

Guide to Complete PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment)

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Introduction

The **Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR)** process is a competency-based assessment of Grandparented Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists who intend to transfer to General registration with the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario (CTCMPAO).

The PLAR process requires Grandparented members to demonstrate the competencies as outlined in **EntryLevel Occupational Competencies for the Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Canada** (October 2009)

<http://www.ctcmpao.on.ca/Media/en/Entry%20Level%20Occupational%20Competencies%20for%20the%20Practice%20of%20TCM%202009.pdf>

Grandparented members using the title of **Acupuncturist** and designation of **R. Ac** are required to demonstrate designated competencies within the eight Practice Areas: interpersonal skills, professionalism, practice management, TCM foundations, biomedicine, diagnostics and treatment, acupuncture techniques, and safety.

Grandparented members using the title of **Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner** and designation of **R. TCMP** are required to demonstrate designated competencies within the nine Practice Areas: interpersonal skills, professionalism, practice management, TCM foundations, biomedicine, diagnostics and treatment, acupuncture techniques, herbal dispensary, and safety.

ONLINE APPLICATION

The PLAR application and evaluation process will be administered by a third party, Professional Testing, independent of the College (CTCMPAO).

Grandparented members need their College Registration Number to login to the PLAR application. All contact information including email address and the professional title and designation is predetermined based on the information in the CTCMPAO public registry. Contact CTCMPAO if there are any discrepancies or if members need to change contact information before proceeding with the PLAR application.

Routes through the PLAR process

A Grandparented member must successfully complete **one** of either (A) **Case Study Assessment**, or (B) **Academic Document Review**, of the PLAR process, the results of which, demonstrate to the satisfaction of the College that the Grandparented member is eligible to proceed to General membership.

(A) Case Study Assessment (primary route)	OR	(B) Academic Document Review (secondary route)
<p>The Case Study Assessment is the <u>primary</u> route through the PLAR process open to all Grandparented members.</p> <p>Grandparented members are required to analyze three (3) clinical cases and write in English a diagnosis and treatment plan for each case.</p> <p><u>R. Ac Grandparented members:</u> When responding to the three (3) case studies, R. Ac Grandparented members will only identify acupuncture treatments. Any herbal treatments included in answers will not be considered when evaluating responses.</p> <p><u>R. TCMP Grandparented members:</u> When responding to the three (3) case studies, R. TCMP Grandparented members must demonstrate their understanding of both acupuncture and herbal treatments.</p>		<p>The Academic Document Review is an alternate route available, <u>if and only if</u>, Grandparented members are able to provide sufficient notarized documentation and supportable evidence relevant to traditional Chinese medicine education as detailed in Steps 1-3 on the pages 9-12.</p> <p>Grandparented members who are applying through the Academic Document Review route are required to highlight and summarize information so that confirmation of hours of instruction and clinical training is clearly evident.</p> <p>Grandparented members who did not receive formal post-secondary training are required to take the Case Study Assessment (primary route).</p> <p>Grandparented members who received formal post-secondary training, but are unable to obtain supporting documentation from a post-secondary educational institution, are required to take the Case Study Assessment.</p>

Payment and Confirmation

The fee to accompany the PLAR application is \$1,800 plus HST (Total \$2,034).

Payment is made to Professional Testing online by credit card.

Once the application is submitted,
a confirmation letter and receipt is automatically emailed to the Grandparented member.

Case Study Assessment (Primary Route)

The **Case Study Assessment** is the primary route through the PLAR process. Read the instructions carefully.

