



MINISTRY OF HEALTH SINGAPORE

Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinical Training Programme (TCM CTP) Training and Assessment Framework

I. INTRODUCTION

The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Clinical Training Programme (CTP) aims to support the professional development of newly registered TCM practitioners (TCMPs) by strengthening their clinical skills and standards through a standardised clinical curriculum and assessment framework to enhance employment opportunities.

During this TCM CTP training period, TCMP trainees will undergo three-monthly rotations through participating TCM institutions, and will be exposed to the necessary clinical experience and skills as they assume increasing responsibility for patients under the supervision of clinical mentors. This will help prepare TCMP trainees for transition from clinical training settings to actual independent clinical practice as they improve their consultation capabilities and procedural skills.

II. TCM CTP TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Overview

The TCM CTP training and assessment framework has been developed to ensure that all TCMP trainees undergo similar and structured training and assessment to achieve the stipulated competencies and training outcomes.

The phased training and assessment framework is underpinned by six Core Competencies, which TCMP trainees are expected to fulfil by demonstrating the management of common medical conditions and performing procedures through Foundational Attributes and Entrustable Professional Activities. This essentially means TCMP trainees are expected to translate the six Core Competencies into observable actions demonstrated during clinical training.

Core Competencies

The six Core Competencies are listed below:

Core competency 1 (CC1) – Patient care

Treat patients with empathy, and provide appropriate and effective care and health promotion;

Core competency 2 (CC2) - Medical knowledge

Appropriate application of established TCM theories and treatments, as well as knowledge of warning signs and symptoms to patient care;

Core competency 3 (CC3) – Interpersonal and communication skills

Effective exchange of information and cooperation with patients, their families and other medical professionals;

Core competency 4 (CC4) – Professionalism

Commitment to professional responsibility, adherence to ethical principles, respect for and sensitivity to different groups of patients;

Core competency 5 (CC5) – Practice-based learning

Review and assess one's care, and evaluate and adopt latest TCM knowledge and scientific evidence to developing effective individual learning programmes and improving patient care; and

Core competency 6 (CC6) – System-based practices

Understand Singapore's overall healthcare system and the role of TCM as a complementary treatment modality, and be able to refer patients to other healthcare professionals to provide the most appropriate care.

Foundational Attributes

Foundational Attributes (FA) are a set of behaviour that TCMPs must demonstrate throughout their professional practice and career. In addition to the TCMP trainees' ability to carry out the Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), they must also continuously demonstrate the following basic qualities before they can be entrusted to perform clinical duties. The six basic traits listed below constitute behaviours associated with professional competence and practical applications.

Table 1. Foundational Attributes of TCMPs

1	Demonstrate openness and respect for patients, their families and all members of the medical profession, including sensitivity to culture and religion.
2	Abide by the ethical code and ethical guidelines of TCM practitioners, including medical legal liability and responsibility.
3	Understand clinical responsibilities and limitations, including seeking support from other healthcare professionals or healthcare workers, where appropriate, or reporting to your superiors (if applicable).
4	Demonstrate determination and integrity, including fulfilling assigned tasks, and be punctual and honest in all circumstances.
5	Open to receiving feedback from supervisors and peers to improve knowledge and skills.
6	Identify reliable and up-to-date sources of medical information to provide medical services to patients.

Entrustable Professional Activities

The training framework categorises the skills and knowledge that TCMP trainees are expected to acquire into six Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), which are skills that a TCMP can be progressively entrusted to perform competently when entering unsupervised practice. Details of these EPAs can be found in the following Section III.

