

What Changed on the NCBAHM Chinese Herbology Exam

The 2020 content outline compared with the 2026 outline, effective September 1, 2026

The NCBAHM (formerly NCCAOM) rewrote the Chinese Herbology content outline for 2026. The new outline takes effect **September 1, 2026** and is built on the 2024 Job Analysis study.

Two things matter most. First, the exam is reorganized: three domains become four, and **safety more than doubles in weight, from 10% to 24%**. Second, two brand-new appendices are published — **51 Dui Yao pairs** and **9 obsolete substances** — neither of which had a list before.

The herb and formula lists both grew, but far less than the raw numbers suggest: almost nothing was actually taken away. The larger job is re-learning names, because 44 formulas and 17 herbs kept their pinyin and changed their English or Latin.

At a Glance

	2020	2026	ADDED	REMOVED	RENAMED
Individual herbs (Appendix A)	272	304	+38	-6	1
Herbal formulas (Appendix C)	162	181	+21	-2	4
Dui Yao pairs (Appendix B)	no list	51	+51	—	—
Obsolete substances (Appendix D)	no list	9	+9	—	—
Exam domains	3	4	+1	—	—

A formula that stayed on the list under a new name is counted as *renamed*, not as one removal plus one addition — so the totals work out to $272 - 6 + 38 = 304$ herbs and $162 - 2 + 21 = 181$ formulas.

The exam itself is unchanged in form: 100 multiple-choice questions, computer-adaptive, 2.5-hour limit.

1 • How the Exam Is Organized

The old outline put 70% of the exam into a single domain. The new one spreads that weight across three, and pulls safety out as a domain of its own.

2020 — three domains

DOMAIN	WEIGHT
I. Safety and Quality of Chinese Herbs	10%
II. Treatment Planning and Strategies	70%
III. Patient Management	20%

2026 — four domains

DOMAIN	WEIGHT
I. Chinese Herbs, Herbal Combinations and Herbal Formulas	22%
A. Individual herbs and herbal combinations	11%
B. Chinese herbal formulas	11%
II. Safety and Quality Control	24%
III. Treatment Planning and Administration	30%
A. Formulation of Herbal Treatment	22%
B. Administration of Chinese Herbal Medicine	8%
IV. Treatment Evaluation and Modification	24%

What is no longer tested

- **Chinese dietary therapy** is gone entirely. The 2020 outline asked you to identify the characteristics, actions, and indications of foods, and to recommend dietary therapy. Nothing in the 2026 outline corresponds to it.
- **External application techniques** — plasters, poultices, soaks — are no longer a stated objective. Plasters (gao) survive only as one item in the list of administration forms.
- **The 18 Incompatibles (Shi Ba Fan) and 19 Antagonisms (Shi Jiu Wei)** are no longer named in the outline. The nearest replacement is a new objective on the mutual relationships of herbs.
- **Patient Management** disappears as a domain heading, but its content did not go away — it moved into the new Domains III and IV.

What is newly tested

Safety and regulation account for most of the new material.

- **Regulatory framework for U.S. practice** — cGMP standards, FDA oversight, Certificates of Analysis (COA), records-keeping requirements, and adverse-event reporting.
- **Adulterant species** as a source of toxicity, and **red-flag situations** in clinical practice.
- **Mutual relationships of herbs** — mutual accentuation (Xiang Xu), mutual antagonism (Xiang Wu), and the rest of the Qi Qing.
- **Treatment strategies as the Ba Fa** — the Eight Methods are now named explicitly, for both individual herbs and formulas.
- **Adjusting a treatment plan for specific populations** — pediatrics, geriatrics, pregnancy, and menstruating patients.

- **Co-management and referral** — recognizing when a patient's condition, or an adverse effect, requires working with or referring to biomedicine.
- **Parameters of administration** — frequency, timing of doses, temperature of the decoction, and length of the course.
- **Compounding, dispensing, and documentation** according to established best practice.
- **Communicating the treatment plan** to the patient, including expected benefits and potential adverse effects.

Study implication. Safety went from 10% to 24% of the exam — roughly one question in four. Most of that weight rewards material your materia medica already covers, herb by herb.

Six of the nine safety objectives are classical: cautions and contraindications, potential toxicity, strategies to prevent it, and clinically significant interactions. The appendix preamble names the levers explicitly — **herb selection, dosage, processing, and duration of treatment** — and those are exactly the fields Bensky and Chen give for every entry. When the outline says the herb list contains potentially toxic items, it means herbs like Ba Dou, Gan Sui, and Chuan Wu, whose toxicity, dose ceilings, and processing requirements are already spelled out in your text.