1. The case studies are based on a set of patient disorders that all registered members of CTCMPAO must be competent in diagnosing and treating. Disorders include: respiratory, digestive, urinary, pain/neurological, gynaecological and obstetric, cardiovascular, blood, psychiatric/mental disturbance, skin, pediatric, disorders of senses, and cancer.
2. Grandparented members whether seeking R. TCMP or R. Ac designation, are required to analyze and complete three (3) clinical cases in English.
3. For each clinical case, Grandparented members are required to make a TCM diagnosis, including an analysis of symptoms and signs, pattern differentiation, a treatment principle consistent with the competencies outlined in *Entry-Level Occupational Competencies for the Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Canada*, and a comprehensive treatment plan supported by evidence.
4. Grandparented members seeking R. TCMP designation must demonstrate their understanding of **both** acupuncture treatments and herbal treatments, and must respond with **both** acupuncture and herbal treatments for each of the 3 case studies.
5. Grandparented members seeking R. Ac designation must **only** identify acupuncture treatments. Any herbal treatments included in answers will not be considered when evaluating responses.
6. Grandparented members are **not permitted** to use or to access any digital devices or audio visual devices (e.g., cell phone/mobile phone, personal digital assistant, pager, tablet, camera, laptop, electronic dictionaries) during the Case Study Assessment. Members are not to bring any such electronic device into the Case Study Assessment.

Grandparented members **are permitted** to utilize the following resources during the Case Study Assessment:

- Bilingual dictionaries
 - TCM reference/textbooks (The College provides a recommended [List of reference books](#) on its website)
 - Paper Printouts of the following:
 - [English nomenclature of basic technical terms of acupuncture](#)
 - [Terminology related to tongue diagnosis](#)
 - [Terminology related to pulse](#)
 - [Index of Materia Medica](#)
 - [List of TCM formulae](#)
 - [List of Common TCM diseases and conditions](#)
7. Responses must be written in English. Evaluation is based **ONLY** on content of the responses, and not on spelling, grammar, or presentation.
 8. The case studies are evaluated with the understanding that there are many approaches to diagnosing and treating patient disorders. The case studies do **NOT** have just one correct answer. The evaluators examine the case studies for sound reasoning consistent with and based on competencies outlined in *Entry-Level Occupational Competencies for the Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Canada (October 2009)*.
 9. CTCMPAO will notify those who have successfully completed the PLAR process to apply for transfer to General Certificate of Registration and submit a transfer fee to CTCMPAO.

10. Unsuccessful members will receive feedback and direction from CTCMPO, while practising with a Grandparented Certificate of Registration prior to re-applying for re-assessment. A fee of \$1,800 plus HST (total \$2,034) must be paid for re-assessment.
11. The assessment centre address, in Toronto, is provided by email upon successful completion of the application form.

Sample Case Study

The sample case study shows the format of how the cases are presented and an example of a possible response. The sample does NOT show the level of difficulty for the case studies. The three (3) clinical case studies that Grandparented members analyze and complete for the Case Study Assessment vary in type of disorder and in level of challenge.

Sample Case Study:

Patient Information

- Female
- 36 years old
- overweight

Main Medical Complaint of Patient

High pitch ringing in the ears and an episode of temporary deafness

Patient Medical History

- Patient had an argument with her daughter 2 days ago, and immediately following the argument she had a temporary deafness and a severe headache. Since yesterday, her deafness has changed to high pitch ringing in the ears
- Patient had high blood pressure for 3 years

Family Medical History

- Mother is diabetic
- Father has hypertension

Assessment Information

Symptoms Described by Patient

- She had temporary deafness for one day and high pitch ringing in the ears since yesterday □ Headache
- Feels irritable, any unhappy or stressful thoughts make the ear ringing and headache worse

Information collected by practitioner to assess the patient

- Red facial complexion
- Talkative and loud
- Can't focus on anything, difficulty falling asleep
- Mind is active during sleep with many dreams but can't remember any when she awakes □
Mouth feels bitter when she wakes up in the morning
- Thirsty and prefers cold drinks
- Has had many clots in the menstruation for the past few months
- Yellowish urine and feels constipated
- **Tongue:** Red tongue and yellow coating
- **Pulse:** Wiry (xian) and rapid (shuo) pulse

Grandparented members provide written answers in English for each case study under the headings shown in the following blank response form.

Blank Response Form:

TCM Diagnosis (identify TCM illness and syndrome differentiation)

Illness

Syndrome Differentiation

Reasons for Diagnosis

Treatment Principle

Treatment Plan*

Grandparented members using the title R. Ac only provide an acupuncture treatment plan. Grandparented members using the title R. TCMP provide both acupuncture and an herbal treatment plan.