Table 2. Entrustable Professional Activities for TCMPs

EPA 1	Identifying and managing patients' health problems
EPA 2	Treatment with TCM herbs and prescriptions
EPA 3	TCM manipulative treatment procedures
EPA 4	Providing medical advice
EPA 5	Compilation of Medical Record
EPA 6	Communicating and interacting with patients and caregivers on their conditions and treatments

Table 3. Entrustment Level for each Entrustable Professional Activity for TCMPs

Entrustment Level	Description
1	Observation allowed only: TCMP trainee can observe, but cannot execute the EPA.
2	Mentors are required to take the initiative to lead and supervise: TCMP trainee is required to perform or assist in the operation of EPA under the supervision of mentors.
3	TCMP trainee can lead and execute the EPA, under the supervision of mentors: TCMP trainee can lead and execute the EPA, but mentors need to actively monitor to ensure the safety and reasonableness of the diagnosis and treatment.
4	No supervision required: TCMP trainee can implement the EPA independently or consult their mentors after completing the EPA.
5	TCMP trainee can mentor junior TCM students.
NA	The prescribed activity was not observed during this assessment period.

Training Phases

The TCM CTP training and assessment framework has been developed to ensure that all TCMP trainees undergo similar structured training and assessment to achieve the stipulated competencies and training outcomes. **Table 4** below describes the different training phases of the CTP.

Table 4. CTP Training Phases

Phase of training per rotation	Suggested duration*	Description	EPA entrustment level to attain before moving into next phase
0	1 – 5 days	TCMP trainees to familiarise themselves with the overall operating procedures of the clinic, such as admin, pharmacy dispensation, fee structure, herbal medications and types of treatment etc. This aims to give TCMP trainees a basic understanding of the overall operations of the clinic for clinical work. This phase can be carried out in tandem with Phase 1.	
1	1 – 5 weeks	Consultation process is mainly led by clinical mentors, assisted by the TCMP trainees such as participating in consultation and updating of medical records and treatment operations, as appropriate. This is to familiarise the TCMP trainees with the patient management system, general facilities and equipment of the clinic, expose TCMP trainees to commonly seen conditions by clinical mentors, treatment methods and the basic requirements expected of the TCMP trainees. This includes the ability to accurately collect medical history and write complete clinical records.	To attain entrustment level 2 on most EPAs before entering Phase 2.
2	2 – 8 weeks	The consultation process and treatment are largely led by TCMP trainees. The clinical mentors are there to provide direct supervision to ensure the safety and	To attain entrustment level 3 on most EPAs before

Phase of training per rotation	Suggested duration*	Description	EPA entrustment level to attain before moving into next phase
		reasonableness of diagnosis and treatment prescribed by the trainee TCMPs. This will provide TCMP trainees opportunity to hone their clinical thinking, hands-on treatment skills and communication with patients by allowing them to lead in the consultation and treatment process. Clinical mentors should, as far as possible, give feedback and discuss clinical cases immediately after the TCMP trainees have completed the consultation and treatment of each patient. This will reinforce learning, improve the ability of TCMP trainees to analyse, treat patients, and master the appropriate dosage of commonly used TCM herbs, so as to achieve reasonable clinical application and effectiveness. TCMP trainees should also be able to provide appropriate medical advice based on the conditions of the patients.	entering Phase 3.
3	1 – 7 weeks	TCMP trainees to provide consultation and treatment independently under minimal supervision (clinical mentors are not present) and hold regular clinical discussions with clinical mentors. This is to simulate actual clinical practice and for TCMP trainees to gain confidence to carry out consultation and treatment independently.	To attain entrustment level 4 on all EPAs by the end of the 1-year training programme.

*The duration of each phase should be shortened / extended at the discretion of the clinical mentor based on the TCMP trainee's clinical performance.