Only three objectives fall outside those books: the **regulatory framework** (cGMP, FDA oversight, Certificates of Analysis, records keeping, adverse-event reporting), **storage, compounding, dispensing, and inventory**, and **recognizing contamination**. Add to those two specifics — **red-flag situations** and **adulterant species** — that sit inside otherwise classical objectives.

So the practical move is to read the cautions and toxicity notes you have been skipping rather than to treat this as a new subject, and to find a separate source for the regulatory piece.

2 • Formulas

The formula list grew from 162 to 181. Twenty-one formulas are genuinely new, only two were dropped, and four are the same formula under a different name.

2.1 • Added — 21 formulas new to the list

PINYIN	ENGLISH
Bu Fei Tang	Tonify the Lungs Decoction
Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang	Bupleurum and Cinnamon Twig Decoction
Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang	Bupleurum plus Dragon Bone and Oyster Shell Decoction
Da Qing Long Tang	Major Bluegreen Dragon Decoction
Dang Gui Shao Yao San	Tangkuei and Peony Powder
Dang Gui Yin Zi	Tangkuei Drink
Ding Zhi Wan	Settle the Emotions Pill
Fang Ji Huang Qi Tang	Stephania and Astragalus Decoction
Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan	Aconite Accessory Root Pill to Regulate the Middle
Gua Lou Xie Bai Ban Xia Tang	Trichosanthes Fruit, Chinese Garlic, and Pinellia Decoction
Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang	Cinnamon Twig Decoction plus Dragon Bone and Oyster Shell
Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang	Astragalus Decoction to Construct the Middle
Jing Fang Bai Du San	Schizonepeta and Saposhnikovia Powder to Overcome Pathogenic Influences
Ling Jiao Gou Teng Yin	Antelope Horn and Uncaria Decoction
Qian Zheng San	Lead to Symmetry Powder
Sha Shen Mai Men Dong Tang	Glehnia and Ophiopogonis Decoction
Si Miao Wan	Four-Marvel Pill
Tao Hong Si Wu Tang	Four-Substance Decoction with Safflower and Peach Pit
Xi Jiao Di Huang Wan	Rhinoceros Horn and Rehmannia Decoction
Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang	Six-Gentlemen Decoction with Aucklandia and Amomum
Zeng Ye Cheng Qi Tang	Increase the Fluids and Order the Qi Decoction

Several of these sit beside a formula you already know, which makes them easier to place: **Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang** joins Xiao Jian Zhong Tang and Da Jian Zhong Tang • **Xiao Cheng Qi Tang** and **Zeng Ye Cheng Qi Tang** join Da Cheng Qi Tang and Tiao Wei Cheng Qi Tang • **Da Qing Long Tang** joins Xiao Qing Long Tang • **Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan** joins Li Zhong Wan • **Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang** joins Liu Jun Zi Tang • **Tao Hong Si Wu Tang** joins Si Wu Tang • **Sha Shen Mai Men Dong Tang** joins Mai Men Dong Tang • **Jing Fang Bai Du San** joins Ren Shen Bai Du San • **Si Miao Wan** joins Er Miao San.

2.2 • Removed — 2 formulas off the list

PINYIN	ENGLISH (2020)
Bi Xie Feng Qing Yin	Dioscorea Hypoglauca Decoction to Separate the Clear
Wei Jing Tang	Reed Decoction

That is the whole of it. Neither formula appears anywhere in the 2026 outline under any spelling. Note that the 2020 list wrote *Bi Xie Feng Qing Yin*; the conventional romanization is Bi Xie **Fen** Qing Yin. Wei Jing Tang is also met as Qian Jin Wei Jing Tang.

2.3 • Renamed — 4 formulas still on the list under a new name

2020 NAME	2026 NAME	2020 ENGLISH	2026 ENGLISH
Ge Gen Huang Lian Huang Qin Tang	Ge Gen Huang Qin Huang Lian Tang	Kudzu, Coptis, and Scutellaria Decoction	Kudzu, Scutellaria, and Coptis Decoction
Jin Gui Shen Qi Wan	Shen Qi Wan	Kidney Qi Pill from the Golden Cabinet	Kidney Qi Pill
Qing Wen Bai Du San	Qing Wen Bai Du Yin	Clear Epidemics and Overcome Toxicity Decoction	Clear Epidemics and Overcome Toxicity Drink
Tai Shan Pan Shi San	Taishan Pan Shi San	Powder that Gives the Stability of Mount Tai	Taishan Bedrock Powder

- **Ge Gen Huang Lian Huang Qin Tang → Ge Gen Huang Qin Huang Lian Tang.** The two herb names swap position in the pinyin and in the English. The 2026 order matches the Chinese.
- **Jin Gui Shen Qi Wan → Shen Qi Wan.** The source attribution — “from the Golden Cabinet” — is dropped from both the pinyin and the English.
- **Qing Wen Bai Du San → Qing Wen Bai Du Yin.** San becomes Yin, and the English follows: Decoction becomes Drink.
- **Tai Shan Pan Shi San → Taishan Pan Shi San.** Only spacing changes in the pinyin, but the English is rewritten completely.