The following is an example of a response to the sample case study. Grandparented members using the R. Ac designation do NOT need to provide an herbal treatment plan as shown in this sample.

TCM Diagnosis (identify TCM illness and syndrome differentiation)

Illness

Tinnitus – Er Ming

Syndrome Differentiation

Excess Type: Rising of Liver and Gallbladder Fire

Reasons for Diagnosis

- Tinnitus seems due to anger, fear causing upward rebellion of wind (feng) fire of the liver and gallbladder and obstruction of qi in the Shao-yang meridians
- Conditions of sudden deafness, red complexion, bitter taste, headache, high pitch sounds, irritability, red tongue, yellow coating and wiry/rapid pulse indicates liver fire ascending to the gallbladder channel to ear
- Liver fire rises upwards to disturb the ears. The pulse is wiry and rapid which means the cause is not due to the invasion of an external/exogenous pathogenic factor
- The hand and foot Shao yang (San jiao and Gallbladder Meridians) both supply the auricular region, so prescriptions for acupuncture include hand and foot shao yang points to regulate the qi and remove obstruction from these meridians and sedate liver and gallbladder

Treatment Principle

- Clear Heat/Fire from liver and gallbladder , ease ears, calm mind

Treatment Plan*

Acupuncture:

- TE 17 (Yifeng), GB 2 (Tinghui), TE 3 (Zhongzhu), TE 5 (Waiguan), GB 20 (Fengchi), LR 3 (Taichong), LR 2 (Xingjian), GB 34 (Yanglingquan), GB 40 (Qiuxu), GB 43 (Xiashi), LI 4 (Hegu).
- Treat 2-3 times a week for 2-4 weeks or until symptoms reduce. Re-assess.

Herbal Prescription:

- Long Dan Xie Gan Tang, (Gentiana Draining the Liver Decoction OR Gentiana Decoction for Purging Liver Fire) 6 – 12 grams per day in divided doses.
- Patent Medicine: Long Dan Xie Gan Wan, (Gentiana Draining the liver pill or gentiana pill for purging Liver Fire). 8 pills twice a day.

Academic Document Review (Alternate Route)

The Academic Document Review is an alternate route through the PLAR process available to Grandparented members. A Grandparented member who wishes to be considered for exemption from the Case Study Assessment must provide sufficient and supportable evidence to clearly demonstrate that he/she has:

- received the minimum required hours of formal, structured TCM and/or TCM Acupuncture professional training (theoretical and clinical) at a post-secondary educational institution, and;
- received training that is aligned with the required competencies that are established for TCM Practitioners and/or Acupuncturists.

Documents must:

- be notarized*
- accompany the PLAR application;
- be scanned copies of original documents which includes the name and location of the granting post-secondary educational institution with an authorized signature and official seal of the institution;
- include supporting evidence of duration of course work, course/program admission requirements, and graduation requirements;
- adhere to the required professional training hours identified for a General member holding the title TCM Practitioner or Acupuncturist (as explained in Step 2).

* Documentation has been signed by a Notary Public or a Commissioner of Oaths and marked with an official stamp or seal, which indicates that the applicant has sworn the documentation to be true. A Notary Public is often a lawyer. A Commissioner of Oaths is often a member of the legislative assembly or certain certified employees of the government.

A Grandparented member who is unsuccessful in the Academic Document Review route must re-apply to take the Case Study Assessment with an additional fee of \$1,800 plus HST.

Before choosing this route on the PLAR application, review Steps 1, 2, and 3 on pages 9-12 of this guide. Also refer to *CTCMPAO Guide to Transfer from Grandparented Certificate of Registration to General Certificate of Registration* for more detail.

Step -
1 TCM Education (Academic Document Review)

On the PLAR application, add the required information in the TCM Education chart and scan and attach a copy of the notarized academic record and official document(s) that clearly identifies your name, program, training institution, the institution’s official seal and signature, duration of your attendance and graduation from the program.