	1 st Month	2 nd Month	3 rd Month
Example 1: TCMP trainee at 1st rotation			
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Example 2: TCMP trainee at 1st / 2nd rotation			
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Example 3: TCMP trainee at 3rd / 4th rotation			
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3

III. DESCRIPTION OF ENTRUSTABLE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (EPA)

Entrustable Professional Activity 1

Identifying and managing patients' health problems

This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Obtain complete, relevant and accurate medical history, signs and symptoms through 4-step TCM diagnosis (inspecting, asking, listening and palpating) and carry out appropriate medical checks, when necessary.
- To provide a reasonable preliminary and differential diagnosis of TCM.
- Decide and recommend appropriate treatments.
- Understand the risks, benefits and costs of treatment.
- Practise within your means. It is recommended that patients be referred to TCM colleagues with relevant expertise, where necessary.
- Recognise warning signs and symptoms of emergency medical conditions that require immediate Western medical attention or further examination (e.g. X-rays) and refer patients in a timely manner.

Entrustable Professional Activity 2

Treatment with TCM herbs and prescriptions

This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Prescribe commonly used Chinese herbs, prescription herbs and various Chinese medicine preparations within safe limits, based on local context and conditions.
- Explain the treatment effectively to the patient / caregivers.
- Explain effectively to patients / caregivers how to take Chinese medicine (e.g. decoction methods, frequency of medication, etc.) and contraindications when taking Chinese medicine (e.g. to note interval between Western medicine and Chinese medicine).

Entrustable Professional Activity 3

TCM manipulative treatment procedures

This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Administer TCM treatment procedures that are generally accepted in our local context and condition and understanding the benefits, complications, indications and contraindications of such procedures.
- Explain the treatment procedure effectively to the patient / caregivers.
- Ensure patients / caregivers are adequately informed and consent taken before treatment procedure begins.
- Implement measures on infection control.
- Perform treatment procedure safely and effectively.
- Understand patients' acceptance and threshold on common reactions during treatment procedure (e.g. slight bleeding on needle site after removal of acupuncture needle).
- Appropriately manage adverse events arising from the treatment procedures.

Entrustable Professional Activity 4

Providing medical advice

This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Provide appropriate medical advice (e.g. diet, lifestyle etc.) to patients and caregivers.
- Suggest follow-up consultation and treatment.
- Advise patients to seek further medical examination, treatment or allied health services at the same time, if necessary.

Entrustable Professional Activity 5

Compilation of Medical Record

This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Record clinical details, examination results, treatment, procedures, medical advice, informed consent in a standardised, accurate, clear and concise manner.

- Record the relevant positive and negative signs and symptoms to indicate clinical reasoning and differential diagnosis.
- Record cases in a timely manner.
- Clearly mark changes or additions to past cases, including date, time and signature.

In addition to performing the above activities, TCMP trainee will also be required to see and log all common conditions during each posting. These common conditions are listed in the trainee logbook. Clinical mentors will also have a case discussion on any of the common conditions TCMP trainee has logged as a form of assessment.

Entrustable Professional Activity 6

Communicating and interacting with patients and caregivers on their conditions and treatments

