Educator FAQs

Q: How often are the curriculum competencies revised?

A: The competencies are reviewed annually by the curricula workgroup of the Council for Excellence in Education (CEE). Minor revisions are made as necessary with a thorough review and revision every three to five years to coincide with potential changes to the domains and subdomains.

Q: Is there a list of commonly used resources (textbooks, software, videos, case studies, etc.) for program directors for each program level?

A: Yes, the list of commonly used resources for each program level is included in the candidate guide.

Q: Explain the job analysis for exam questions and why these are entry level.

A: The primary purpose for conducting a job analysis is to define practice of a profession in terms of the actual tasks practitioners must be able to perform safely and competently at the time of certification. The definition, or description of practice is typically used to form the foundation of a credentialing (licensing or certification) examination that is fair, job-related, and legally defensible.

Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) plans for and conducts comprehensive job analyses for each certification examination, depending how quickly and substantively the competencies assessed by a given certification examination changes. Typically, the frequency of these job analyses is approximately every three to five years. Consistent with best practices, the job analysis process involves a diverse and representative sample of stakeholders, including recently certified professionals and employers/supervisors. These stakeholders assess the criticality of current workplace practices, skills, tasks, and responsibilities, with respect to importance and frequency of performance. The results of the job analysis influence to what extent the competencies are revised for each respective certification examination. Ultimately, the job analysis process is a fundamental quality assurance component of the relevancy, currency, and validity of competencies assessed by each certification examination.

The examination specifications are typically established or revised at the same time as the development of the examination blueprint. The specifications usually include the total number of test items (both scored and non-scored), test item type(s), such as multiple-choice or other, total test duration, scoring methodology, etc.

Q: Explain how exam competencies arise (from roles and functions study).

A: The job analysis serves as the foundation for the examination blueprint. First, the individual competencies are grouped into domains that represent specific and similar areas of content. Next, the percentage weighting of each content domain is determined, in part, through the individual competency statement criticality scores, considered collectively, within each domain. This weighting of domains relative to one another allows the Exam Development Committees to determine how much, or to what extent, each domain is assessed (both by the number and difficulty of test items), relative to the other domains. For example, domains with competencies that have higher criticality scores (that is, more important and/or more frequently performed) typically represent a larger percentage of test items than those domains with lower criticality scores for its respective competencies.

Q: Explain why exam and curriculum content differ from one another

A: The exam is intended to measure entry-level competency where the curriculum is broader and more future thinking. While one of the goals of the curriculum is to prepare graduates for the rigors of the exam, that is just a piece of the curriculum. During their educational programs, HIM students will learn of issues far beyond what they may experience as a new professional. The curriculum exposes students to thought-provoking, current, and future topics where the exam tests only functions performed in the market when the exam is created. If we simply "teach to the test" we are doing little more than training people for a vocation. The outcome of the educational process should reflect a student's ability to problem solve and use critical thinking skills whereas training only allows students to parrot what they were taught during the training process. For these reasons, the curriculum is broad, rigorous, and demanding.

Q: Since the CEE's role is to develop educational strategy, if the CEE makes recommendations related to curriculum does CAHIIM have to abide by them and make them part of the standards?

A: The CEE, along with input from a broad set of academic and workforce stakeholders represent the profession in regard to the curriculum. During the curriculum development process there are checkpoints for comments by AHIMA leaders, CAHIIM, CCHIIM, and all members. Once comments are received and considered the CEE is the final authority and releases the curriculum to CAHIIM for implementation in the accreditation process.

Q: What is the role of the AOE in relation to CEE, CAHIIM, and CCHIIM?

A: The Assembly on Education is the educator community. Increasingly this group also represents the workforce. The annual AOE symposium is a large gathering of HIM educators often used as an opportunity to get feedback and input from key stakeholders the CEE, CCHIIM, and CAHIIM represent.

Q: Why does it take so long to produce a new credential?

A: Developing a credential is an extensive process requiring multiple steps to ensure the credential is sustainable, meets specific criteria, and is aligned with CCHIIM strategy, market driven and needed. Proposed credentials must also go through a risk assessment process and resources to develop the credential must be available.

In addition to the steps to determine the feasibility of the new credential, developing a new credential requires completion of the test development process, which includes: job analysis, item writing, exam construction, exam publishing, beta exam, and standard setting. The test development process takes approximately nine (9) months to complete.

Q: Explain how the credentialing exams (RHIA, RHIT) are scored.

A: The CCHIIM continues its efforts towards complying with third-party accreditation standards for all AHIMA certification offerings. Individual exam results are reported through the use of scaled scores instead of raw scores.

Background information regarding the rationale and use of scaled scores is provided below:

- Third-party accreditation standards require that certification bodies (such as CCHIIM) demonstrate equivalency across forms or versions of the same exam, in order to assure that no candidates are placed at a disadvantage, solely due to varying levels of difficulty across forms.

- The use of scaled scores for reporting certification exam results is a widely accepted best practice for both professional voluntary certifications and also for licensure (regulated) exams in numerous industries, including healthcare, for the purpose of equating exams across forms.

