

**American Osteopathic Association**

**Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation**

**Accreditation of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine:  
Glossary**



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AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

**Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation  
American Osteopathic Association  
142 E. Ontario Street  
Chicago, IL 60611-6824  
Telephone: (312) 202-8124  
E-mail: [predoc@osteopathic.org](mailto:predoc@osteopathic.org)**

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The glossary should be used for information and guidance purposes only. The glossary should not be used as a resource to interpret the Standards; only the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation may interpret the Standards according to the context presented. The following information serves only to define terms.

**AACOM** – American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

**Academic Credentialing** – Approval of faculty members either for on-campus or off campus instruction, through a process of verification of education, licensure, insurance, and other requirements deemed necessary to meet COM policy.

**Accreditation** – The status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an educational institution or program that meets the agency’s standards and requirements. This process ensures that educational programs provided by institutions of higher education meet acceptable levels of quality, as follows:

**Accreditation with Exceptional Outcome:** This indicates that the COM is in compliance with all standards and that all elements are met at the time of the review with no progress report or additional written information required. For schools with this status, accreditation will be granted for ten years. Monitoring is conducted through submission of the COCA annual report and the mid-cycle report that is due in year five. This accreditation status is not available to newly accredited COMs (progressing from pre-accreditation status) or following an accreditation status of Accreditation with Probation or Accreditation with Warning.

**Accreditation:** This indicates that a COM is compliant with all standards. However, there may be non-core elements that are not met and must be addressed via progress reporting. For schools with this status, accreditation will be granted for seven years. Monitoring is conducted through submission of the COCA annual report and the mid-cycle report that is due in year three. COMs achieving accreditation for the first time with all Elements met will be granted this status for six years with a mid-cycle report due in year three.

**Accreditation with Finding:** This indicates that a COM is not compliant with one standard (including non-compliance with a Core Element(s) within a standard) and ongoing monitoring will occur through progress reporting and annual reports. For schools with this status, accreditation will be granted for five years. Mid-cycle reporting is due in year three.

**Accreditation with Monitoring:** This indicates that a COM is not compliant with two standards (including non-compliance with a Core Element(s) within each standard) and ongoing monitoring will occur through progress reporting and annual reports. For schools with this status, accreditation will be granted for four years. Mid-cycle reporting is due in year two.

**Accreditation with Warning:** This indicates that a COM is not compliant with three to five standards and ongoing monitoring will occur through progress reporting, annual reports, and any other monitoring the COCA deems necessary (e.g., focused site visits, etc.). For schools

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with this status, accreditation will be granted for two years. The mid-cycle report will be submitted with the annual report.

**Accreditation with Probation:** This indicates that a COM is not compliant with more than five standards. For schools with this status, the accreditation will be granted for no more than one year. Monitoring will occur continuously as deemed necessary by the COCA, including progress reporting, an annual report, and focused site visits.

**Withdrawal of Accreditation:** This indicates that the quality of the educational program is compromised, and the school was unable to come into compliance with all standards within the allotted timeframe.

**ACGME** – Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

**Additional Location** – A location that is geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. The Additional Location will not have separate administration, faculty, or budgetary independence. The additional location must have a common Chief Academic Officer, faculty, budget, and curriculum with the parent COM. Students may be admitted directly to the Additional Location as their primary place of enrollment (34 CFR §602.22).

**Adverse Action** – A decision by the COCA involving the denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or pre-accreditation. Upon the determination of the COCA, the decision is reported to the United States Department of Education.

**Affiliated Clinical Site** – A clinical site in an accredited healthcare facility or clinic, not owned or operated by a COM, which agrees to provide specific and limited clinical instruction to a COM's students.

**Annual Report** – A required report from each COM addressing programmatic outcomes.

**AOA** – American Osteopathic Association

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**Approved Class Size** – The maximum class size allowed by the COCA. All COMs with entering first-time matriculants in excess of the approved class size plus a permitted variance of eight percent (8%) will be determined to have an unplanned class size increase and will be required to submit a Substantive Change, Unplanned Class Size Increase application, including the required fees. For the purpose of an accurate accounting of class size, in those instances where a student matriculates in one year but takes a leave of absence or other decelerated program options, the COM will count that student towards the class in which they matriculated

**Branch Campus** – A branch campus is a location that is geographically apart from the COM and is:

1. Permanent in nature;
2. Offers courses in educational programs leading to a DO degree;
3. Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
4. Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

The COCA may serve as the programmatic or institutional accreditor for COMs wishing to request a Branch Campus. (34 CFR §600.2).

**CHEA** – Council for Higher Education Accreditation

**Clery Act** – The *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act* (Clery Act) is a federal statute which requires all colleges and universities that participate in federal financial aid programs to keep and disclose information about crime on and near their respective campuses.

