

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
HEALTH INFORMATION DEPARTMENT
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

We are glad that you have chosen NDSCS to further your educational goals. This packet provides you with information to assist you with the admissions process for the Health Information Department. The department offers 2 options:

- Health Information Technician Associate of Applied Science Degree
- Medical Coding Certificate

Please carefully review all information which has been provided in the packet. If you have questions regarding any of the information provided, contact HI Department Chair, Kaila Givens, at Kaila.Givens@ndscs.edu or by phone 701-671-2269.

Program Handbooks are published in the HIT 176 Introduction course and provide additional information needed for students enrolled in the program options. If you do not take HIT 176 your first semester, please contact kaila.givens@ndscs.edu for a copy of the program handbook for your option.

General Information

HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIAN AAS DEGREE:

What is a health information technician? Health information professionals care for patients by caring for their medical data, focusing on completeness, accuracy and protection. They use computer applications to organize, analyze, evaluate, and report health data, complying with laws, standards, and regulations. Health information technicians often specialize in coding diagnoses and procedures in health records for reimbursement and other purposes.

NDSCS offers North Dakota's only health information technician program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM).

Academic training includes online learning laboratories. Students will participate in two virtual professional practice courses. The HIT program includes onsite experience. Whenever possible, the onsite experience is scheduled in the student's geographic area. Tuition and fees are assessed for these courses.

What employment opportunities are available? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of health information technicians is projected to grow 11% from 2018 to 2028; much faster than the average for all occupations. Learn more about medical records and health information technicians by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

Employment opportunities include hospitals, nursing homes, behavioral health facilities, insurance companies, physician practices, software vendors, auditing firms, government agencies, and other facilities outside of healthcare. With appropriate experience, RHITs may be employed remotely (at-home).

Graduates may pursue a bachelor's degree at another institution, and/or obtain specialty certifications for further advancement and management opportunities in the profession.

We strive to prepare students/graduates to pass the RHIT certification and obtain employment.

What is a medical coder? Coders review medical documentation, using classification systems software and assign medical codes. The codes are used for billing, research, statistics, reporting, and

administrative purposes.

NDSCS offers North Dakota's only medical coding certificate approved by the AHIMA Professional Certificate Approval Program (PCAP).

What employment opportunities are available? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of Medical Coding is projected to grow 11% from 2018 to 2028; much faster than the average for all occupations. Coders are employed in a variety of settings including hospitals, nursing homes, behavioral health facilities, home health agencies, physician practices, insurance companies, consulting and auditing firms, and software vendors. Coding guidelines will be studied in detail, as well as concepts in insurance and reimbursement, including payment systems.

Students can easily continue their education by completing the additional courses in the health information technician AAS degree program option. For further advancement in the profession, additional coding certifications are desirable after the graduate attains work experience.

We strive to prepare students/graduates to pass the CCA certification and obtain employment.

Program Admission Requirements:

Program Admission Requirements are subject to revision. Please check the department or program website under 'Program Admission Requirements' for current information.

Curriculum Requirements:

A grade of "C" or above must be achieved in all courses in order to advance in the program and prior to taking the practicum or professional practice courses.

Essential Program Requirements: Applicants must have the ability to perform the *Essential Program Requirements* as listed on the Health Information Program Information FAQ file on the college website and in this document. www.ndscs.edu

Are there Professional Practice/Practicum Experiences? Academic training includes online learning laboratories. Students will participate in professional practice/practicum courses, which include virtual experiences. HIT 297 includes an onsite component. Tuition and fees are assessed for these courses. Whenever possible, the onsite experience is scheduled in the student's geographic area.

HIT AAS Degree: The first professional practice takes place early in the summer semester between the first and second year of the program. All first-year course work must be successfully completed prior to this experience. The second professional practice takes place during the last weeks of the spring semester of the second year, following completion of all other program courses. A grade of 'C' or above must be achieved in all courses to take the professional practices/practicum courses.

MEDICAL CODING CERTIFICATE:

Academic training includes online learning laboratories. At the end of the program, students will complete a capstone practicum, which includes a variety of virtual experiences. Tuition and fees are assessed for this course.

