

Entry-Level Occupational Competencies for the Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine

**Developed for the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
Practitioners and Acupuncturists of British Columbia**

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of British Columbia (CTCMA) regulates the practices of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture. CTCMA authorizes the use of four restricted titles:

- Registered Acupuncturist, R.Ac
- Registered Traditional Chinese Medicine Herbalist, R.TCM.H
- Registered Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner, R.TCM.P
- Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Dr.TCM

Occupational competencies for the Acupuncturist, Herbalist and TCM Practitioner were developed and approved by CTCMA in 2010¹. The scope of practice of the R.TCM.P is a combination of the scopes of the Acupuncturist and the Herbalist; this is reflected in the occupational competencies.

The scope of practice of the Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine includes, and exceeds, the scope of the R.TCM.P. Therefore the occupational competencies for the Dr.TCM include and build upon those of the R.TCM.P.

Occupational Competencies and Professional Competence

Professional competence refers to the ability of an individual, in a given practice situation, to act in a safe, effective and ethical manner. Competence is a subjective measure that is enabled by the ability to perform specific practice tasks with acceptable levels of proficiency.

We define an occupational competency as *the ability to perform a practice task with a specified level of proficiency*. Thus, (professional) competence is enabled by the possession of (occupational) competencies.

The competencies we have identified in general describe practice tasks that are broad and complex. Their performance requires the application of significant learning in one or more of the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains².

¹ *Entry-Level Occupational Competencies for the Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Canada*, Canadian Alliance of Regulatory Bodies for TCM Practitioners and Acupuncturists, May 2010

² We refer here to *Bloom's Taxonomy*, based upon the work of psychologist Benjamin Bloom in 1956, and many others who followed.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational competencies are an array of abilities that the entry-level Dr.TCM³ brings to the workplace, and applies in the context of the situation at hand, using professional judgment. Competencies are not applied in isolation; they represent an integrated set of abilities, each competency informing and qualifying the others.

The entry-level competencies involve a broad range of practice tasks, to ensure that the Dr.TCM entering practice is equipped to work in a variety of common practice settings. Some entry-level competencies will not be relevant in certain practice settings.

We identify the minimum level of proficiency required in each competency at the point of entry to practice.

For the Dr.TCM we define two levels of proficiency:

Level 1: Basic Proficiency⁴

This is characterized as follows:

When presented with routine situations, the entry-level Dr.TCM applies each relevant competency in a manner consistent with generally accepted standards in the profession, without supervision or direction, and within a reasonable timeframe. The entry-level Dr.TCM selects and applies competencies in an informed manner. The entry-level Dr.TCM anticipates what outcomes to expect in a given situation, and responds appropriately.

The entry-level Dr.TCM recognizes unusual, difficult to resolve and complex situations which may be beyond his / her capacity. The entry-level Dr.TCM takes appropriate and ethical steps to address these situations, which may include seeking consultation or supervision, reviewing research literature, or referring the client.

³ The entry-level Dr.TCM is an individual who has met all the registration requirements and as a result has been awarded the Dr.TCM title by CTCMA. The entry-level Dr.TCM is beginning professional practice as a Dr.TCM.

⁴ Basic Proficiency is the level of proficiency required in all competencies, as a minimum, of the R.TCM.P.

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Level 2: Advanced Proficiency

Some of the competencies applicable to the Dr.TCM are designated as requiring Level 2 Proficiency. These are subject to a higher performance expectation, as follows:

The entry-level Dr.TCM applies comprehensive and advanced knowledge and skills to deal effectively with commonly-occurring situations. In providing patient care the entry-level Dr.TCM readily perceives which aspects of a presenting situation are significant, and prioritizes management.

The entry-level Dr.TCM more effectively deals with unusual, difficult to resolve and complex situations, while maintaining collaboration with colleagues and other health care professionals, reviewing relevant research literature and referring where appropriate.