Watch these four. They are the changes most likely to trip you up, because the formula did not go anywhere — only its label did. If you have older notes, flashcards, or a study app, these are the entries that will quietly disagree with the official list.

2.4 • Same formula, new English name — 44 formulas

These formulas kept their pinyin and were retranslated. This is the largest single change in the revision, and the one most likely to cost you a point on a question that names a formula in English.

Learn this rule first — it covers 7 of the 44 on its own. A formula ending in **Yin** is now a **Drink**, not a Decoction. Nothing else about these names changed, so they are not listed in the table below:

Pu Ji Xiao Du Yin • Sang Ju Yin • Shi Pi Yin • Tian Ma Gou Teng Yin • Wu Wei Xiao Du Yin • You Gui Yin • Zuo Gui Yin.

The remaining 37 changed in some other way:

PINYIN	2020 ENGLISH	2026 ENGLISH
Ban Xia Bai Zhu Tian Ma Tang	Pinellia, Atractylodis Macrocephalae, and Gastrodia Decoction	Pinellia, White Atractylodes, and Gastrodia Decoction
Bu Yang Huan Wu Tang	Tonify the Yang to Restore Five (Tenths) Decoction	Tonify the Yang to Restore Five (-Tenths) Decoction
Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang	Tonify the Middle and Augment the Qi Decoction	Tonify the Middle to Augment the Qi Decoction
Chai Ge Jie Ji Tang	Bupleurum and Kudzu Decoction	Bupleurum and Kudzu Decoction to Release the Muscle Layer
Chai Hu Shu Gan San	Bupleurum Powder to Spread the Liver	Bupleurum Powder to Dredge the Liver
Chuan Xiong Cha Tiao San	Ligusticum Chuanxiong Powder to be Taken with Green Tea	Chuanxiong Powder to be Taken with Green Tea
Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang	Angelica Pubescens and Sangjisheng Decoction	Pubescent Angelica and Taxillus Decoction
Er Chen Tang	Two-Cured Decoction	Two-Aged (Herb) Decoction
Er Zhi Wan	Two-Ultimate Pill	Two-Solstice Pill
Fang Feng Tong Sheng San	Ledebouriella Powder That Sagely Unblocks	Saposhnikovia Powder That Sagely Unblocks
Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang	Drive Out Blood Stasis Below the Diaphragm Decoction	Drive Out Stasis Below the Diaphragm Decoction
Huang Lian Jie Du Tang	Coptis Decoction to Relieve Toxicity	Coptis Decoction to Resolve Toxicity
Huo Xiang Zheng Qi San	Agastache Powder to Rectify the Qi	Patchouli/Agastache Powder to Rectify the Qi
Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang	Poria, Cinnamon Twig, Atractylodis Macrocephalae and Licorice Decoction	Poria, Cinnamon Twig, Atractylodes, and Licorice Decoction
Liu Jun Zi Tang	Six Gentlemen Decoction	Six-Gentlemen Decoction
Long Dan Xie Gan Tang	Gentiana Longdancao Decoction to Drain the Liver	Gentian Decoction to Drain the Liver
Qi Ju Di Huang Wan	Lycium Fruit, Chrysanthemum and Rehmannia Pill	Lycium Fruit, Chrysanthemum, and Rehmannia Pill
Qing Hao Bie Jia Tang	Artemisia Annuua and Soft-Shelled Turtle Shell Decoction	Sweet Wormwood and Soft-shelled Turtle Shell Decoction
Qing Zao Jiu Fei Tang	Eliminate Dryness and Rescue the Lungs Decoction	Clear Dryness and Rescue the Lungs Decoction
San Ren Tang	Three Nut Decoction	Three-Seed Decoction
Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang	Drive Out Blood Stasis in the Lower Abdomen Decoction	Drive Out Stasis from the Lower Abdomen Decoction
Shen Ling Bai Zhu San	Ginseng, Poria and Atractylodes Macrocephala Powder	Ginseng, Poria, and White Atractylodes Powder
Shen Tong Zhu Yu Tang	Drive Out Blood Stasis from a Painful Body Decoction	Drive Out Stasis from a Painful Body Decoction
Sheng Hua Tang	Generation and Transformation Decoction	Generating and Transforming Decoction
Shi Hui San	Ten Partially-Charred Substance Powder	Ten Partially-charred Substances Powder
Shi Quan Da Bu Tang	All Inclusive Great Tonifying Decoction	All-Inclusive Great Tonifying Decoction
Tian Tai Wu Yao San	Top-quality Lindera Powder	Top-Quality Lindera Powder

