially impacted by these changes/accommodations.

If a program has any questions or comments about the above temporary policies, please contact CNME Executive Director, Dr. Daniel Seitz, at 413-528-8877 or by email at danseitz@verizon.net.