What's in My Alphabet Soup? – An FPD FAQ

What is a first “Professional Doctorate” or FPD degree?
It is an entry-level doctoral degree one receives upon completing a professional program of study. Other examples include degrees such as the MD, DC, ND, PharmD and DPT. The actual entry-level degree required to enter the profession is determined by individual states. Currently, for the states which license or register acupuncturists, the master’s degree is the entry-level degree required for acupuncture and a Chinese medicine practice. The move to create PD programs was initiated by colleges and accreditors, not by licensure requirements.

A Short History of the Development of Professional Doctorate in the Acupuncture Profession
The Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) approved Accreditation Standards for a First Professional Doctoral (FPD) Degree in Acupuncture and/or Oriental Medicine on February 14, 2013 and began accepting substantive change applications from ACAOM accredited institutions to add the new program in June of that year. During the intervening four-year period, ACAOM-accredited institutions received approval of programs to begin enrolling students. However, to date, the Commission has not granted either pre-accreditation or accreditation to any professional doctorate programs under these standards.

What is the difference between OCOM’s current DAOM degree and a professional doctorate?
The Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (DAOM) is a postgraduate degree that requires students to first complete a master’s-level degree in Chinese medicine. A professional doctorate is a degree where students enter a graduate program to receive a doctoral degree without having to first complete a master’s degree. The highest degree in the field of Chinese medicine study is the postgraduate DAOM.

For students considering which path to take, please note that the entry-level degree required to begin professional practice is a master’s degree. A doctoral degree may confer additional benefits on your resume. In a competitive applicant pool, however, a doctorate has no additional benefit to scope of practice.

Choosing the postgraduate DAOM program at OCOM means a significant increase in depth of study and experience within three major domains: clinical practice, teaching, and research.

What is a transitional doctorate?
*A note about degree title: The term “transitional or T” is used in advertising and catalogs to distinguish between this course of study taken by practicing acupuncturists and the one taken by new, entry-level students. Graduates of these transitional doctorate programs will have earned a doctorate recognized according to state law. There are now ACAOM standards for these transitional degrees, and OCOM intends to offer a transitional path for recent graduates as part of the Professional Doctorate program application. The earliest such a program would be offered would be fall of 2019.

Will OCOM offer a Professional Doctorate?
Yes. College faculty and administration are engaged in curriculum review and a draft application for a new program. The earliest OCOM could expect to enroll students in an approved program in pre-accreditation would be Fall 2019.

Will OCOM offer a PD completion program or “transitional doctorate”?
Yes. A PD degree completion program may eventually be available for current OCOM master’s students and OCOM graduates. The earliest we would be able to offer such a program would be 2019. Cost, hours, and format for the degree completion program have not yet been determined, but we anticipate offering a modular format with both in-person and online components. Classroom and clinical coursework will be flexible to allow working professionals to maintain their practice.

A “cut off date” for allowing graduates to pursue the PD degree completion path is also undetermined.
Individuals who want to pursue a doctorate, but who graduated from OCOM when the research, herbal, and clinical curriculum was significantly different from today will be better served by enrolling in the postgraduate doctoral (DAOM) program.

**What is my path to a doctorate at OCOM?**
There is currently a direct path to a DAOM at OCOM, learn more at this link: [http://www.ocom.edu/news/149-five-years-to-a-doctoral-degree-at-ocom](http://www.ocom.edu/news/149-five-years-to-a-doctoral-degree-at-ocom)

**What is the cost of a DAOM degree?**
As of the 2017-2018 academic year, DAOM tuition was $34,392 for the two-year program.

**Do you have scholarships for the DAOM program?**
Yes.

**What is the value of a post-graduate degree in Chinese medicine at OCOM?**
DAOM graduates consistently report on the quality, personal benefits, and professional outcomes of their studies at OCOM. With emphasis on teaching and research competencies, as well as advanced clinical skills, the modular and in-person format cultivates future leaders in the field.

**Will practitioners who have a master’s degree be grandfathered?**
Grandfathering is not recognized in academia, but falls within the purview of licensure. For example, New Mexico uses the license title “Doctor of Oriental Medicine”; in Florida, it is “Acupuncture Physician,” and in Rhode Island, it is “Doctor of Acupuncture.” The practitioners in those states with existing licenses were grandfathered when these licensing titles were created, regardless of their degree. Grandfathering is usually determined by state regulatory boards. Changes in licensing titles are more easily facilitated by changes in entry-level requirements, e.g. if a state were to make the PD the requirement for entry into the profession, they might consider changing the professional title from “Licensed Acupuncturist” to “Doctor of Acupuncture.”

**What our students and graduates say...**
Eighty-nine percent of Class of 2015 respondents report their practice is more successful than when they entered the DAOM program. Here are some of their comments:

“The doctoral program has offered me an increased professional approach to patient interactions as well with other medical practitioners. My skill as a practitioner has increased twofold and I can approach treatment protocols from a stronger understanding of Western and Eastern medicine allowing for successful treatments results.”

“The most outstanding part to me was the peer-to-peer teaching that happened, how it influenced my feelings and understanding of leadership and policy development in our profession, and what it meant for the classroom environment to be in a classroom with practitioners.”

“I think the DAOM program has been the best decision I’ve made in my career.”

“The research for my capstone (Chinese language) dramatically altered the focus and direction of my career in Chinese medicine and life. It opened new levels and introduced me to a depth of medicine I had not imagined before. I am still in the early phases of fulfilling the newfound potential, but there is new energy and vigor in my life and practice.”

“As is true for most professionals with active practices, it is always beneficial to learn from subject matter experts. Although I cannot say the DAOM program totally redesigned my practice, it did broaden the range of patients and conditions I could treat successfully. Successfully is the operative word. Anyone can treat anything. It is the extent to which we have success treating those conditions that we can measure the success of our practices.”