Wen Dan Tang	Warm the Gallbladder Decoction	Warm Gallbladder Decoction
Wen Jing Tang	Warm the Menses Decoction	Flow-Warming Decoction
Xiao Ji Yin Zi	Cephalanoplos Decoction	Small Thistle Drink
Xiao Qing Long Tang	Minor Blue-Green Dragon Decoction	Minor Bluegreen Dragon Decoction
Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang	Drive Out Stasis in the Mansion of Blood Decoction	Drive Out Stasis from the Mansion of Blood Decoction
Yin Chen Hao Tang	Artemisia Yinchenhao Decoction	Virgate Wormwood Decoction
Yin Qiao San	Honeysuckle and Forsythia Powder	Honeysuckle and Forsythia Powder
Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan	Anemarrhena, Phellodendron and Rehmannia Pill	Anemarrhena, Phellodendron, and Rehmannia Pill
Zhi Gan Cao Tang	Honey-Fried Licorice Decoction	Prepared Licorice Decoction
Zhu Ye Shi Gao Tang	Lophatherus and Gypsum Decoction	Lophatherum and Gypsum Decoction

Patterns worth memorizing rather than brute-forcing:

- **Xiao Ji Yin Zi follows the Drink rule too**, but its herb name changed as well — Cephalanoplos became Small Thistle — so it appears in the table above.
- **Latin herb names give way to common English names.** Ligusticum Chuanxiong → Chuanxiong · Ledebouriella → Saposnikovia · Gentiana Longdancao → Gentian · Artemisia Annua → Sweet Wormwood · Artemisia Yinchenhao → Virgate Wormwood · Cephalanoplos → Small Thistle · Atractylodis Macrocephalae → White Atractylodes.
- **“Drive Out Blood Stasis” becomes “Drive Out Stasis,”** and “in the” becomes “from the,” across the Zhu Yu Tang family.
- **A handful are real changes of meaning**, not style: Wen Jing Tang is now *Flow-Warming Decoction* rather than *Warm the Menses* · Er Chen Tang is *Two-Aged (Herb)* rather than *Two-Cured* · Er Zhi Wan is *Two-Solstice* rather than *Two-Ultimate* · San Ren Tang is *Three-Seed* rather than *Three Nut* · Chai Hu Shu Gan San *dredges* rather than *spreads* the Liver.
- **Punctuation and hyphens** account for the rest — an added serial comma, Six Gentlemen becoming Six-Gentlemen, Blue-Green becoming Bluegreen.

3 • Individual Herbs

The herb list grew from 272 to 304. Thirty-eight herbs are new, six came off, and one was renamed.

3.1 • Added — 38 herbs new to the list

PINYIN	PHARMACEUTICAL NAME
Ba Dou	<i>Crotonis Fructus</i>
Bai Jiang Can	<i>Bombyx Batryticatus</i>
Ban Zhi Lian	<i>Scutellariae barbatae Herba</i>
Bing Lang	<i>Arecae Semen</i>
Bing Pian	<i>Borneolum</i>
Chi Xiao Dou	<i>Phaseoli Semen</i>
Chuan Mu Tong	<i>Clematidis armandii Caulis</i>
Chuan Wu	<i>Aconiti Radix</i>
Chuan Xin Lian	<i>Andrographitis Herba</i>
Ci Wu Jia	<i>Acanthopanax senticosi Radix et Caulis</i>
Cong Bai	<i>Allii fistulosi Bulbus</i>
Da Qing Ye	<i>Isatidis Folium</i>
Feng Mi	<i>Mel</i>
Gan Sui	<i>Kansui Radix</i>
Ge Jie	<i>Gecko</i>
Hai Jin Sha	<i>Lygodii Spora</i>
Jin Qian Cao	<i>Lysimachiae Herba</i>
Kun Bu	<i>Eckloniae Thallus</i>
Lian Zi Xin	<i>Nelumbinis Plumula</i>
Ling Yang Jiao	<i>Saigae tataricae Cornu</i>
Ling Zhi	<i>Ganoderma</i>
Liu Huang	<i>Sulfur</i>
Lu Lu Tong	<i>Liquidambaris Fructus</i>
Ma Huang Gen	<i>Ephedrae Radix</i>
Pang Da Hai	<i>Sterculiae lychnophorae Semen</i>
Pei Lan	<i>Eupatorii Herba</i>
Qing Dai	<i>Indigo naturalis</i>
Quan Xie	<i>Scorpio</i>