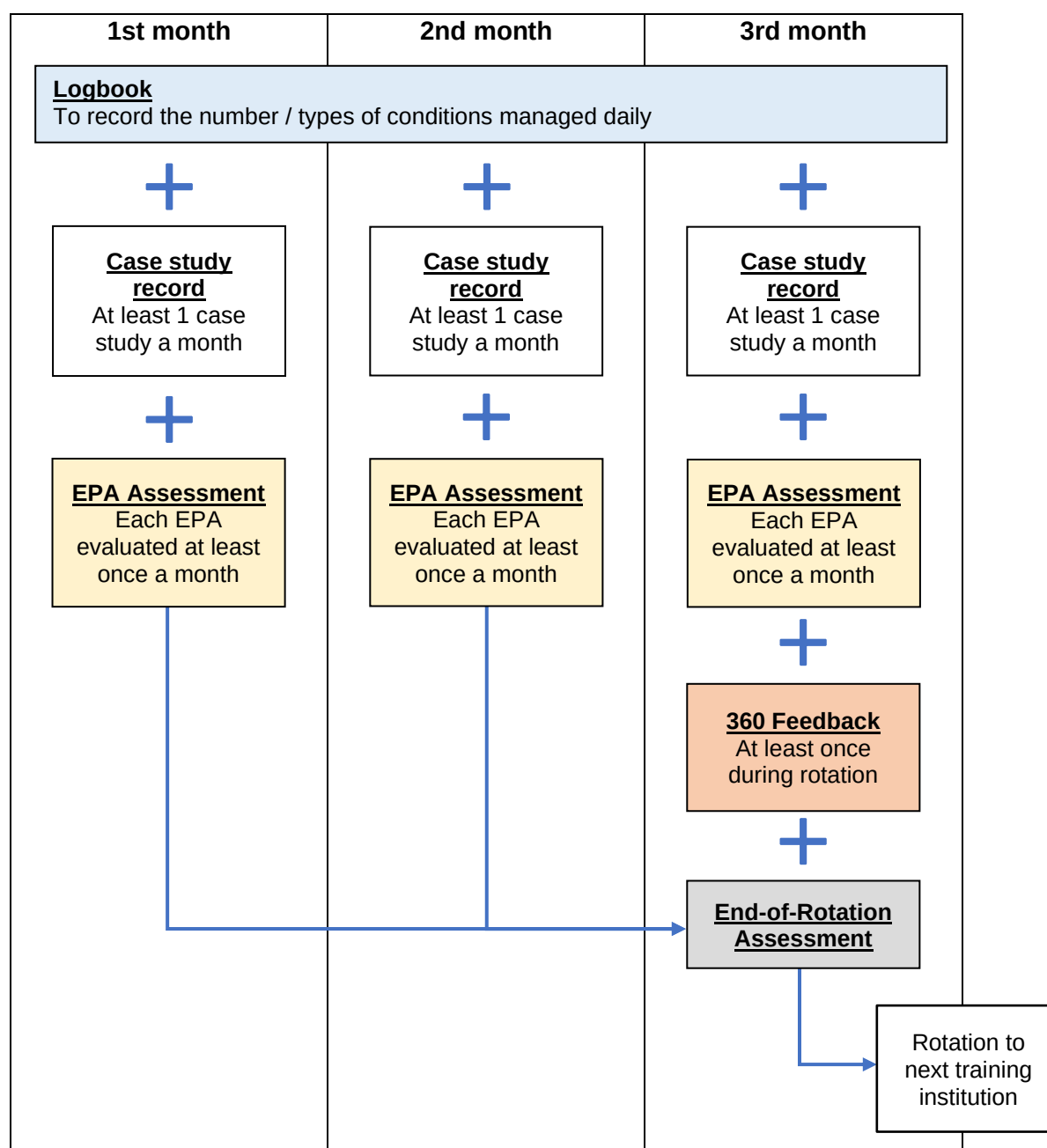
This EPA will require TCMP trainee to be able to perform the following independently by end of the CTP:

- Communicate effectively with patients and their families from different social economic status, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Be sensitive, honest and display empathy when communicating with patients and their families.
- Exchange clinical information, examination results, diagnoses and treatments in non-technical and easy-to-understand manner.
- Obtain verbal consent from the patient or his / her family before conducting an examination or treatment.
- Provide clear information to patients and caregivers with appropriate discussions.
- Provide patients and caregivers with an opportunity to clarify issues arising from the discussion.
- Involve patients in the treatment decision making process, taking into account their preferences for the various treatments.
- Avoid imposing judgment on the lifestyle and choices of patients.
- Keep patients' confidentiality and respect their privacy.
- Apologise or explain, where appropriate.
- Identify and manage any communication barriers, such as cognitive, hearing or language barriers.
- Seek timely help from your superiors (if applicable) or third parties (e.g. family members, police) on difficult communication issues.

