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Unified Residency Accreditation System To Be Launched

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The **Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education** (ACGME), **American Osteopathic Association** (AOA), and the **American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine** (AACOM) will be forming a unified, single **accreditation system** for allopathic and osteopathic physicians in 2015. First announced in [October 2012](#), the three governing boards finally approved the framework for implementing a single accreditation system last month, which calls for the AOA and AACOM to become member organizations of the ACGME, thereby allowing the ACGME to accredit all osteopathic graduate medical education programs that are currently accredited by the AOA. In so doing, **osteopathic physicians** (DOs) training in AOA-accredited residency programs will be able to transfer into ACGME-accredited residencies without having to repeat any years of training.

Although the precise details of the unified accreditation system have yet to be developed, in an [open letter to the community](#), Thomas J. Nasca, M.D., MACP, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the ACGME, outlined the “major dimensions” of the UAS:

- Beginning July 1, 2015, there will be a transition period during which AOA-approved training programs will apply for ACGME accreditation. As long as an application for accreditation has been submitted by the AOA program, DO graduates from that program will be able to enter into ACGME programs (either a residency or fellowship).
- AOA-trained physicians will be able to serve as residency faculty members and program directors, and AOA board certification (rather than just American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) certification) will be an acceptable qualification for such positions.
- An Osteopathic Principles Review Committee will be established to evaluate and recommend standards for those training programs that want to be recognized as offering training in [osteopathic principles](#).
- Since the ACGME does not have its own corresponding specialty, a Neuromusculoskeletal Review Committee will be established to set standards and render accreditation decisions for neuromusculoskeletal and osteopathic manipulative medicine residency programs.
- The AOA will cease to accredit GME programs at the end of the transitional period, i.e., on or before June 30, 2020.

While the specific elements and structure of the unified accreditation system are being fleshed out by the ACGME, AOA and AACOM, two possible corollaries are whether (i) the National Residency Match Program (NRMP), which matches medical school graduates with residency programs, will join in the discussions and create a single Match for DOs and MDs, and (ii) the AOA and ABMS board certification processes also will become uniform. In the meantime, it will be interesting to see how the organizations will work together to create consistent accreditation



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standards for two groups of physicians that purport to have divergent perspectives on healthcare delivery.

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