Beyond Entry to Practice

We have noted above that some entry-level competencies are relevant only in certain practice settings. Following commencement of practice, the Dr.TCM's competencies will continue to evolve. The level of proficiency in competencies that are used regularly will increase with experience. Also, new competencies may be added, through formal or informal learning.

Following commencement of practice the level of proficiency in competencies that are not used will decrease; such competencies may eventually be lost.

Competency Assessment

In order to determine eligibility for registration as a Dr.TCM, CTCMA undertakes competency assessment. Assessment relies on observation of performance indicators in the following assessment vehicles:

- Completion of an approved Dr.TCM training program
- A registration examination with multiple choice (MCQ) and clinical case study (CCS) components

The indicators are listed in a separate document.

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Organizational Framework for the Competencies

The competencies for the Dr.TCM are displayed in a grid on the following pages, grouped into Practice Areas as shown below:

1. Interpersonal Skills
2. Professionalism
3. Practice Management
4. Traditional Chinese Medicine Foundations
5. Fundamentals of Biomedicine
6. Diagnostics and Treatment
7. Acupuncture Techniques
8. Herbal Dispensary Management
9. Safety
10. TCM Classics
11. Advanced TCM Practice
12. Scholarship and Research

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
1.1	Utilize professional communication.	
a	Speak effectively, using appropriate terminology.	1
b	Write effectively, using appropriate terminology.	1
c	Comprehend written information.	1
d	Comprehend information presented orally.	1
e	Respond to non-verbal communication.	1
f	Respond to sources of interpersonal conflict.	1
g	Adapt communication style in response to needs of recipient.	1
h	Ensure effectiveness of communication.	1
i	Communicate with professional integrity.	1
1.2	Develop and maintain effective inter-professional relationships.	
a	Develop productive working relationships.	1
b	Work cooperatively in an interdisciplinary health care setting.	1
c	Provide leadership in collaborating with biomedical health care providers.	1
d	Recognize the variety of health and social services available in the province and direct patients appropriately.	1
1.3	Develop and maintain effective relationships with patients.	
a	Show respect toward patients as individuals.	1
b	Exhibit compassion toward patients.	1
c	Maintain practitioner / patient boundaries.	1
d	Facilitate honest, reciprocal communication.	1
e	Encourage patient to take responsibility for his / her health.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 2 PROFESSIONALISM		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
2.1	Comply with legal requirements.	
a	Apply to practice current, relevant federal and provincial / territorial legislation.	1
b	Apply to practice current requirements of regulatory body.	1
c	Apply to practice current, relevant requirements of municipal and other local authorities.	1
2.2	Practice in a manner that accords patient dignity and reflects patient rights.	
a	Ensure that patient is aware of treatment plan, its benefits and risks.	1
b	Ensure ongoing, informed consent.	1
c	Respect patient rights to privacy and confidentiality.	1
d	Terminate course of treatment when appropriate.	1
2.3	Maintain practitioner self-care.	
a	Maintain personal health and wellness in the context of professional practice.	1
b	Exhibit professional deportment.	1
2.4	Practice with professional integrity.	
a	Practice within limits of expertise.	1
b	Modify practice to enhance effectiveness.	1
c	Exhibit professional behaviour.	1
d	Remain current with developments in acupuncture practice.	1
e	Remain current with developments in TCM herbology practice.	1
2.5	Apply principles of reflective practice.	
a	Engage with colleagues in professional activities related to the practice of TCM.	1
b	Critically assess personal performance and set goals for improvement.	1
c	Undertake professional development activities aimed at enhancing practice.	1
2.6	Facilitate the learning of others.	
a	Act as a mentor to less experienced colleagues.	1
b	Make effective presentations to groups.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 3 PRACTICE MANAGEMENT		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
3.1	Maintain patient records.	
a	Ensure complete and accurate records.	1
b	Ensure security and integrity of records.	1
3.2	Utilize effective business strategies.	
a	Ensure sound financial management.	1
b	Employ ethical business practices.	1
c	Establish office procedures and supervise staff accordingly.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 4 TCM FOUNDATIONS		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
4.1	Apply fundamental knowledge of the following Traditional Chinese Medicine principles in diagnosis and treatment.	
a	yin yang	2
b	wu xing (five elements)	2
c	zang xiang (organ theories)	2
d	jing luo & shu xue (channels, collaterals, and acupuncture points)	2
e	qi, xue, jin ye, jing, & shen (qi, blood, body fluid, essence, spirit)	2
f	ti zhi (constitution)	2
g	bing yin (etiology)	2
h	bing ji (pathogenesis)	2
i	yu fang (prevention)	2
j	zhi ze (principles of treatment)	2
k	yang sheng (health preservation)	2
4.2	Apply fundamentals of acupuncture in diagnosis and treatment.	
a	Characterize the following points.	
	(i) jing xue (points of the 14 channels)	1
	(ii) jing wai qi xue (extra points)	1
b	Apply knowledge of the following special groupings of points, in treatment planning:	
	(i) wu shu xue (five transporting points)	2
	(ii) yuan xue (source points)	2
	(iii) luo xue (connecting points)	2
	(iv) xi xue (cleft points)	2
	(v) bei shu xue (back shu points)	2
	(vi) mu xue (front mu points)	2
	(vii) xia he xue (lower he-sea points)	2
	(viii) ba mai jiao hui xue (eight confluent points)	2
	(ix) ba hui xue (eight meeting (influential) points)	2
	(x) zi mu xue (mother / child points)	2
	(xi) jiao hui xue (channel crossing points)	2
	(xii) a shi xue (ah shi points)	2

