

## **Health Information Technology**

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**The curriculum in this program will be changing. Please contact a program advisor for the most up to-date information.**

**Associate in Applied Science Degree  
(5-6 semesters)**

**Career Cluster:** Health Science

### **At a Glance**

If your interests include high tech, computers, and medicine then why not combine healthcare and technology? Consider a career in health information management. It just may be the thing for you. The Health Information Technician is a skilled professional who analyzes and evaluates highly sensitive data in health records. Skills of the Health Information Technician are varied but include the following: supervising the release of health information, maintaining and utilizing information storage and retrieval systems, compiling various health statistics, and supervising electronic health information management systems. Health information technicians may be employed by any facility that manages patient information, such as a hospital, clinic, physician office, insurance company, or medical research center. Health Information Technicians are trained to also become medical coding specialists. The medical coding specialists perform detailed review of medical records to identify diagnoses and operative procedures. Numeric classification codes are assigned to each diagnosis and procedure using automated or manual methods. Principle classification systems used include the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM), Current Procedural Terminology (CPT), and introductory Info. on ICD-10-CM and PCS.

Health Information professionals play a vital role in making our healthcare system work. They perform the data collection and analysis that doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals need to do their jobs well and are a key part of quality patient care. With experience, the RHIT credentialed individual holds potential for advancement to management positions.

A variety of options for program completion are available on campus and online.

### **Program Description**

The Health Information Technology (HIT) Program at WSCC is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). Only graduates of CAHIIM-accredited programs are eligible to take the national examination to become Registered Health Information Technicians (RHITs). Technicians trained in non-CAHIIM accredited programs or trained on the job are not eligible to take the examination. Wallace State Community College is one of only two CAHIIM-accredited programs in the state of Alabama.

Students have the opportunity to spend many hours in a clinical setting to practice skills obtained in the classroom. Students enrolled in professional practice experience (clinical) courses are assigned hours consistent with day shift. Assignment to the professional practice experience facilities will be at the discretion of program officials, and students are required to travel to different locations for the ‘hands on’ training.

1. Full-time program: A student who has completed all HIT required general education courses may complete the HIT program courses in four semesters. HIT courses, excluding clinicals, may be completed online. Please note that class availability online and on campus depends on the number of students enrolled.
2. Part-time Program: A student who has completed all HIT general education courses may choose to complete the program by taking classes on a part-time basis. The program must be completed within three years following entry into the program.
3. Online Program: A student may schedule HIT online classes in accordance with either the full-time or part-time completion option. The professional practice experience activities must be completed on dayshift at an approved health care facility, not online. HIT students who live within 75 miles of campus must attend a minimum number of on-campus class/lab meetings. Instructors may require online students to take make-up exams on campus. Instructors may also require online course exams to be proctored, according to college policy.

### **Admission Requirements**

Applicants Must:

**Before June 1**, applicants must meet all the requirements listed below to be considered eligible for acceptance into the Health Information Technology program.

1. Submit a WSCC application to the Admissions Office and meet all the general admission requirements for the college.
2. Submit a program application to the Health Information Technology Program Director before June 1. Applications received after June 1 will be considered on a space-available basis only.
3. Complete all HIT required general education courses with a grade of “C” or better before September 1 to be considered for HIT program admission in fall semester.

The following must be sent to the Admission Office and the Health Information Technology Program Director before June 1.

1. Submit ACT scores. The HIT program requires a minimum score of 17.
2. Submit COMPASS test scores. COMPASS must be taken within 3 years of the planned program entry date. The HIT program requires a minimum score of 76 on the Reading examination part of the test. If ACT has been taken within 3 years of program application, scores may be accepted in lieu of COMPASS scores. An ACT Reading subscore of 17 is required in lieu of 76 on the Reading part of the COMPASS. Although a student has successfully completed ENG 101, a COMPASS Reading score of at least 76 is required. If a student has successfully completed Math 116 (or higher Math), a COMPASS score for Math is not required.