She Xiang	<i>Moschus</i>
Si Gua Luo	<i>Luffae Fructus Retinervus</i>
Ting Li Zi	<i>Lepidii/Descurainiae Semen</i>
Tu Bie Chong	<i>Eupolyphaga/Steleophaga</i>
Wu Gong	<i>Scolopendra</i>
Wu Ling Zhi	<i>Troglodyteri Faeces</i>
Xi Xin	<i>Asari Radix et Rhizoma</i>
Yu Zhu	<i>Polygonati odorati Rhizoma</i>
Zao Jiao Ci	<i>Gleditsiae Spina</i>
Zi Cao	<i>Arnebiae/Lithospermi Radix</i>

Where the additions come from:

- **Toxic and strongly-acting herbs** — Ba Dou, Gan Sui, Chuan Wu, Liu Huang, Ting Li Zi, Qing Dai. The appendix warns explicitly that the herb list contains potentially toxic items, so learn each one's dose range, processing, and cautions alongside its actions.
- **Insect and animal medicinals** — Quan Xie, Wu Gong, Bai Jiang Can, Ge Jie, Tu Bie Chong, Wu Ling Zhi.
- **Herbs the new Dui Yao appendix requires** — Jin Qian Cao and Hai Jin Sha, Pei Lan, Ting Li Zi.
- **Chuan Mu Tong**, the accepted substitute for Guan Mu Tong, which is now on the obsolete list. Plain Mu Tong (*Akebiae Caulis*) was already on the list and stays — three similar names worth keeping straight.
- **Common herbs simply missing before** — Chi Xiao Dou, Cong Bai, Da Qing Ye, Xi Xin, Yu Zhu, Bing Lang, Bing Pian, Kun Bu, Lu Lu Tong, Si Gua Luo, Zao Jiao Ci, Zi Cao, Ma Huang Gen, Lian Zi Xin.
- **Modern and patent-medicine staples** — Ling Zhi, Ci Wu Jia, Chuan Xin Lian, Ban Zhi Lian, Feng Mi, Pang Da Hai.

3.2 • Removed — 6 herbs off the list

Do not read this as material you can skip. Every one is a prepared or derived form whose base herb is still on the list — the 2026 appendix keeps one entry per crude drug rather than listing each preparation separately.

PINYIN	PHARMACEUTICAL NAME (2020)	BASE HERB STILL ON THE LIST
Dan Nan Xing	<i>Arisaema Rhizoma cum Bile</i>	Tian Nan Xing
Gui Ban Jiao	<i>Testudinis Plastris Colla</i>	Gui Ban
Lu Jiao Jiao	<i>Cervi Cornus Colla</i>	Lu Rong
Pao Jiang	<i>Zingiberis Rhizoma preparatum</i>	Gan Jiang, Sheng Jiang
Sheng Jiang Pi	<i>Zingiberis Rhizomatis Cortex</i>	Sheng Jiang
Zhi Gan Cao	<i>Glycyrrhizae Radix preparata</i>	Gan Cao

Processing (Pao Zhi) remains an explicit exam objective, so you are still expected to know what honey-frying does to Gan Cao. That knowledge has simply moved under the base herb.

3.3 • Renamed

2020 NAME	2026 NAME	PHARMACEUTICAL NAME
Xin Yi Hua	Xin Yi	Magnoliae Flos

Same herb, same pharmaceutical name — only the pinyin is shortened. Note that the 2026 documents are inconsistent here: Appendix A says **Xin Yi**, but Dui Yao pair 6 still says **Xin Yi Hua**. Recognize both.

3.4 • Same herb, new pharmaceutical name — 11 herbs

Restyled or corrected binomials. Four of them are more than cosmetic and are flagged beneath the table.