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
c	Select points for assessment.	2
d	Select points or areas for therapy.	2
e	Select stimulation techniques.	2
f	Apply knowledge of adjunct techniques:	
	(i) <i>qi gong / tai ji</i>	2
	(ii) <i>gua sha</i>	2
g	Apply knowledge of precautions and contraindications for application of stimulation techniques.	1
4.3	Apply knowledge of the following properties and functions of TCM herbs in treatment planning:	
a	<i>si qi</i> (four properties)	
b	<i>wu wei</i> (five flavours)	2
c	<i>sheng jiang fu chen</i> (ascending, descending, floating, sinking)	2
d	<i>gui jing</i> (channel tropism)	2
e	actions	2
f	indications	2
g	toxicity	2
h	<i>pao zhi</i> (processing)	2
i	pharmacological effect	1
4.4	Apply knowledge of herbal formulating strategies, with reference to:	
a	composition of formula	2
b	modification of formula	2
c	functions & classifications	2
d	combinations & compatibility	2
e	dosage form & methods of administration	2
f	dosage	2
g	potential adverse effects	2
h	contraindications & precautions	2
4.5	Apply knowledge of the following herb interactions in treatment planning:	
a	herb – drug interactions	2
b	herb – herb interactions	2
c	herb – food interactions	2
d	herb – natural health product interactions	2