The professional practice sites may require one or more of the following checks prior to confirming a site placement:

- * Criminal arrest record background check.
- * Drug and alcohol testing
- * Health and immunization documentation

Results may affect placements and the student's ability to complete the program of study. Sites may have additional requirements which you will be notified of. Failure to submit all required documents in a timely manner, may result in the department's inability to place the student.



HIT AAS Accreditation Statement

The Health Information Technician Associate in Applied Science degree program at NDSCS is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education, 233 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Floor, Chicago, IL 60601-5800; telephone 312 (233-1100) www.cahiim.org



Medical Coding Program Approval Statement

The North Dakota State College of Science Medical Coding program option is approved by the AHIMA Professional Certificate Approval Program. This designation acknowledges the coding program as having been evaluated by a peer review process against a national minimum set of standards for entry-level coding professionals. This process allows academic institutions, healthcare organizations and private companies to be acknowledged as offering an approved coding certificate program.

“Value for Students” Statement

The AHIMA Professional Certificate Approval Program designation:

- Identifies specialized programs that meet established coding educational standards.
- Stimulates improvement of educational standards through faculty development opportunities, and by involving faculty and staff in program evaluation and planning.
- Promotes a better understanding of the goals of professional coding education.
- Provides reasonable assurance that practitioners possess the necessary job skills upon entry into the profession.

Timeframe of Program Approval: July of 2018 to July 17, 2021 with annual interim approval during these years.

Are Online Classes Self-paced?- Online courses are not self-paced because we follow the same academic calendar for start/end dates and final add/drop dates for online classes as the regular on-campus classes- see this link: <https://www.ndscs.edu/academics/things-to-know-academics/dates-and-deadlines/>

However, students have flexibility in time of day they "attend" or log into their class and do their coursework. For example, if you workdays, you can work in your class evenings and weekends. You do not have to login at a particular day or time. You may, however, need to test during “regular weekday business hours.”

Are Exam Proctors Needed? Exam Proctors may be required for online course exams. The proctor can be someone in your community such as a librarian, college testing center or an administrator or instructor in the public school system and as detailed on the proctor approval form. Your instructor will provide you with proctor information guidelines and a proctor form that you will complete and submit to your online course instructor prior to your first exam. The proctor must be someone in an official capacity or at a test center and must be approved by your class instructors.

*Students in the NDSCS-Wahpeton area will test at the NDSCS Wahpeton campus Testing Center, Old Main, while students in the NDSCS-Fargo area will test at the NDSCS-Fargo test center. Our department does not accept electronic proctor services such as “Proctor U.”

Challenge Exams: Challenge exams are not offered for HIT prefix courses. Students interested in challenging a class may contact the Student Success Office (1-800-342-4325 ext. 3000) for information about the process and costs.

In order to be eligible for the RHIT Credential Exam, must both the HIT Department requirements and General Education requirements be completed?

Yes! You must earn your HIT AAS degree from a CAHIIM-accredited program in order to be eligible to take the RHIT Credential exam. There is a process to request early RHIT exam testing in your final semester of courses. Please refer to the AHIMA website for more information:

www.ahima.org/certification

I'm not sure if I should pursue the Medical Coding Certificate or the HIT AAS degree. How do I decide? It depends! Many students start with the AAS degree, while some students decide to begin by pursuing the Medical Coding Certificate. Some then decide to continue onto the HIT AAS degree. Most of the courses for the Medical Coding Certificate are also required for the HIT AAS degree! You will work closely with your advisor each semester and can discuss this with your advisor.

Course Exemption: FYE 101 Science of Success: FYE 101 Requirement- FYE 101 Science of Success is a required course for all incoming students unless they meet specific criteria and are approved for an exemption.

Exemption for FYE 101- All freshmen are required to take FYE 101. If a student wishes to apply for an exemption from the FYE course, they will need to complete the FYE 101 Exemption Request Form and submit it to the Director of Student Success and Career Services, Old Main, 410B; ph: 701-671-2272. The link is located toward the bottom of the web page.

<https://www.ndscs.edu/current-students/student-success/first-year-experience/>

Students must submit this form and supporting documents to the Student Success Coordinator **by noon of the last day to add a semester class in the student’s first semester at NDSCS.**

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY: Technology Requirements: Because the program is delivered via an online learning platform, students must have ongoing access to a browser and must have a computer that meets the technical requirements described at: www.ndscs.edu. Assistive technology, browser plug-ins, and related software downloads are all described in detail. It is expected that the student has the technology available at the beginning of each course they enroll in and throughout the course. The student should have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties.