### **Clinical Rotations**

Core - A clinical rotation required for all medical students in the OMS-III year that must be completed within hospitals or other sites affiliated with the COM. Faculty at these sites must meet the requirements as outlined in Continuing Accreditation Element 7.1. These rotations must have a defined syllabus and written assessment in addition to the preceptor and student evaluations. Core rotations must include, but are not limited to: Internal medicine, general surgery, family medicine, and pediatrics. All core clinical rotations must be a minimum of four weeks long and must include in-person patient care.

Required – A non-core clinical rotation that a COM requires for all medical students for the medical students to fulfill the charge of the COM's mission statement. A required rotation can be either in the OMS-III or the OMS-IV year that must be completed within hospitals or other sites affiliated with the COM. These rotations must have a defined syllabus and written assessment in addition to the preceptor and student evaluations. At a minimum, required clinical rotations must include: Psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, and emergency medicine. All required clinical rotations must be a minimum of four weeks long and must include in-person patient care.

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Note: Critical care medicine can be substituted for emergency medicine.

Note: Psychiatry and obstetrics and gynecology will change from a required to a core rotation by July 1, 2027.

Elective or Selective - A clinical rotation that a medical student chooses to pursue to further their desired training. Medical students can complete the rotation in any COM approved specialty at any COM approved training site that a COM has an affiliation agreement. These rotations must have a defined syllabus and written assessment in addition to the preceptor and student evaluations.

**COCA** – Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation

**COM (SOM)** – College (or school) of osteopathic medicine offering instruction leading to a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) degree.

**Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX-USA)** – A series of osteopathic medical licensing examinations administered by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME).

**CORE Element** – An element considered fundamental to meeting the standard. A COM will be found out of compliance with the standard if the COM fails to meet any core element within that standard.

**Culturally-Sensitive** – To be aware that differences and similarities exist between people without judging those differences as positive or negative.

**Credit Hour** – A credit hour is defined by the regulations of the U.S. Secretary of Education at 34 CFR 600.2 – Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
  2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
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**Curriculum Changes** – A substantive change in curriculum will be considered when a comprehensive change in the curriculum is occurring, which means a significant departure from the existing curriculum content or method of delivery. A substantive change is NOT merely a modification made as part of the routine curricular improvement process. A substantive change in curriculum may also be considered if there is a change from clock hours to credit hours or a substantial increase or decrease (more than 20%) in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program. CFR 602.22 a-(2)iii.

**Curriculum Vitae** – A brief account of an individual’s education, qualifications, and professional experiences, updated within the last three years.

**Direct Supervision of a Medical Student** – Observation of a student in the clinical learning environment that can occur while the supervisor is physically present with the student and the patient, or when the supervisor allows the student to interact with the patient without being present but is immediately available. In both cases the supervisor must physically see the patient during the key portions of the interaction and is responsible for student and patient safety.

**Distance Education** – Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver the entire course of instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

1. The internet;
2. One-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
3. Audio conferencing; or
4. Video cassettes, DVD’s and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition. (34 CFR 600.2)

**EPAs** – Entrustable Professional Activities

**Escrow Reserve Fund** – A minimum segregated, unencumbered reserve fund escrowed until one year after graduation of the first class of students and equal to an amount approved by the COCA. The escrowed reserve fund must not be borrowed or pledged funds and must be 100% wholly owned assets of the COM or its parent institution.

**Faculty Member** – An individual who contributes in a full or part time manner to a COM in the areas of teaching, research/scholarly work, service, or administrative responsibilities.

Adjunct Faculty Member – Faculty serving in a temporary or auxiliary capacity with limited duties and benefits.

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**Full Time Faculty Member** – A faculty member is determined to work full time for a COM or institution if he/she contributes at least thirty-two hours per week of work, including responsibilities in the area of teaching, research/scholarly work, service or administrative responsibilities. In the faculty adequacy model, a faculty member meeting this definition may be considered full-time or 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE).

**Part Time Faculty Member** – Faculty members working fewer hours or with contractual arrangements resulting in routine payments from sources other than the COM or institution are considered part-time and should be assigned the working percentage of a full time equivalent.

**Feasibility Study** – An assessment of the practicality of a proposed plan or method required as part of the Candidate Status Application. The submitted document will be verified at the time of the site visit.

**Full-time Equivalent (FTE)** – An FTE is the number of hours worked by one employee on a full-time basis.

**Independent of Financial Interest** - Examples of a material relationship that would disqualify an individual from being an independent director include, but are not limited to:

- a) Having any direct or indirect contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interest in the institution or its actions.
- b) Being compensated as an employee or contracted party by the institution or any related entity.
- c) Holding an ownership interest in the institution (e.g., owning stocks, shares, or any similar equity interest), excluding shares held indirectly through mutual funds, insurance policies, or blind trusts.
- d) Receiving compensation for board participation in an amount that could create a potential conflict of interest, excluding reimbursement for travel, lodging, meals, and other incidental expenses associated with attending meetings.