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 5 FUNDAMENTALS OF BIOMEDICINE		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
5.1	Apply basic biomedical concepts to TCM practice:	
a	human anatomical structures	1
b	biochemical processes	2
c	control mechanisms	2
d	infectious diseases and infection control	2
e	dysfunctions and common diseases	2
5.2	Relate biomedical diagnostic and treatment approaches to TCM practice:	
a	diagnosis and treatment methods	2
b	pharmacology	2
5.3	Integrate TCM and biomedical concepts.	
a	Relate biomedical information concerning patient's condition and treatment to TCM state of health.	2
b	Communicate TCM diagnostic and treatment information for use by other health care workers, and to third parties.	2
c	Maintain knowledge of emerging diseases and conditions, and their responsiveness to treatment by TCM.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 6 DIAGNOSTICS AND TREATMENT		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
6.1	Establish priorities for assessment and treatment planning.	
a	Identify chief complaint.	2
b	Initiate assessment based upon chief complaint.	2
c	Recognize conditions that require urgent medical treatment, and direct patient appropriately.	2
d	Modify assessment strategy based upon emerging information.	2
e	Initiate collaboration, consultation or referral as appropriate.	2
f	Recognize support needs beyond the scope of TCM, and advise patient accordingly.	1
6.2	Assess patient.	
a	Collect information using <i>wang zhen</i> (TCM diagnostic inspection method).	2
b	Collect information using <i>wen zhen</i> (TCM diagnostic inquiry method).	2
c	Collect information using <i>wen zhen</i> (TCM diagnostic auscultation and olfaction methods).	2
d	Collect information using <i>qie zhen</i> (TCM diagnostic palpation method).	2
e	Measure vital signs.	1
f	Conduct relevant non-invasive physical examination.	2
6.3	Analyze assessment information.	
a	Organize and interpret the collected information using the following TCM syndrome differentiation methods:	2
	(i) <i>ba gang bian zheng</i> (eight principles differentiation)	2
	(ii) <i>zang fu bian zheng</i> (organ theory differentiation)	2
	(iii) <i>wu xing bian zheng</i> (five elements differentiation)	2
	(iv) <i>san jiao bian zheng</i> (triple warmer differentiation)	2
	(v) <i>wei qi ying xue bian zheng</i> (four levels differentiation)	2
	(vi) <i>liu jing bian zheng</i> (six stages differentiation)	2
	(vii) <i>qi xue jin ye bian zheng</i> (qi, blood, body fluid differentiation)	2
	(viii) <i>bing yin bian zheng</i> (pathogenic factors differentiation)	2
	(ix) <i>jing luo bian zheng</i> (meridian differentiation)	2
b	Incorporate information obtained from biomedical diagnostic data, medical and health history.	2
c	Integrate knowledge of TCM with biomedical concepts and clinical approaches, and apply this integrated perspective to treatment.	2
c	Make TCM diagnosis.	2