You must also include supporting evidence that clearly identifies the course name and duration (hours of training) of each of the courses completed.

Academic records and supporting evidence include a transcript, detailed marks card, relevé de notes, examination report, extract, certificate, index, or other name depending on the country from which it is issued.

If you do not have sufficient supporting documentation or are unable to obtain the documentation from a formal, post-secondary institution you must take the Case Study Assessment.

Sample TCM Education Chart

Program Period <i>(mm/yy–mm/yy)</i>	Name of Program	Institution Name and Address	Name of Documents (e.g., transcript, academic record. ...)
Example: September 1995 – June 1999	Diploma Program for Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner	State Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine 2338 Chestnut St., Northwood, Michigan, USA 33118	Transcript and Diploma √ Upload document(s)
			<input type="checkbox"/> Upload document(s)
			<input type="checkbox"/> Upload document(s)

Step -

2 Course Summary Chart (Academic Document Review)

For the title of TCM Practitioner and designation of R. TCMP
 Based on your academic record and documents submitted, provide a minimum of **1000 hours** of relevant academic and practical training.

For the title of Acupuncturist and designation of R. Ac
 Based on your academic record and documents submitted, provide a minimum of **750 hours** of relevant academic and practical training.

Complete the **Course Summary Chart** and identify the courses and hours, from your academic record, that indicate the appropriate hours of training. Any course listed must be related to your practice as a TCM practitioner and/or acupuncturist.

Sample Course Summary Chart for TCM Practitioners and Acupuncturists

Course Name	Hours	Brief Description of the Course
Example: TCM Theory Introduction 102	60	Introduction to the classical theories of yin yang and five elements. Physiology of the human body studied through concepts such as Zang Fu organs, qi, and bodily fluids

Step -

TOTAL Hours:		
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3 Align Training to Occupational Competencies (Academic Document Review)

Sample R. Ac Chart

Grandparented members must identify course content from their academic record that demonstrates they have the training that is aligned to the required competencies. Grandparented members are expected to be fully informed of the required competencies by referencing *Entry-Level Occupational Competencies for the Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Canada*.

Complete the appropriate chart R. Ac or R. TCMP by listing the courses that specifically address the competencies in the areas of practice. List a minimum of (two) 2 courses and a maximum of five (5).

TCM Foundations	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply fundamental knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine principles in diagnosis and treatment • Apply fundamentals of acupuncture in diagnosis and treatment 	<p>TCM Theory Introduction</p> <p>102 TCM Diagnostics 203</p> <p>etc.</p> <p>(identify courses from the academic records submitted that align to each section)</p>
Diagnostics and Treatment	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish priorities for assessment and treatment plan • Assess patient • Analyze assessment information • Establish treatment plan based on diagnosis • Monitor effectiveness of treatment plan and modify where necessary • Educate and counsel patient 	
Acupuncture Techniques	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform needling • Perform moxibustion • Perform treatment utilizing supplementary devices • Perform cupping • Perform tui na 	

Step 3 Align Training to Occupational Competencies (Academic Document Review) (Continued)

Sample R. TCMP Chart

TCM Foundations	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply fundamental knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine principles in diagnosis and treatment • Apply fundamentals of acupuncture in diagnosis and treatment • Apply knowledge of properties and functions of TCM herbs in treatment planning • Apply knowledge of herbal formulating strategies • Apply knowledge of herb interactions in treatment planning 	
Diagnostics and Treatment	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish priorities for assessment and treatment plan • Assess patient • Analyze assessment information • Establish treatment plan based on diagnosis • Monitor effectiveness of treatment plan and modify where necessary • Educate and counsel patient 	
Acupuncture Techniques	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform needling • Perform moxibustion • Perform treatment utilizing supplementary devices • Perform cupping • Perform tui na 	
Herbal Dispensary Management	Courses
<p>Competencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbal Dispensary Management • Prepare and dispense herbal formulas • Evaluate patient risk profile • Manage risks to patients 	