

CNME Eligibility Application Requirements

■ Introduction

The Council offers two types of formal, public recognition for naturopathic medicine programs: “candidate for accreditation” (a pre-accreditation status that is generally referred to in this *Handbook* as “candidacy” or “candidacy status”) and accreditation. Before it may seek accreditation by the Council, a program must first achieve candidacy—though in rare circumstances the Council may waive this requirement for an already well-established program that has students enrolled in every year of the program. CNME candidacy is a formative period for a program during which the Council carefully monitors the program’s ongoing development towards maturity; a program in candidacy must achieve accreditation within five years or its candidacy status is withdrawn. As noted previously, while not synonymous with accreditation, candidacy is not considered a lesser form of recognition: graduates of both candidate and accredited naturopathic medical programs are eligible to take the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examinations and to apply for licensure in the United States and Canada. Attainment of candidacy does not, however, assure eventual accreditation.

A program must successfully move through a two-phase process in order to attain candidacy status:

1. **Eligibility Application.** A program must first demonstrate to the Council its readiness to seek CNME candidacy; this phase of the process, referred to as the “eligibility process,” requires submission of an “eligibility application” that demonstrates to the Council’s satisfaction that the program meets the Council’s 18 eligibility requirements. The Council’s acceptance of an eligibility application does not, however, confer any formal CNME recognition.
2. **Candidacy Self-Study Process.** If the program’s eligibility application is accepted, the program is authorized by the Council to engage in the candidacy self-study process. This process includes the following three steps:
 - a. Submission of a comprehensive self-study report that demonstrates that (i) the program meets the Council’s accreditation standards to the degree expected of a program for its stage of development and (ii) that it also complies with the Council’s policies;
 - b. Hosting an onsite visit by a CNME evaluation team (the visit enables the Council—through its representatives—to verify the contents of the self-study report, and to observe first-hand the program’s operations); and
 - c. Appearing before the Council at a formal hearing on candidacy at which the Council reviews the program’s compliance with standards and policies, and then makes a decision to approve, defer or deny candidacy.

Part Three of the *Handbook* provides information on the policies and procedures related to candidacy and accreditation; Part Five of the *Handbook* describes the self-study process, and the Council’s requirements for the format and content of the self-study report.

■ Eligibility Application

The eligibility application consists of (i) a narrative report showing how the program complies with the Council’s 18 eligibility requirements, and (ii) a number of required documents that serve to further substantiate compliance and describe important aspects of the program. The purpose of the eligibility application is to provide a naturopathic medicine program an opportunity to demonstrate to the Council that it is ready to undertake the demanding candidacy self-study process with a reasonable likelihood of success; acceptance of the application confirms that the program is, indeed, ready in the estimation of the Council to move forward in seeking candidacy.

The eligibility application submission to the Council contains the following:

1. A formal cover letter from the institution signed by the chief executive officer and the chair of the institution's governing board stating that the institution intends to seek CNME candidacy status for the naturopathic medicine program;
2. The eligibility application, which consists of the narrative report and supporting documents demonstrating that the program meets the eligibility requirements; and
3. The required application fee (the institution should contact the Council's executive director to verify the current fee).

The Council requests that a program considering submission of an eligibility application first contact the Council's executive director to discuss its plans. The earliest timeframe that an eligibility application may be submitted is during the 12-month period prior to the initiation of an ND program (see Policy 19 under Part Six of this *Handbook*). Before submitting the application, the program should consider carefully whether it has met the Council's eligibility requirements). The following are the steps in the review process:

1. The institution submits the eligibility application to the Council's office for initial review by the CNME executive director, who verifies that the application submission is complete—including cover letter and fee.
2. When the executive director determines that the submission is complete, he or she—in consultation with the Council's president—appoints a review committee composed of CNME board members to review the application; the review takes place within three months of receipt of the completed application.
3. Based on its review, the review committee may either (i) request additional information, (ii) defer action on the application for a period of up to one year due to the program's lack of readiness to engage in the candidacy self-study process, or (iii) forward the application to the Council's Board of Directors for review at its next regularly scheduled meeting (in this latter case, the completed application must be submitted at least four months prior to the Council meeting at which it will be reviewed).
4. At its meeting—with representatives of the program in attendance to provide information and answer questions—the Council holds a hearing in closed session regarding eligibility application. Following the hearing, the Council issues its decision. The following possible decisions may be issued:
 - a. Approve the application and authorize the program to begin work on its candidacy self-study report, generally due within 18 months of the Council's decision;
 - b. Defer action on the application pending receipt of additional information (note that the Council may defer action on an application for a period of up to one year, after which it must approve or deny the application); or
 - c. Deny the application.