IV. ASSESSMENT

Assessment Framework

The principal clinical mentor and clinical mentors of each TCM institution will be in charge of the TCMP trainee's training and assessment. During the course of training, clinical mentors will guide TCMP trainees and provide feedback on their progress, including areas of improvement, based on the various assessment tools listed at the beginning of this section. The CTP and these assessment tools will also be regularly reviewed by the CTP Executive Committee (EXCO) to provide better training for TCMPs.



Assessment Tools

Each component of the CTP framework (Core Competencies, Foundational Attributes, Entrustable Professional Activities) will be assessed using a variety of assessment tools. For example, a monthly EPA assessment form will be used to assess TCMP trainee's performance of EPAs. The trainee logbook and case study records will capture the performance of required procedures or conditions attended to. A 360 feedback form (or multi-rater form) will assess TCMP trainee's competencies in communication skills, professionalism and teamwork. An end-of-rotation assessment will assess TCMP trainee's general progress and overall performance.

In general, TCMP trainees are expected to have 12 monthly reports for both case study records and EPA assessment, 4 multi-rater exercises and 4 end-of-rotation assessment reports during the course of the TCM CTP.

1. Logbook

TCMP trainees will be given a softcopy logbook to record their learning experience daily throughout the year. The logbook is a tracking tool that charts the training progress and achievements of the TCMP trainee daily, and it also serves as a tool for discussion of management of patients with clinical mentors. When recording conditions/procedures in the logbook, please ensure that only patients' initials or last four digits and alphabet of patients' NRIC are used and that the logbook is secured digitally (i.e. encrypted with password).

The logbook contains a list of common conditions which TCMP trainees are expected to have managed. All the common conditions seen have to be logged in by the end of each rotation. TCMP trainees may also record other cases which they have managed into the logbook for their own learning reference. There are also sections for TCMP trainees to record their personal reflections on the cases that they have seen.

TCMP trainees are required to update their logbooks before their monthly discussion with their clinical mentors. The cases and procedures they log will form the basis of the discussion and the report that their clinical mentors prepare.

TCMP trainees are strongly encouraged to also participate in learning activities organised by the TCM training institutions which they are rotated to, and record these learning activities in the logbook.

2. Case Study Record

The case study record is an assessment tool that assesses the TCMP trainee's skills in medical record writing and critical thinking. Case study records should contain information such as patient particulars (anonymised data), main complaint, history of current condition, medical history, allergies, medication history, physical checks, TCM diagnosis and accompanying syndrome diagnosis, syndrome analysis/differentiation, treatment methods and medical advice.

TCMP trainees are required to complete at least one case study record each month, and this will form the basis of assessment for the end of each rotation.

3. EPA assessment form

The monthly EPA assessment form assesses TCMP trainees' performance in the TCM training institution and their ability to achieve the overall competencies.

Clinical mentors will meet with TCMP trainees at the beginning of each rotation to establish contact and set suitable targets and milestones. During each rotation, clinical mentors will conduct monthly feedback sessions with TCMP trainees to go through logged cases, clinical procedures, discuss feedback received on performance and ability to conduct themselves professionally and work together in a team. This will provide insights to supervisor to conduct a monthly open assessment on TCMP trainees' abilities in carry out the EPAs and competency and medical knowledge and patient care.

4. 360 Feedback Form

The 360 feedback form, or multi-rater form, is used to assess foundational attributes of TCMP trainees and forms the basis for assessment for the end of each rotation.

During the training, this assessment will be carried out at least once before the end of each rotation. To achieve this, at least two relevant healthcare staff of the respective TCM institution will be asked to evaluate the TCMP trainee's performance, namely:

- i. Administrative staff
- ii. Frontline / clinic staff

5. End-of-Rotation Assessment Form

The end-of-rotation assessment form is used by the principal clinical mentor, in consultation with the other clinical mentors, to assess the TCMP trainee's competencies, entrustment level attained for each EPA during the rotation, progress and overall performance at the end of each rotation. The form also serves as a report for clinical mentors in next rotation cycle to note and work on areas of improvements for the TCMP trainee.