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
6.4	Establish treatment plan based on diagnosis.	
a	Determine TCM treatment goals and strategies.	2
b	Take into account precautions and contraindications.	2
c	Adapt treatment according to patient characteristics and needs.	2
d	Select appropriate points, point combinations and / or treatment areas.	2
e	Select appropriate course of acupuncture treatment and therapeutic modalities.	2
f	Devise applicable TCM herbal formula.	2
g	Devise appropriate course of herbal treatment.	2
6.5	Provide acupuncture treatment.	
a	Adapt clinical setting to enhance comfort and safety.	1
b	Position patient for treatment.	1
c	Locate selected points on patient.	1
d	Apply treatment techniques.	1
e	Monitor and respond to patient condition during treatment.	1
6.6	Implement herbal treatment plan.	
a	Instruct patient on accessing TCM herbal formula.	1
b	Instruct patient on administration of TCM herbal formula.	1
6.7	Monitor effectiveness of treatment plan and modify where necessary.	
a	Evaluate effectiveness of treatment plan on an ongoing basis.	2
b	Modify treatment plan to enhance effectiveness.	2
6.8	Educate and counsel patient.	
a	Explain etiology and pathogenesis of condition.	1
b	Explain TCM concepts as they apply to patient condition.	1
c	Inform patient of possible side effects and reaction to treatment.	1
d	Advise patient on <i>yu fang</i> and <i>yang sheng</i> (prevention and health preservation)	2
e	Counsel patient on compliance with treatment recommendations.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 7 ACUPUNCTURE TECHNIQUES		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
7.1	Perform needling.	
a	Perform filiform needling.	1
b	Perform dermal (plum blossom, seven star) needling.	1
c	Perform intra-dermal tack needling.	1
d	Perform three edged needling.	1
7.2	Perform moxibustion.	
a	Perform direct moxibustion.	1
b	Perform indirect moxibustion.	1
c	Perform needle warming moxibustion.	1
7.3	Perform treatment utilizing supplementary devices.	
a	Perform stimulation using heat lamps.	1
b	Perform stimulation using electro-acupuncture devices.	1
7.4	Perform cupping.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 8 HERBAL DISPENSARY MANAGEMENT		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
8.1	Maintain herbal inventory.	
a	Identify appropriate supply for herbs.	1
b	Assess quality of herbs with reference to:	
	(i) packaging	1
	(ii) labeling	1
	(iii) physical properties	1
	(iv) available quality assurance information	1
c	Store herbs in appropriate conditions, including:	
	(i) environment	1
	(ii) security	1
	(iii) monitoring	1
d	Maintain records with respect to inventory.	1
8.2	Prepare and dispense herbal formulas.	
a	Verify formula information is clear, complete and accurate.	1
b	Verify availability of components and confirm substitution if required.	1
c	Confirm identity of components.	1
d	Compound formula.	1
e	Apply packaging.	1
f	Apply labeling.	1
g	Provide instructions for storage and use.	1
h	Maintain dispensing records.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 9 SAFETY		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
9.1	Evaluate patient risk profile.	
a	Determine risk profile relative to acupuncture treatment.	1
b	Determine level of risk relative to TCM herbal treatment.	1
9.2	Provide a safe working environment.	
a	Maintain current knowledge of communicable diseases and infection control techniques.	1
b	Apply universal precautions for infection control.	1
c	Ensure effective supervision of staff and / or students.	1
d	Inspect facilities for electrical hazards, fire risk and physical hazards that may cause accidents, and take action to minimize.	1
e	Establish procedures and route for emergency evacuation of facilities.	1
f	Establish procedures to maximize protection of self, staff and patients in the event of abusive or violent behaviour.	1
9.3	Manage risks to patients.	
a	Include safety precautions in herbal treatment plan.	1
b	Manage adverse reactions and accidents resulting from treatment.	1
c	Respond appropriately to medical emergencies.	1
d	Manage blood-to-blood contact and provide direction for post exposure follow up.	1
e	Clean spills of blood and other body fluids.	1
f	Control and extinguish small fires.	1
9.4	Ensure that equipment is safe and functional.	
a	Select equipment that enhances patient safety.	1
b	Maintain equipment in good working order.	1
c	Clean equipment regularly, and disinfect as appropriate.	1

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 10 TCM CLASSICS		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
10.1	Apply knowledge of the TCM Classics in diagnosis and treatment.	
a	<i>huang di nei jing</i> (Medical Classic of the Yellow Emperor / The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon)	2
b	<i>shang han lun</i> (Treatise on Cold Pathogenic Diseases / Treatise on Febrile Diseases)	2
c	<i>wen bing xue</i> (Science of Epidemic Febrile Disease)	2
d	<i>jin gui yao lue</i> (Synopsis of the Golden Chamber)	2
e	<i>nan jing</i> (Classic of Difficulties)	2
f	<i>yi jing</i> (Classic of Changes)	1
g	<i>shen nong ben cao jing</i> (Shennong's Classic of Materia Medica)	2
10.2	Integrate knowledge of the TCM Classics.	2

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 11 ADVANCED TCM PRACTICE		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
11.1	Maintain awareness of new developments and methodologies in TCM.	1
11.2	Apply knowledge of advanced acupuncture techniques:	
a	<i>wei zhen</i> (micro systems acupuncture)	2
b	point injection	1
11.3	Apply advanced herbal formulas.	
a	Utilize principles of combination of different formulas for treating complex cases.	2
b	Maintain knowledge of developments in application of classic or modified formulas.	1
11.4	Apply knowledge of modern therapeutic technologies (including laser acupuncture, cold laser treatment, therapeutic ultrasound treatment).	1
11.5	Perform <i>tui na / an mo</i> (acupressure).	2

OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

AREA 12 SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH		
Occupational Competency		Level of Proficiency
12.1	Utilize research literature.	1
12.2	Demonstrate the potential to undertake research in TCM.	1