If the review committee defers action on the eligibility application due to lack of readiness, the committee will inform the program of its deficiencies and request that the program provide information and documentation demonstrating that it has satisfactorily addressed the deficiencies identified by the committee.

If the Council denies the eligibility application, the Council will inform the program of the reasons for denial. A Council decision to deny an application cannot be appealed. If the program decides to resubmit a new eligibility application, it must wait at least one year from the date that the previous application was denied and pay a new application fee.

A program may decide to withdraw its eligibility application at any time prior to a final decision of the Council to approve or deny the application; if the program does so, then the Council refunds half of the application fee. A program that withdraws its application must wait at least one year before resubmitting a new application, and it must pay another application fee.

If a review committee of the Council requests that a program provide additional information, the program must provide the information within 12 months of the request, or the eligibility application lapses. In the case of a lapsed application, the program must submit a new eligibility application, including another application fee, if it wishes the Council to review its eligibility application.

A program will be informed of any decision of a review committee or the Council regarding an eligibility application within 15 days of the decision.

■ Eligibility Requirements

As noted above, an eligibility application includes a narrative report that demonstrates compliance with the Council's 18 eligibility requirements, which are as follows:

1. The program is located in a legally incorporated institution that has authorization from the appropriate state or provincial agency to grant the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine degree or designation. Note that:
 - A program in the U.S. is not eligible for *initial accreditation* by CNME unless it first achieves candidacy status with an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education, and
 - A program in Canada is not eligible for initial accreditation by CNME unless it first obtains provincial approval for participation in government-funded student-aid programs (note, however, that if government-funded student aid programs are unavailable to students in the program due to legal impediments beyond the institution's control, the institution must ensure that suitable private student aid programs are available).
2. The program is located at an institution with a qualified governing board that exercises ultimate authority over the institution free of undue outside influence and that observes an appropriate conflict of interest policy.
3. The program is located at an institution that has an appropriately qualified chief executive officer (e.g., president) whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution.
4. The program has an appropriately qualified chief academic/administrative officer (e.g., dean)—or an appropriate academic leadership team—whose full-time or major responsibility is to the program. There are mechanisms in place to allow all appropriate constituencies within the program—including faculty, administrative staff and students—to communicate their needs and provide input to the program's leadership team.
5. The program has a clear, concise and realistic mission statement that identifies what it intends to accomplish and encompasses the educational preparation of naturopathic physicians/doctors. The mission is accompanied by a set of program outcomes, which are consistent with the mission statement and guide the program in establishing specific student achievement/learning goals and objectives and other relevant outcomes of the program.
6. The program has an appropriately qualified and stable administrative staff sufficient in size to meet the needs of the program and achieve the program's mission.
7. The program has adopted an academic freedom policy that ensures academic freedom in teaching, scholarship and research.
8. Faculty members for didactic and clinical courses have appropriate education and experience for their teaching positions/responsibilities in the program, including appropriate advanced or professional degrees—usually terminal degrees in their field—and any other qualifications required to provide instruction in their assigned areas at the doctoral level. The number of full- and part-time members of the faculty is sufficient to effectively meet program needs.

9. The program is residential, consists of a minimum of four academic years, and requires a minimum of 4,100 clock hours, including a minimum of 1,200 hours devoted to clinical training. The curriculum covers the subject areas specified in the CNME Accreditation Standards.
10. The program has sufficient physical and learning resources—including instructional, library, clinical, office, research facilities, equipment and supplies—to achieve its mission and objectives, provide for the effective functioning of the program, and accommodate the needs of the faculty, staff and student body.
11. The library provides a reasonably comprehensive set of learning and information resources that support learning outcomes and research, and the staffing of the library is sufficient to support facilities, resources, services and programs, as well as the volume of students, faculty and other patrons.
12. The program has in place—or is in the process of developing—plans and processes for (i) evaluating each student’s academic and clinical performance and achievement in relation to the program’s mission and educational requirements, and (ii) assessing overall program outcomes and effectiveness in relation to the program’s mission and programmatic objectives.
13. The program publishes and adheres to a student admission policy that clearly specifies the educational prerequisites, personal characteristics and minimum qualifications of applicants that the program considers necessary for academic and professional success.
14. The program has a current catalog or academic calendar and other official publications available to students and the public—in print or electronic form—that accurately set forth:
 - a. Current mission and programmatic objectives
 - b. Admissions requirements and procedures
 - c. Transfer credit and advanced standing policies, including the criteria for accepting transfer credit
 - d. Tuition, fees and refund policies
 - e. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid (if applicable)
 - f. Academic performance requirements
 - g. Policies and procedures related to satisfactory academic progress
 - h. Rules for student conduct
 - i. Student disciplinary procedures
 - j. Student grievance procedures
 - k. Grading and attendance policies
 - l. Program completion requirements
 - m. Members of the administration, including their positions
 - n. Professional education and qualifications of full- and part-time faculty
 - o. Members of the governing board
 - p. Non-discrimination policy
 - q. Academic calendar
 - r. Program sequence or outline
 - s. Description of each major component of the academic program, including the curriculum and course descriptions for each course
 - t. Description of the learning and other physical resources
 - u. Sources of information on the legal requirements for licensure and entry into the profession.
15. The institution in which the program is located must be financially sound, and provide resources to the program sufficient to carry out the program’s mission and educational objectives in the current, short and long term. Adequate resources must be available to meet debt-service requirements of short- and long-term indebtedness without adversely impacting the quality of the program.