- CCHIIM revises and updates all certifications at least once per year. These revisions are based on statistical analyses of individual item performance and in consideration of redundant, revised, or new knowledge required of certificants entering the workforce. Because these exams are updated annually, a common question from candidates and educators concerns the perceived level of difficulty between current and prior exam forms.

- A scaled score is a mathematical conversion of a raw score (number of questions answered correctly). The scale score is determined by converting the number of questions answered correctly to a scale score ranging from 100 to 400. Candidates need a minimum scaled score of 300 to pass the examination.

- Each candidate's score is converted to a scaled score in such a way that a particular score corresponds to the same level of achievement regardless of the form of the examination actually taken. In other words, a score of 300 on the current form or version of the exam will have the same meaning as a score of 300 on any prior form or version of the exam.

- Aggregate pass rates of the candidate pool are not affected by the use of scaled scores for reporting exam performance.

- A candidate's individual pass / fail status is not affected by the use of scaled scores for reporting exam performance.

Q: If we are given templates to aid us in the development of associate-degree specialty tracks, do we have to make these a part of our program?

A: No. Specialty tracks are an optional choice and each school can make the decision to implement specialty tracks based on their own specific circumstances and needs.

Q: How can we develop qualified faculty to teach at the graduate level?

A: AHIMA and the AHIMA Foundation continue to provide support for faculty to increase their skills and advance their own education. For example, the AHIMA Foundation Research Network (AFRN) affords professionals a mechanism to further

their expertise in research and scholarly writing; valued skills needed towards promotion and tenure. The purpose of the AFRN is to: 1) bring together interdisciplinary expertise under a formal organizational structure to explore and to advance funding opportunities; 2) collaborate on research activities; and 3) contribute to the HIM body of knowledge through research, publication and presentation. The AHIMA Journal and the Foundation's research and education journals, Perspectives in Health Information Management (PHIM) and Educational Perspectives in Health Informatics and Information Management (EPHIM) offer educators current trends and research within the discipline. In addition, scholarship funds are being targeted to support graduate level education to ensure a growing faculty workforce.

Q: How will we address new faculty needs in understanding the basics of HIM education such as developing syllabi, developing tests, grading, etc.? Will this still be part of the FDI or did this go away?

A: These content areas are included in the annual Faculty Development Institute (link) and an ongoing Faculty Development webinar series, which can be attended live, or recordings of prior webcasts can be found in CourseShare (link). Educators may also elect to enroll in one of the new Faculty Badge (link) courses which provide professional faculty development through asynchronous online courses with mentor support. The badge courses provide greater depth of context regarding common topics that arise when transitioning to academia.

Q: Why does the CEE have so many workgroups? What is their function?

A: The workgroups of the CEE support students, faculty, and the HIM profession. The Faculty Development, Curricula, Educational Programming, Graduate Resource Alliance, PPE, and Workforce workgroups function as their names suggest. The integration of education and workforce is a critical concept that continues to ensure education is based on the needs of the rapidly changing healthcare environment. Workgroup volunteers assist in framing the advancement of HIM education, and the CEE could not function without its volunteers, which now number close to 100.

Q: How do the workgroups work with the other affiliates, such as CCHIIM, CAHIIM, and others?

A: Each workgroup meets monthly and provides a verbal report to the CEE on the status of ongoing projects. The CEE takes the work from each of the workgroups and uses it to advance ideas and thinking around PPE, faculty development, curricula, educational programming, research and workforce needs. The work of each of the

workgroups enables the CEE to rapidly respond to needs in each area. The work of the CEE and workgroups inform the activities of CAHIIM and CCHIIM.

Q: What criteria are used to determine whether a specific software application will be included in the VLab suite?

A: Generally, the VLab team tries to assure that the software:

- addresses one or more HIM academic curricular competencies at the associate's, bachelor's or graduate level – adds learning value
- is actually used in the real-world - it is prevalent and relevant in the healthcare workspace
- is anticipated to be around for the foreseeable future - it is not a "fad"
- vendor is able to deploy and support the software on the VLab platform as seamlessly as possible – for convenient and reliable student and faculty access
- is available at the lowest possible cost – affects VLab affordability and value

Q: What is the process to create/revise VLab learning activities?

A: There are 6 steps in the process, as follows:

1. VLab Faculty Liaison identifies the academic curricular competency(ies) to be addressed
2. VLab Faculty Liaison develops new Activity and Answer Key
    a. Includes curricular competency(ies) and Bloom's Level(s)
3. Activity and Answer Key vetted through the VLab Strategic Advisory Committee
    a. Edits made until Activity and Answer Key are finalized
4. The Learning Management System Administration Team (LAT) staff builds and tests the new Activity on the Staging (test) system
    a. LAT staff (and Faculty Liaison as necessary) conduct testing and make adjustments until the Activity works exactly as planned
5. LAT builds and tests the new Activity on live VLab
    a. Testing and adjustments made until the Activity works exactly as planned
    b. LAT informs VLab Manager that Activity is now live on VLab
6. VLab Manager (or designee):
    a. Updates and posts the Curriculum Map (adds new Activity)
    b. Posts the Answer Key to the VLab Instructors Engage community
    c. Posts a new announcement onto the VLab Instructors and Assembly on Education Engage communities