# CAHIIM®

**2018 Health Information Management Accreditation Standards**

## Associate Degree

## Contents

The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education ( CAHIIM) is an accrediting organization which has independent authority in all actions pertaining to accreditation of educational programs in health informatics and health information management. CAHIIM is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

CAHIIM is located at 233 N. Michigan Avenue, 21st Floor, Chicago, Illinois, 60601, and on the web at cahiim.org.

## Public Interest

CAHIIM serves the public interest by operating in a consistent manner with all applicable ethical, business and accreditation best practices. Accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process by which nongovernmental associations recognize educational programs found to meet or exceed standards for educational quality. Accreditation also assists in the further improvement of these educational programs as related to resources invested, processes followed, and outcomes achieved.

CAHIIM and its sponsoring organization(s) cooperate to establish, maintain, and promote appropriate standards of quality for postsecondary educational programs in health informatics and health information management to provide competent, skilled professionals for the healthcare industry.

## Mission

CAHIIM strives to carry out its mission by promoting, evaluating, and improving the quality of undergraduate and graduate health informatics and information management education.

Through our partnership with academe and the practice fields, CAHIIM serves colleges and universities in a voluntary peer review process as a means to continuously improve quality education to meet healthcare workforce needs. CAHIIM accreditation becomes the benchmark by which students and employers determine the integrity of health informatics and health information management education.

## Vision

CAHIIM is the globally recognized and trusted accreditation organization for Health Informatics and Health Information Management education programs to ensure the development of a workforce that meets the challenge of an information-intensive environment and its impact on global health.

## Introduction

For the purpose of CAHIIM the discipline of Health Information Management is the practice of acquiring, analyzing, and protecting digital and traditional medical information vital to providing quality patient care. It is a combination of business, science, and information technology.

Students in this discipline are expected to have working knowledge in six major domains: (1) Data Content, Structure and Standards, (2) Information Protection: Access, Disclosure, Archival, Privacy and Security, (3) Health Information Technologies, (4) Revenue Management, (5) Compliance, and (6) Leadership.

## I. Sponsorship

### 1. Sponsoring Educational Institution

The sponsoring educational institution must be a postsecondary academic institution accredited by an institutional accrediting organization that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). The Institution must be authorized to award a degree. The sponsoring institution must participate in the federal student financial assistance program administered under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Upon request, the applying campus program must provide the Office of Postsecondary Education Identifier (OPE ID) number assigned by the U.S. Department of Education as proof of participation for financial aid. State Board of Education approvals must also be completed.

## II. Systematic Planning

### 2. Program Mission

The program's mission and goals must be outcomes focused, form the basis for program planning and implementation, and be compatible with the mission of the sponsoring educational institution and ethics of the health information management profession.

Each program will define its own mission and goals which derive from the purposes of its sponsoring educational institution, communities of interest, workforce needs, faculty expertise, and the values of the field of health information management.

(See: AHIMA Code of Ethics)

### 3. Program Effectiveness Measures

The program must have an assessment plan for systematic evaluation of mission, goals and measurable outcomes. The program must be involved in an ongoing effort to determine its effectiveness, which constitutes a quality improvement cycle.

Results of the program annual assessment must be monitored and reflected in an action plan and reviewed by the program's advisory committee. Programs must conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of how the program achieves its mission, goals and target objectives for continual improvement, including a candid assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

The program uses the results of assessment and documents and implements program improvements. CAHIIM will seek evidence that there is documentation of changes made in the program. These may include curriculum revisions, improvements in student services and faculty development activities.

An institutional effectiveness survey or other institutional level evaluation data is not sufficient to replace the program's own evaluation plan. Program goals for the following are required:

Curriculum Goal

The program must assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum, with the results of the program assessment used as the basis for ongoing planning and program improvement.

Annual assessment of the curriculum is required to determine where and when improvements are needed. Assessment is conducted using feedback from students, faculty, graduates, advisory committee, employers, and other relevant sources. At least one measurable target outcome must be related to curriculum content, improvements and/or effectiveness in approach to curriculum content.

### Students and Graduates Goal

The program must provide assurance that the educational needs of students are met and that graduates demonstrate at least the AHIMA entry-level curriculum competencies. The program must assess through goals and target outcomes that student learning outcomes are examined and demonstrate progress toward achievement of entry-level competencies.

### Faculty Development Goal

The program must demonstrate that all individuals who have responsibility to delivery academic components of the program and will maintain continuing competence. Provide measurable evidence that these individuals will keep current in the content areas in which they teach.

The program must assure through annual measureable outcomes that faculty development planning is targeted to improve faculty knowledge and expertise in the areas in which they teach. This includes efforts to keep current in health information management and/or other relevant professional content, practice, and teaching techniques.

## 4. Communities of Practice Outreach Goal

The program must indicate how it assesses and responds to the needs of its communities of practice. The program must demonstrate how it interprets these needs into educating a competent workforce, including how program serves as a source of continued education for its communities of practice.