3. Submit official college transcripts and official high school transcripts or proof of GED. All applicants must possess a minimum 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale with a grade of “C” or better on all general required pre-HIT courses. Grade point average is calculated using only HIT major and HIT general education courses. Official college transcripts must be submitted to the Admissions Office and copies are acceptable for HIT Program Director. High school transcripts are only required to be sent to the Admissions office.

### **Selection and Notification**

1. The Health Information Technology program admits one class annually in the fall. Students will be admitted to program courses during the fall semester only.
2. Admission to the Health Information Technology program is competitive, and the number of students is limited by the number of faculty and clinical facilities available. Meeting minimal requirements does not guarantee acceptance.
3. Students that meet the application deadline are selected on the basis of ACT score. All factors being equal, completion of HIT 110 with at least a “C” will be the deciding factor for admission to the Health Information Technology program.
4. Program applications will be reviewed for completion of program admission requirements. Students accepted into the HIT program will be notified in writing by the HIT Program Director. The notification will be mailed to the student at the address on the application. Students who are not accepted will also receive written notification. Program acceptance or rejection will not be given over the phone or via email.
5. Students selected must respond, confirming their intent to enroll within ten (10) days of the postmarked date of the acceptance letter. A student who fails to respond will forfeit his/her place in the class.

### **Program Expectations**

Students admitted into the Health Information Technology program are expected to comply with the Health Science Program Regulations and Expectations as published in the Programs of Study section of the Wallace State College Catalog.

Required Competencies:

1. Clinical Classification Systems proficiency (Medical Coding).
2. Reimbursement methodology proficiency (Billing process and procedures).
3. Knowledge of health data structure, content and standards.
4. Healthcare statistics and research skills.
5. Quality management and performance improvement skills.
6. Compliance with healthcare privacy, confidentiality, and legal regulations.
7. Skilled in computer concepts such as healthcare applications and security.
8. Maintenance and monitoring of data storage systems.
9. Application of leadership concepts and techniques, including management functions.

Upon Admission:

1. Students selected for acceptance must attend the mandatory orientation session (or view and listen to the online version if residence is greater than 75 miles from campus). All students must score 100 on the post-orientation exam posted in the HIT Student Center. Failure to do

so before the program established deadline will result in forfeiture of their space in the class, resulting in administrative withdrawal of the student from all HIT classes.

2. Selected students, at the request of the Professional Practice Course instructor (Clinical Coordinator), must submit:
  - Documentation of recent physical exam on the proper program issued form
  - Mantoux (2-step) TB skin test results and proof of required vaccinations and at least the second of three Hepatitis B vaccinations
  - Valid CPR certification - only CPR courses designed to certify health care providers is accepted
  - Copy of current health insurance card (Health insurance coverage is required by some clinical agencies; not having health insurance may limit your placement).
  - Clear background check and drug screen according to college policy.

Failure to submit all required clinical documentation before the program established deadline will result in program dismissal.

3. Selected students must carry accident and malpractice insurance, available through the College at the time of registration for program classes.

### **Progression**

In order to progress in the Health Information Technology program: Students must maintain a grade of “C” (70) or better in all major required Health Information Technology courses. A student will be dismissed from the program if he/she withdraws from, or makes a “D” or “F” in a HIT course. Students selected for admission to the program must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 in HIT required courses. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program. Grade point average is calculated using only HIT major and HIT general education courses.

Graduation requirements must be met within three (3) years following entry into the program. Students who withdraw or are dismissed from the program and wish to be readmitted must reapply the following year and follow procedures and requirements for admission to the HIT program published in the current catalog. Readmission into the program will be allowed one time only. After the second dismissal from any healthcare information program, students are not eligible to apply for HIT, MCC, or MTR programs.

Students who are accepted for readmission are required to repeat certain classes previously completed, such as lecture classes associated with lab classes. Students are required to pass the HIT proficiency exam in the required class HIT 292. If a student does not score at least 70% on this proficiency exam, he/she will fail HIT 292 regardless of other HIT 292 course grades. See HIT Student Handbook and course syllabus for details.

Health Information Technology program faculty may require online course exams to be proctored, according to college policy.