16. The institution in which the program is located must provide for an institutional financial audit to be conducted annually by an outside independent certified or chartered public accountant. The audit must include an opinion/management letter, a balance sheet statement, a statement of revenue and expenditures, and a report on the change in fund balance and/or financial position.
17. The program discloses to the Council all information required by the Council to carry out its evaluation and accrediting functions.
18. The program understands and agrees that the Council may, at its discretion and in accordance with its policies, make known to any agency or members of the public who may request such information the nature of any action, positive or adverse, regarding its status with the Council.

■ Required Documentation for Eligibility Application

As noted above, an eligibility application also includes documentation, placed in appendices, that demonstrates the program's compliance with the Council's 18 eligibility requirements and provides further information on the program; a program has discretion to append additional documentation that it considers relevant to the narrative report and helpful in demonstrating compliance with the eligibility requirements. The required documentation for each eligibility requirement (ER) is as follows:

Eligibility Requirement 1:

- A letter, certificate or other document from a state or provincial regulatory body showing that the institution is a legally incorporated institution.
- A letter, certificate or other document from a state or provincial regulatory body showing that the institution is legally permitted to grant a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine degree or designation.

Eligibility Requirement 2:

- A list of the current members of the governing board, including officer title (if any), employment relationship with the institution (if any), and brief biographical information on each member.
- A copy of the conflict-of-interest policy or policies under which the board operates.

Eligibility Requirement 3:

- Résumé/CV of the institution's chief executive officer.

Eligibility Requirement 4:

- Résumé/CV of the program's chief administrative officer/dean.

Eligibility Requirement 5:

- A copy of the program's mission and programmatic goals and objectives.

Eligibility Requirement 6:

- An organizational chart for the institution showing how the program's administration fits within the larger institution.
- An organizational chart for the program showing the reporting structure of the program's administrative staff.
- A list of the program's administrators, including their full-time-equivalent (FTE) status, teaching role (if any), and brief biographical information on each member.

Eligibility Requirement 7:

- A copy of the program's academic freedom policy.

Eligibility Requirement 8:

- A grid or list of the program's faculty members, including their teaching assignments and FTE status.
- Brief biographical information on each faculty member.

Eligibility Requirement 9:

- An outline of the program of study listing each course, including clock-hour and credit amounts.
- An outline of academic requirements for students in the clinical portion of the program.
- Information on the program's clinical training sites.

Eligibility Requirement 10:

- A floor plan or description of campus facilities used by—or available to—the program.

Eligibility Requirement 11:

- A summary of the library and information resources available to students in the program, including those resources directly related to the study of naturopathic medicine.

Eligibility Requirement 12:

- A copy of the program's academic assessment plan or a detailed description of its assessment process.

Eligibility Requirement 13:

- A copy of the program's catalog/calendar or other document that outlines admissions requirements.
- A copy of any additional materials provided to potential students containing admissions information.

Eligibility Requirement 14:

- A copy of the program's catalog/calendar.
- A copy of the program's student handbook.

Eligibility Requirement 15:

- A copy of the institution's budget for the current fiscal year.
- A copy of the program's budget for the current fiscal year.

Eligibility Requirement 16:

- A copy of the institution's most recent audited financial statement, including the management letter.

Eligibility Requirement 17:

- No documentation is required.

Eligibility Requirement 18:

- No documentation is required.