PINYIN	2020	2026
Bai Hua She She Cao	<i>Oldenlandiae Herba</i>	<i>Hedyotis diffusae Herba</i>
Da Ji	<i>Herba seu Radix Cirsii Japonici</i>	<i>Cirsii japonici Herba sive Radix</i>
Gou Teng	<i>Uncariae Ramulus cum Uncus</i>	<i>Uncariae Ramulus cum Uncis</i>
Gu Ya	<i>Setariae Fructus germinatus</i>	<i>Setariae (Oryzae) Fructus germinatus</i>
Gui Ban	<i>Testudinis Plastrum</i>	<i>Testudinis Plastrum</i>
Jue Ming Zi	<i>Cassia Semen</i>	<i>Cassiae Semen</i>
Lian Qiao	<i>Forsythia Fructus</i>	<i>Forsythiae Fructus</i>
Lu Dou	<i>Phaseoli Semen</i>	<i>Phaseoli radiati Semen</i>
Shen Qu	<i>Massa medicata Fermentata</i>	<i>Massa medicata fermentata</i>
Tan Xiang	<i>Santi albi Lignum</i>	<i>Santali albi Lignum</i>
Wei Ling Xian	<i>Clematidis Rhizoma</i>	<i>Clematidis Radix</i>

- **Bai Hua She She Cao** — *Oldenlandiae Herba* becomes *Hedyotis diffusae Herba*. A genus reassignment, not a spelling change.
- **Wei Ling Xian** — *Clematidis Rhizoma* becomes *Clematidis Radix*. The part of the plant used has changed.
- **Gu Ya** — now *Setariae (Oryzae) Fructus germinatus*, admitting the rice-sprout source alongside millet.
- **Lu Dou** — now *Phaseoli radiati Semen*, because the 2026 list also adds Chi Xiao Dou, which takes the plain *Phaseoli Semen*.

A further 6 herbs had a letter lowercased and nothing more — the same name either way, and not worth memorizing.

4 • Dui Yao — Herbal Pairs

The 2020 outline asked you to know the functions and indications of common herbal pairs, but never said which pairs. The 2026 outline publishes a list of **51**. Everything here is new material.

This is the single largest addition to the exam, and the one area where there was previously nothing official to study from. Work through the list systematically: for each pair, know what the two herbs do together that neither does alone, and the pattern the pair treats.

#	HERB	PAIRED WITH
1	Ai Ye (<i>Artemisiae argyi Folium</i>)	E Jiao (<i>Asini Corii Colla</i>)
2	Bai Shao (<i>Paeoniae Radix alba</i>)	Gan Cao (<i>Glycyrrhizae Radix</i>)
3	Bai Zhu (<i>Atractylodis macrocephalae Rhizoma</i>)	Fu Ling (<i>Poria</i>)
4	Ban Xia (<i>Pinelliae Rhizoma</i>)	Chen Pi (<i>Citri reticulatae Pericarpium</i>)
5	Ban Xia (<i>Pinelliae Rhizoma</i>)	Sheng Jiang (<i>Zingiberis Rhizoma recens</i>)
6	Cang Er Zi (<i>Xanthii Fructus</i>)	Xin Yi Hua (<i>Magnoliae Flos</i>)
7	Chai Hu (<i>Bupleuri Radix</i>)	Bai Shao (<i>Paeoniae Radix alba</i>)
8	Chai Hu (<i>Bupleuri Radix</i>)	Huang Qin (<i>Scutellariae Radix</i>)
9	Chai Hu (<i>Bupleuri Radix</i>)	Sheng Ma (<i>Cimicifugae Rhizoma</i>)
10	Da Huang (<i>Rhei Radix et Rhizoma</i>)	Mang Xiao (<i>Natrii Sulfas</i>)
11	Dang Gui (<i>Angelicae sinensis Radix</i>)	Chuan Xiong (<i>Chuanxiong Rhizoma</i>)
12	Dang Gui (<i>Angelicae sinensis Radix</i>)	Xiang Fu (<i>Cyperi Rhizoma</i>)
13	Dang Gui (<i>Angelicae sinensis Radix</i>)	Huang Qi (<i>Astragali Radix</i>)
14	Dang Gui (<i>Angelicae sinensis Radix</i>)	Rou Cong Rong (<i>Cistanches Herba</i>)
15	Di Yu (<i>Sanguisorbae Radix</i>)	Huai Mi (<i>Sophorae Flos immaturus</i>)
16	Du Zhong (<i>Eucommiae Cortex</i>)	Xu Duan (<i>Dipsaci Radix</i>)
17	Fu Zi (<i>Aconiti Radix lateralis</i>)	Gan Jiang (<i>Zingiberis Rhizoma</i>)
18	Fu Zi (<i>Aconiti Radix lateralis</i>)	Rou Gui (<i>Cinnamomi Cortex</i>)
19	Ge Gen (<i>Puerariae Radix</i>)	Sheng Ma (<i>Cimicifugae Rhizoma</i>)
20	Gou Qi Zi (<i>Lycii Fructus</i>)	Ju Hua (<i>Chrysanthemi Flos</i>)
21	Gan Jiang (<i>Zingiberis Rhizoma</i>)	Bai Zhu (<i>Atractylodis macrocephalae Rhizoma</i>)
22	Gua Lou (<i>Trichosanthis Fructus</i>)	Xie Bai (<i>Allii macrostemi Bulbus</i>)
23	Gui Ban (<i>Testudinis Plastrum</i>)	Bie Jia (<i>Trionycis Carapax</i>)
24	Gui Zhi (<i>Cinnamomi Ramulus</i>)	Bai Shao (<i>Paeoniae Radix alba</i>)
25	Han Lian Cao (<i>Ecliptae Herba</i>)	Nu Zhen Zi (<i>Ligustri lucidi Fructus</i>)
26	Huang Lian (<i>Coptidis Rhizoma</i>)	Rou Gui (<i>Cinnamomi Cortex</i>)