Students must have a working knowledge of the internet as well as basic computer knowledge, including software installation, ability to use email, uploading and download files, and troubleshooting.

ESTIMATED ONLINE PROGRAM COSTS – 2020-2021

	HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIAN AAS DEGREE	MEDICAL CODING CERTIFICATE
Admission Fee- Nonrefundable	\$35	\$35
Books/Supplies (new)	\$2500	\$2500

AHIMA Student Membership	\$49/year	\$49/year
AHIMA Virtual Lab Access Code	\$110/year (valid for 365 days from purchase) Do not purchase until instructed.	\$110/year (valid for 365 days from purchase) Do not purchase until instructed.
Tuition/mandatory/ fees: <u>On Campus Students</u>	\$178.98/credit (ND residents; tuition varies per state) + \$40/cr Instructional fee	\$178.98/credit (ND residents; tuition varies per state) + \$40/cr Instructional fee
Professional Practice Course Fees	HIT 297 - \$229 (National Certification Exam); CastleBranch Background Check/ Immunization tracker - \$65.00	
Tuition/mandatory/online access fees: <u>Online Students</u>	\$214.98/credit + \$40/cr Instructional fee	\$214.98/credit + \$40/cr Instructional fee

ONLINE tuition/mandatory/online access fees:

- **MN RECIP** \$232.30/cr + \$40/cr Instructional fee
- **US RES** \$243.85/cr + \$40/cr Instructional fee
- **INTER** \$323.24/cr + \$40/cr Instructional fee

HIT 297 Professional Practice II is a virtual and onsite internship experience where the college attempts to place the student in their local area. Students will be registered as traditional students for this course and tuition rates will be based on student's state of residency. For more information about non-resident rates, contact the NDSCS Financial Aid Office at 1-800-342-4325, ext. 2207.

Expenses for the Professional Practice Experience II includes transportation, meals, housing (if needed). Some sites require health screenings, physical exams and a criminal background check. These are the student's responsibility.

Bookstore Services: You can order your textbooks through our Bookstore by calling 1-800-342-4325, ext 2239 or online at <http://ndscsbookstore.com/home.aspx> The same easy payment options that are available for tuition and registration are available for purchasing your books.

Academic Services Center: The Academic Services Center is committed to the philosophy that everyone should have the opportunity to learn and is dedicated to helping students develop academic abilities and discover their personal strengths. The ASC strives to enhance student achievement and increase student retention by providing a wide range of college readiness and college levels courses, activities and services by working cooperatively with NDSCS departments, high schools, NDUS institutions and funding agencies. Contact by phone at 701-671-2616.

Accessibility Support Services: Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact their instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at NDSCS.Accessibility@ndscs.edu or by phone at 701-671-2623 as soon as possible in the semester to discuss possible accommodations.

Academic Advising and Career Counseling

Students should have assistance in planning their course of study. Each program has at least one faculty advisor to assist students. Your HI advisor is Kaila Givens. She can be reached at Kaila.givens@ndscs.edu. The advisor for Medical Coding is Martin Smith. He can be reached at

martin.smith@ndscs.edu. You are expected to meet (either on campus or via e-mail) at least once per semester for program planning.

In addition to program advisors, the Student Success Center is a one-stop location for students to find help with the following: Course Placement questions, Assistance with Class Schedules, Change of Program- forms and counseling, Career Counseling and Career Services. Qualified division advisors are available for academic advising. Contact the Student Success at 1-800-342-4325 ext. 2263 or NDSCS.StudentSuccess@ndscs.edu

Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office answers questions in regard to the process of college financing. Carmen.Marohl@ndscs.edu or 1-800-342-4325 ext. 2191.

Library

The library staff is available to help students locate information for their assignments. Students may access materials across the state through the library website at <https://www.ndscs.edu/current-students/campus-buildings-services/about-the-library/> or the ODIN database at www.odin.nodak.edu.