### **Readmission to Program**

Students whose progression through the HIT program is interrupted and who desire to re-enter the program must schedule an appointment with the HIT Program Director to discuss reentry. The student must apply for readmission to the HIT program according to published application

deadlines. Students are only eligible for re-entry within one year from the term of withdrawal or failure. Reinstatement may be denied due to, but not limited to, any of the following circumstances:

1. Failure to possess a GPA of at least 2.5 for all HIT major and HIT general education courses.
2. Space unavailability in a course in which the student wished to be reinstated.
3. Refusal by clinical agencies to accept the student for clinical experiences.
4. Over 12 months have elapsed since the student was enrolled in a HIT course.
5. Student has been dismissed from the program.

### **Admission with Advanced Standing**

Graduates from Wallace State Community College Medical Coding Certificate program are eligible for admission with advanced standing provided that the following criteria are met:

1. The applicant has met all of the requirements for admission to the College and to the HIT program before June 1.
2. All HIT prefix courses must have been completed with a minimum grade of “C” within the last 3 years to be accepted toward degree requirements. This applies only if there are no major changes to the classification system currently required by regulatory agencies, such as a change from ICD-9-CM to ICD-10.

### **Transfer Students**

Students transferring into the Health Information Technology program must meet all requirements for admission to the program. Only with program director’s approval will those equivalent courses taken at other CAHIIM accredited programs within the last three years and passed with a “C” or better be considered for application toward completion of program requirements.

### **Career Path**

The Health Information Technology degree curriculum prepares graduates to work in any setting that health information is generated (physician offices, nursing homes, hospitals, home health care agencies, insurance companies, etc.) This is not a complete list, but graduates of this program may choose to work in any of the following areas:

- Performance Improvement (facilitates quality improvement projects in the facility)
- Insurance and Billing
- Release of Information (Coordinator or Privacy Officer)
- Medical Coding (Coder/DRG Specialist)
- Medical Office (Coordinator or Manager)

Job prospects for graduates are very good. Employment of health information technicians is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through 2014. Entry level annual earnings of health information technicians are \$25,000 - \$30,000. Salaries increase with experience in the field to earnings of more than \$40,000 per year. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics)

The WSCC HIT program classes may be accepted for transfer to accredited programs in Health Information Administration, such as Alabama State University and University Alabama at Birmingham. Please consult STARS transfer guide for the latest information.

## Completion Requirements

### GENERAL REQUIRED COURSES

ORI 101* Orientation to College	1
ENG 101-102 English Composition I & II	6
BIO 201-202** Human Anatomy & Physiology I & II	8
Behavioral Science Elective	3
HUM Humanities and Fine Arts Elective	3
MTH 116 Mathematical Applications	3
CIS 146 Microcomputer Applications	3
	27

\*See ORI 101 information on p. 20.

\*\*BIO 103 is a prerequisite class for these courses.

### HIT MAJOR REQUIRED COURSES

HIT 110 Medical Terminology	3
HIT 115 Pathophysiology & Pharmacology for HIT	4
HIT 130 HIT Classification & Reimbursement	3
HIT 131 Classification Skills Laboratory	1
HIT 134 HIT Legal and Ethical Issues	3
HIT 151 Health Data Content and Structure	3
HIT 152 Skills Development Laboratory I	1
HIT 153 Health Care Delivery Systems	3
HIT 155 Health Care Statistics	2
HIT 160 HIT Clinical Practice I	1
HIT 221 HIT Computer Applications	2
HIT 222 HIT Computer Applications Laboratory	1
HIT 230 Medical Coding Systems I	3
HIT 231 Medical Coding Skills Laboratory I	1
HIT 232 Medical Coding Systems II	3
HIT 233 Medical Coding Skills Laboratory II	1
HIT 235 Medical Coding Systems III	2
HIT 236 Medical Coding Skills Laboratory	1
HIT 254 Organizational Improvement	3
HIT 255 Principles of Supervision in HIT	3
HIT 260 Professional Practice Experience	3
HIT 292 HIT Exam Review	2
	49
TOTAL HOURS	76

**Note:** All courses with the HIT prefix must be completed at WSCC.