**Institutional Accrediting Agency** – An agency that accredits institutions of higher education; such an agency grants accreditation decisions that enable its accredited institutions to establish eligibility to participate in Higher Education Act Programs.

**Interprofessional Education (IPE)** – When students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes. (World Health Organization 2010)

**NACIQI** – National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity

**NBOME** – National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners, Inc

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**Observer** – A site team member who is an official from a federal or state agency or a representative of any other organization, who is not assigned a specific role on the site visit team.

**Operating Reserve Fund** – A fund consisting of an amount approved by the COCA but no less than one-fourth of the escrow reserve fund. The minimum operating reserve fund must not be borrowed or pledged funds and must be 100% wholly owned assets of the COM or its parent institution.

**Osteopathic Core Competencies** – The Seven Osteopathic Core Competencies were defined to meet the requirements of AOA-accredited postdoctoral training programs: Medical knowledge; osteopathic philosophy and osteopathic manipulative medicine; patient care; professionalism; interpersonal and communication skills; practice-based learning and improvement; and systems-based practice.

**Planned Class Size Increase** – A substantive change initiated by the COM and approved by its governing board to increase its COCA-approved class size.

**Progress Report** – A document submitted by a COM for compliance monitoring purposes to demonstrate the COM's compliance with accreditation standards the COCA has deemed not met.

**Proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine** – A COM that has not yet achieved pre-accreditation status. A proposed COM may not advertise, interview, or admit students or accept any money or other compensation from any applicant as a reservation fee or payment for any part of a future tuition. A proposed COM may not begin to offer any facts, ideas, or skills imparted through education, erudition, knowledge, learning, scholarship, science that will result in awarding partial or complete credit leading to the awarding of the DO degree until pre-accreditation status is awarded. The proposed COM must specifically and conspicuously note this status on its website or in communication to the target audience.

**Public Document** – A statement or document that is accessible to or shared with members of the public.

**Public Website** – An unencrypted webpage published by the COM that is accessible to all members of the public without need for a password or other specific permission.

**Published Document** – A document that is provided by the COM in hard copy or posted to the COM's website. Documents requiring public notice must be made available on request to the public or posted to the COM's website for access without a password.

**Right to Recruit but not to Admit Students or to Offer Instruction** – This phrase identifies a proposed COM (i.e., a COM that has not yet achieved pre-accreditation status) that has been approved by the COCA to advertise, interview, and otherwise seek applicants for a future class, but may not accept payments for fees or tuition, admit students, or offer instruction. A proposed COM with the right to recruit but not to admit students or to offer instruction must specifically and conspicuously note this status on its website and in all communications.

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**Self-Study** – A self-assessment report submitted by a COM to the COCA to demonstrate the COM's compliance with all applicable COCA standards.

**Show Cause** – A directive by the COCA to a COM mandating the COM to produce information or evidence as to why the COCA should not take an adverse accreditation decision following information evidencing a COM's non-compliance with the accreditation standards, policies or procedures.

**Site Visit** – The process through which the COCA examines, through an on-site review, a COM's compliance with all accreditation standards. Site reviews may be conducted virtually as directed by the COCA.

Comprehensive Site Visit – A review that addresses all standards.

Focused Site Visit – A review that addresses a specific set of identified standards.

**Site Visit Team** – A group of individuals each classified under certain categories of on-site evaluators, as required by 34 CFR § 602.15. The categories of on-site evaluators are:

1. Administrator – An individual who is currently or recently, and directly, engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary program or institutional administration.
2. Educator – An individual who is currently or recently, and directly, engaged in a significant manner in osteopathic education in an academic capacity (e.g., professor, instructor, academic dean).
3. Academic – An individual who is currently or recently, and directly, engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research.
4. Practitioner – An individual who is currently or recently, and directly, engaged in a significant manner in the practice of the osteopathic profession.

**Substantive Change** – Any modification in a COM's operations, governance, or legal status that does not have a material adverse effect that could impact the COM's capacity to continue to meet the COCA's accreditation requirements for the delivery of the osteopathic medical education curriculum. See *COCA Substantive Changes Policies and Procedures*.

**Teach-out Agreement** – A written agreement an accredited COM provides for the equitable treatment of its students to complete their program of study, if the COM stops offering its educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete their program of study.

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**Teach-Out Plan** – A written plan developed by a COM providing for the equitable treatment of its students if an institution, an additional location or a branch campus ceases to operate before all students enrolled in that program complete their program of study. This plan may include, if required by the COCA, a teach-out agreement between COMs.

**Technical Assessment Report** – The process of setting goals about technical facets of the institution, determining how well those goals are being met, and determining the best course of action to take to improve those results.

**Title IV** – Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

**USDE** – United States Department of Education and the Secretary of Education.

**Withdrawal** - The voluntary withdrawal of a COM from the accreditation process.

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