27	Huo Xiang (Pogostemonis/Agastaches Herba)	Pei Lan (Eupatorii Herba)
28	Jie Geng (Platycodi Radix)	Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)
29	Jin Qian Cao (Lysimachiae Herba)	Hai Jin Sha (Lygodii Spora)
30	Jin Yin Hua (Lonicerae Flos)	Lian Qiao (Forsythia Fructus)
31	Jing Jie (Schizonepetae Herba)	Fang Feng (Saposhnikoviae Radix)
32	Long Gu (Fossilia Ossis Mastodi)	Mu Li (Ostreae Concha)
33	Ma Huang (Ephedrae Herba)	Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)
34	Ma Huang (Ephedrae Herba)	Shi Gao (Gypsum fibrosum)
35	Ma Huang (Ephedrae Herba)	Xing Ren (Armeniaca Semen)
36	Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Radix)	Sha Shen (Glehniae/Adenophorae Radix)
37	Niu Bang Zi (Arctii Fructus)	Lian Qiao (Forsythiae Fructus)
38	Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix)	Huang Qi (Astragali Radix)
39	Qing Hao (Artemisiae annuae Herba)	Bie Jia (Trionycis Carapax)
40	Ru Xiang (Olibanum)	Mo Yao (Myrrha)
41	San Leng (Sparganii Rhizoma)	E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma)
42	Sang Bai Pi (Mori Cortex)	Di Gu Pi (Lycii Cortex)
43	Sang Ye (Mori Folium)	Ju Hua (Chrysanthemi Flos)
44	Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma recens)	Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)
45	Shi Gao (Gypsum fibrosum)	Zhi Mu (Anemarrhenae Radix)
46	Tao Ren (Persicae Semen)	Hong Hua (Carthami Flos)
47	Tian Ma (Gastrodiae Rhizoma)	Gou Teng (Uncariae Ramulus cum Uncus)
48	Ting Li Zi (Lepidii/Descurainiae Semen)	Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)
49	Zhi Mu (Anemarrhenae Radix)	Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex)
50	Zhi Zi (Gardeniae Fructus)	Dan Dou Chi (Sojae Semen preparatum)
51	Zi Wan (Asteris Radix)	Kuan Dong Hua (Farfarae Flos)

One inconsistency to be aware of: pair 6 names **Xin Yi Hua**, while the herb appendix calls the same herb **Xin Yi**. Pair 30 writes Lian Qiao as *Forsythia Fructus* and pair 37 as *Forsythiae Fructus*. Both forms refer to the same herb.

5 • Obsolete Substances

A second brand-new appendix. These nine substances have a history of clinical use but are now considered obsolete because of toxicity or endangered status. **None of them appears on the herb list** — they are tested separately.