E-Mail Account: Each student is granted access to an e-mail account. This is the account Health Information Students should use in all college related communications, including course work. If you have questions on obtaining your email account, contact ndscs.servicedesk@ndscs.edu

Planning and Prioritizing for Online Learning

Online classes are a wonderful way to organize competing priorities. The flexibility of scheduling means that many students are able to meet their goals at the appropriate pace for their busy lives. You need to have reliable sources for transportation, childcare, and Internet in order to attend class or work. Online classes may not be a great fit for students who prefer the interactivity and visuals of in-person learning.

Exams are taken at a proctoring site and arrangements to test per the course schedule and proctoring guidelines must be made.

Tell people your plans and goals (developing a support system is crucial). Additionally, you can build your HIM experience through volunteering. Even if it's only a few hours at an HIM department you will meet potential references and employers, and you can add the experience to your resume. Research local organizations where you would like to work someday and ask if you can help. Even if the tasks are not challenging or exciting, building your network and being in an HIM environment can lead to great opportunities.

Curriculum Options:

While the HIT Program is designed to be completed in two academic years, some students may wish to take a reduced course load per semester and thus spread the program out over two and a half or three years. This can be discussed with your advisor and an appropriate option selected. See options in the front of the program handbook. The maximum time allowed for part-time students to complete the program is three years. Any time allowed beyond three years is at the discretion of the department chair due to changes constantly occurring in the dynamic healthcare industry. Coursework may need to be repeated if content changes.

Essential Functions of a Health Information Technology Student:

Essential functions are those considered to be necessary or fundamental to performance of a job. In postsecondary education, the student's job is to learn and participate in an academic environment and the clinical environment as well. The student, with or without reasonable accommodation, must possess these essential functions.

- Must be able to use computer programs following written instructions, (e.g. word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, database, flow-charting software, plus health information programs (e.g., electronic health records, encoders, tracking systems, etc.) Ability to learn new computer applications as changes occur is required. Jobs may include up to eight hours per day of computer work.
- Must be able to protect the confidentiality/security of health and facility/practitioner business information. Must be able to comply with laws, regulations and standards. Must show honesty/ethics including not cheating and not plagiarizing on assignments. Must follow the AHIMA Code of Ethics.
 - Requires ability to communicate orally and in written form (or comparable communication skills) and use proper format, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Requires proficient use of the English language. Must use critical thinking, exhibit sound judgment, show emotional stability/maturity, show physical/mental stamina, and receive/share information/instructions from instructors, patients, physicians, and others in didactic and/or clinical setting
 - Must complete tasks accurately and timely. Must be able to apply principles of logical/scientific thinking and comprehend concepts. Must be adaptable, able to make decisions related to class/lab/clinical assignments and have the ability to build/maintain constructive cooperative working relationships with others and develop goals/priorities to organize/accomplish work.
 - Must demonstrate professionalism, work alone or in teams, demonstrate integrity and sincerity, and show caring/sensitivity especially in areas of patient care. Must demonstrate neatness and good hygiene. Requires positive attitude when receiving constructive criticism. Must be willing to alter plans or change approaches in the learning/work environment, maintain composure and continue to function during stress. Must show respect to others. Must show dependability in attendance.
 - Must be able to apply mathematical formulas, determine percentages/decimals; determine time; use metric systems, use/display descriptive statistics, calculate hospital statistics, productivity information, quality improvement studies, budgets, equipment and supply needs/costs, medical bills, etc. Must be able to construct formulas when preparing computerized spreadsheets.
 - Requires the ability to travel to and from Professional Practice Experience facilities, public locations for the purposes of various meetings, or other assigned locations off campus.
 - Students Individual Needs – Students requiring reasonable accommodations in order to meet program requirements must consult with the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible to discuss their individual needs.
 - Endurance necessary to complete 40-hour week during professional practice/practicum experiences.

Reference: <http://pittcc.edu/academics/programs/health-sciences/health-information-technology/essential-functions> 5.5.2015

I encourage you to become familiar with the NDSCS online web site, www.ndscs.edu for additional information.

AFTER REVIEWING THE FAQ PAGES, DO YOU STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have **academic planning or program-related questions**, you can contact the HI Department Chair, Kaila Givens, at kaila.givens@ndscs.edu

If you need help with the **college application or the registration steps**, please contact Student Success at ndscs.studentsuccess@ndscs.edu.

For questions about technical issues, please contact our help desk at ndscs.servicedesk@ndscs.edu

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