## 5. Program Planning

A program assessment plan exists that includes systematic evaluation of its mission goals and outcomes. Plan includes a process for continuous improvement and is in compliance with the sponsoring educational institution's overall evaluation plan.

Each program is evaluated by the extent to which it attains its goals and measurable outcomes, which must be clearly defined and regularly reviewed to form the essential frame of reference for meaningful external and internal evaluation.

Program must incorporate and keep–up-to-date any curriculum components or other content changes as identified by AHIMA's Council for Excellence in Education (CEE).

## 6. Annual Assessment for Continuing Accreditation Programs

Accredited programs must annually assess and document its program goals and outcomes in the CAHIIM Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR) process and reporting system. The program must use the results of annual assessments to document program improvements. Data analysis and action plans must be documented. A program must document how it meets its goals and objectives and how it plans to address observed weaknesses.

**7. Program Governance**

The sponsoring educational institution must clarify the lines of authority and administrative governance of the program within the framework of the sponsoring institution.

**8. Program Leadership: The Program Director**

The program must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the program director that are necessary to fully support and sustain the program. The program director must be credentialed as a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) or Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA), and must have at minimum, a baccalaureate degree. The qualifications and responsibilities of the individual(s) responsible for leadership of the program must be documented.

The program director must be a full-time position of the sponsoring institution dedicated to the program and the discipline and have full employee status, rights, responsibilities and privileges as defined by institutional policy and be consistent with other similar positions at the institution.

**9. Program Director Responsibilities**

The program director of the educational program must be responsible for the organization, administration, continuous program review, planning, development, and general effectiveness of the program. The director must have a role in the budget development process of the program. The program director must be given adequate release time to devote to curriculum development and evaluation, counseling of students, program management and administrative duties within the institution.

**10. Faculty**

The program must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the faculty necessary to fully support and sustain the program. The program must have at least two full-time faculty members, that includes the program director, dedicated to the program and the discipline.

Part-time and adjunct faculty must be recognized as an important faculty component. The size of the faculty complement in relationship to the size of the number of enrolled students in the program must support and encourage effective and regular student/faculty interactions.

An appropriate student/faculty ratio depends on a number of factors, including the nature of the institution, the range of teaching responsibilities, and teaching intensity (such as didactic material, projects, practice experiences, research).

**11. Faculty Qualifications**

The qualifications of each faculty member must include professional preparation and experience, competence in assigned teaching areas, effectiveness in teaching, and scholarly productivity consistent with their faculty appointment and institutional policy. Faculty must have a degree and/or certification in the assigned teaching area.

## 12. Faculty Performance

The required faculty must provide students with adequate attention, instruction and supervised practice to acquire the knowledge and competence needed for entry-level practice. Each faculty (including part time and adjunct faculty) member's performance must be evaluated and documented according to the institution's policies. Evaluation includes teaching effectiveness and scholarly productivity consistent with their appointment. Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, and others must be sufficiently involved in the evaluation process.

## IV. Resources

## 13. Advisory Committee

Each HIM program must have an advisory committee representative of its communities of interest.

The advisory committee responsibilities include assisting program faculty and sponsoring educational institution personnel with the development and revision of program goals and curriculum, monitoring program needs and expectations, and ensuring program responsiveness to change.

CAHIIM emphasizes the importance of a strong advisory committee comprised of individuals external to the academic institution- such as employers, graduates, healthcare executives and others representative of the communities of interest.

Input from individuals in practice is very valuable in terms of curriculum assessment and keeping the program aligned with current practices.

The advisory committee must play an active role in developing program goals and performing program evaluation as reflected in the program's annual goals.

The advisory committee must meet, at a minimum, annually. It is anticipated that the advisory committee will meet at more frequent intervals when warranted to review program goals, curricula, etc.

## 14. Professional Development

The program director and all faculty must demonstrate continuing professional development related to the curriculum content to which they are assigned. Professional development may be considered continuing education in program management (if applicable), curriculum content areas, teaching techniques, scholarly achievements or other areas related to the faculty's responsibilities and/or teaching assignments.

Ensure professional development is available to online instructors regarding technology and aspects of online teaching/learning.

## 15. Learning Resources and Student Access

The sponsoring educational institution must provide appropriate resources to support the learning experiences and achieve the program's goals and outcomes. The methods of demonstrating adequate resources must reflect the types of resources available to support the learning experiences of students and be sufficient enough to accommodate all students enrolled in the program. These include but are not limited to student access to current technology, computers and relevant software, practice resources and other materials.

Require daily technical support services are in place. Ensure technology requirements and skills are made known to students before they begin the course/program. Offer students an orientation before taking an online course.

### 16. Financial Support

The sponsoring educational institution must provide financial support to the program to achieve its goals and outcomes, and provide resources and support for faculty development.

### 17. Student Records

Documentation must be maintained for student admission, advisement, counseling, and evaluation. Records of student evaluations must be maintained in sufficient detail to document learning progress and achievements. Grades and credits for courses must be recorded on the student transcript and permanently maintained by the sponsoring educational institution in a safe and accessible location. Program officials must maintain student records that reflect evidence of student evaluation on all levels, and progression toward achievement of program requirements.