The outline states three expectations for each substance: **identify its actions and indications, identify the toxicity or endangered-status issue, and apply an appropriate substitution.**

SUBSTANCE	PHARMACEUTICAL NAME	WHY IT IS OBSOLETE
Chuan Shan Jia	<i>Manitis Squama</i>	Endangered — pangolin (CITES)
Guan Mu Tong	<i>Aristolochiae manshuriensis Caulis</i>	Aristolochic acid — nephrotoxicity
Guang Fang Ji	<i>Aristolochiae Fangchi Radix</i>	Aristolochic acid — nephrotoxicity
Hu Gu	<i>Tigris Os</i>	Endangered — tiger (CITES)
Ma Dou Ling	<i>Aristolochiae Fructus</i>	Aristolochic acid — nephrotoxicity
Xi Jiao	<i>Rhinocerotis Cornu</i>	Endangered — rhinoceros (CITES)
Xiong Dan	<i>Vesica Fellea Ursi</i>	Endangered / welfare — bear bile (CITES)
Ying Su Ke	<i>Papaveris Pericarpium</i>	Controlled substance — opium poppy
Zhu Sha	<i>Cinnabaris</i>	Mercury toxicity

A point that catches people out. Xi Jiao is on this list, yet **Xi Jiao Di Huang Wan is newly added to the formula list**. That is deliberate: you are expected to know the formula, know that Xi Jiao itself may not be used, and name the substitute — Shui Niu Jiao, which is on the herb list.

The reverse case is worth noting too. **Ling Jiao Gou Teng Yin** is also newly added, but **Ling Yang Jiao is not an obsolete substance** — it sits on the herb list as an ordinary herb you are expected to know in full. The two situations look alike and are not.

Guan Mu Tong is the substitution most likely to be tested, because its replacement, **Chuan Mu Tong**, is one of the herbs newly added to Appendix A.

6 • Recommended Texts

NCBAHM does not recommend a single text, and the suggested bibliography changed only slightly.

CHANGE	REFERENCE
Added	Maclean, Lyttleton, Bayley & Taylor. <i>Clinical Handbook of Internal Medicine: The Treatment of Disease with Traditional Chinese Medicine</i> . 2nd ed. Eastland Press, 2018.
Removed	Lu, Henry C. <i>Chinese Natural Cures: Traditional Methods for Remedy and Prevention</i> . 2006. — the dietary-therapy text, leaving with the dietary-therapy domain.
New edition	Scheid, Bensky, Ellis & Barolet. <i>Chinese Herbal Medicine: Formulas and Strategies</i> — now the Portable 2nd ed., 2015 , previously the 2nd ed., 2009.
New edition	Cheng, Xinnong (ed.). <i>Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion</i> — now the 4th ed., 2019 , previously the 3rd ed., 2009.

Everything else carries over unchanged, including Bensky's *Materia Medica* (3rd ed., 2004), both Chen & Chen volumes, Fratkin's *Chinese Herbal Patent Medicines*, and both Maciocia titles.

7 • Other Things to Know

- **The organization has been renamed.** NCCAOM is now **NCBAHM** — the National Certification Board for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine. The certification and the exam are the same; the name on the paperwork is not.
- **Both list appendices now carry a toxicity warning.** The outline states plainly that the herb list and the formula list each contain potentially toxic items, and that you are expected to apply strategies — herb selection, dosage, processing, duration, substitution — to reduce that risk.
- **Questions give you pinyin and the botanical name together,** formatted exactly as in the appendices: Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix), Cang Er Zi San (Xanthium Powder). You are not asked to supply one from the other unaided.
- **Off-list items still appear as distractors.** Both outlines say the exam focuses on, but is not exclusively limited to, the listed herbs and formulas — and that unlisted ones may show up as incorrect answers.
- **The Candidate Preparation Handbook and the Exam Content Outline carry identical lists.** If you have both, you only need to study one; the handbook adds policy, sample questions, and a nomenclature cross-reference table that is genuinely useful given how much was retranslated.

8 • Where to Put Your Time

- 1 • **The 51 Dui Yao pairs.** Entirely new, entirely unstudied, and now an explicit objective. Start here.
- 2 • **The 44 retranslated formula names.** The formulas are familiar; the English is not. Learn the patterns — Yin means Drink, Latin becomes common English — rather than memorizing 44 separate lines.
- 3 • **The regulatory side of safety.** Safety is one question in four, but most of it is classical — cautions, contraindications, toxicity, dosage, processing. What your materia medica will not give you is cGMP, Certificates of Analysis, records keeping, adverse-event reporting, storage and contamination. Find a separate source for that piece.
- 4 • **The 9 obsolete substances and their substitutes.** A short, self-contained list with a predictable question format.
- 5 • **The 21 new formulas and 38 new herbs.** Real work, but most sit next to something you already know.
- 6 • **The 4 renamed formulas.** Five minutes, and they are the easiest points to lose.

Prepared by TCMStudy.net from the NCBAHM Chinese Herbology Content Outline effective September 1, 2026, compared against the 2020 content outline. Always confirm against the current outline on the NCBAHM website before your exam date.