## V. Program Curriculum

### 18. Curriculum

The program must demonstrate that the curriculum meets or exceeds the professional course content as published in the AHIMA HIM curriculum competencies for associate degree programs. Institutions must have policies regarding the allocation of credit to courses, particularly with respect to the credit value of laboratory and professional practice experience courses.

Teaching & assessment methods should be active, and evidence based. Analysis of situations in professional contexts and problem based assessment must be emphasized.

### 19. Syllabi

The curriculum syllabi must document the AHIMA HIM curriculum competencies for associate degree programs. Instruction must be based on clearly written course syllabi to include course objectives, and evaluation methods that assess student learning outcomes. Students must know at the outset of each course through the syllabus what is required for successful completion, what they are expected to learn, what activities they will experience, and how and when they will be evaluated. Syllabi must follow a standardized format for the program.

### 20. Course Sequence

Content must be delivered in an appropriate sequence of didactic, laboratory, and professional practice activities. Course content must be logical and coherent with didactic instruction and related activities organized in each course. Courses must be sequenced appropriately, which means that knowledge and experience must be carefully analyzed, and prerequisites appropriately identified and placed. (For example, medical science, computer literacy and health record content courses must be placed early in the curriculum sequence, as they contain skills and knowledge that the student will apply to later courses.) Institutions must have policies regarding the allocation of credit to courses, particularly with respect to the credit value of laboratory and professional practice experience courses.

21. **Online Content Access**

Academic technologies, software applications and simulations, and online or web-enhanced courses, have a significant role in the online learning environment. To fairly evaluate online content the program must provide CAHIIM with full access to the Learning Management Systems (LMS) in use for all online course content and relevant education applications used to deliver this content.

22. **Curriculum—Evaluation of Students**

Evaluation of students must be conducted frequently enough to provide both the students and program faculty with valid and timely indications of the students' progress toward and achievement of the competencies stated in the curriculum. Student evaluation methodologies (tests, exams, projects, assignments, etc.) may vary in type and construction, must be conducted frequently, and must be able to test the different cognitive levels. Programs must show that students are being taught and tested at a variety of taxonomic levels, with emphasis being placed on the use of application and problem-solving techniques. The analysis of situations in professional contexts and problem-based assessment must be emphasized.

23. **Professional Practice Experiences**

Professional practice experiences (PPE) must be designed and supervised to reinforce didactic instruction and must include program coordinated experience at professional practice site(s). The program must describe how the PPE (clinical practicum, directed practice experience) is designed, supervised and evaluated, and the objectives to be achieved in each PPE course. The PPE s a credit-based course, which applies toward degree completion, and requires tuition, fees and costs as normally occurs according to institutional policy.

Simulation activities designed to replicate PPE are permitted but cannot totally replace an on-site PPE. The program must describe how simulation activities are designed, supervised and evaluated and the objectives to be achieved by using simulation activities. PPE, whether on-site or through simulations must relate to higher level competencies and result in a learning experience for the student and/or a deliverable to a practice site. The PPE must provide the student with the opportunity to reinforce competencies and skill sets. The PPE does not prohibit a paid internship.

*PPE onsite preparation:* The health and safety of patients, students and faculty associated with educational activities must be adequately safeguarded according to the health and safety practices of both the sponsoring educational institution and the professional practice site. The responsibilities of the college, PPE site and student(s) must be documented for externships or professional practice experiences. Either a formal contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU) will suffice, if in accordance with institutional practice. Health, safety and security policies and requirements must be outlined in the agreement or MOU, and students must be informed of these in advance of the PPE.

The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education expects the program and the sponsoring institution to comply with the following Fair Practice Standards.

## 24. Publications and Disclosures

The following published program information must accurately reflect the program offered and must be known to all applicants and students.

- The sponsoring educational institution, programmatic accreditation status and curriculum

- Admissions policies and procedures

- Policies on advanced placement, transfer of credits, and credits for experiential learning

- Number of credits required for completion of the program

- Tuition/fees and other costs required to complete the program

- Policies and procedures for withdrawal and for refunds of tuition/fees

- Academic calendar

- Student grievance procedure

- Criteria for successful completion of each segment of the curriculum and graduation

- Information about student/graduate achievement that includes the results of one or more of the program's measurable outcomes must be published on the program website. This must include but not limited to program completion rate and student satisfaction rate.

## 25. Lawful and Non-Discriminatory Practices

All activities associated with the program, including student and faculty recruitment, student admission, and faculty employment practices, must be non-discriminatory and in accordance with federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations.

**26. Substantive Changes**

The program must report substantive change(s) as described in the CAHIIM website in a timely manner or as specified.

**27.** Submit the CAHIIM Annual Program Assessment Report (APAR) and other required reports by the determined CAHIIM date.

**28.** Each program must participate in a designated periodic site visit of the accredited program.

**29.** Payment of all CAHIIM administrative fees is required.