Request for Exception to BOR 301.12
Certificate of Applied Science in Health Information Coding
MSU-Great Falls College of Technology

MSU-Great Falls College of Technology (the College) requests an exception to BOR 301.12 for our CAS program in Health Information Coding. The program is out of compliance with the following provision of the policy;

- The College's program exceeds the 45-credit limit stated in the policy. The College's CAS in Health Information Coding (HIC) requires 47 credits. The program curriculum is included in Appendix A.

Rationale(s) for Exception:

1. **Accreditation Requirements.** The curriculum content is dictated by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) in their *Coding Education Program Approval Manual*[1]. A significant component of the approval process is the completion of a gap analysis to identify gaps and/or alignment of the institution's curriculum with the required content areas as mandated by AHIMA. In conducting this analysis, the College's curriculum is in compliance. Removal of any one course or reduction of any content/contact would result in new gaps threatening AHIMA's approval of the program. While some courses have more contact time than required by AHIMA, these courses are shared by other programs at the College and modifications to them would cause a ripple effect in the curricula of these other programs. The program's gap analysis is included in Appendix B.

   Note: It is possible that students could challenge certain courses (e.g. Intro to Computers or Medical Terminology) and not have to take all of the required coursework. However, it is the faculty opinion based on experience that enough students do take these courses and thus it is best to disclose all of them within the curriculum sequence and advisement plan.

2. **Comparability to Other Accredited Programs.** The College's program is the only accredited Health Information Coding program in the state. While other coding programs do exist in Montana, it is worth noting that none of them are approved by AHIMA at this time. In comparison with other AHIMA approved programs in the United States, the College's program is comparable. Appendix C lists all AHIMA approved coding programs in the nation along with their total program credits. Even though many programs appear to be below 45 credits, many of them do not include all or any of related instruction requirements of NWCCU's accreditation standards as these are not a requirement for AHIMA's approval. Explanations of this or other factors impacting the different programs' credit totals are listed in the "Notes" area.

   Without the consideration of the lack related instruction coursework, the average program credits of AHIMA approved programs is 44 credits. When programs without related instruction are removed, the average total is 47.85 credits.

[1] American Health Information Management Association's Coding Education Program Approval Manual is available at http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/internalproject_coding/bok1_035953.doc

APPENDIX A

Health Information Coding Program Curriculum
Certificate of Applied Science

FALL SEMESTER

Course No.	Title	Credits
AH 101	Healthcare Delivery in the US	2
AH 185	Basic Medical Terminology	3
AH 194	Basic Pharmaceutical	1
BIO 127	Anatomy & Physiology I for non-clinical majors	4
CIT 110	Introduction to Computers	3
MATH --**	103 or higher	3-4
		Subtotal 16-17

SPRING SEMESTER

Course No.	Title	Credits
COMM 135	Interpersonal Communication OR	
PSY 101	General Psychology OR	
SOC 111	Introduction to Sociology	3
AH 201	Medical Science	3
ENGL 124	Business and Professional Communication	3
HI 132	Health Data Content & Structure	3
HI 236	ICD Coding	3
HI 237	CPT Coding	3
		Subtotal 18

SUMMER SEMESTER

Course No.	Title	Credits
OO 111	Fund of Health Insurance	4
HI 256	Intermediate ICD Coding	3
HI 257	Intermediate CPT Coding	3
HI 270	Professional Practice Experience	2
		Subtotal 12

TOTAL PROGRAM CREDITS – 47

APPENDIX B

AHIMA Coding Program GAP Analysis

Program Name/School: MSU-GF College of Technology

Length of Program: 3 semesters, Fall, Spring and Summer
Please identify in weeks/months the time typically needed to complete the coding certificate.

Model Curriculum: The column below represents the knowledge cluster components (KCs) of the model coding curriculum. ◆ = Comprehensive Coding Program ◆ = Physician Coding Program	**Contact Hrs Required**	**Your program's Contact Hours**	**Program Equivalent:** Please complete this column. Identify in which course this content is covered, and how many contact hours are devoted TO THIS CONTENT. Where you have combined multiple KCs into a single class you must identify how many hours of instruction are dedicated for each KC. Make your entries in blue font.	**NOTES:** Please use this column if there are comments you wish to provide about the program equivalents. Add your comments in blue font.
Anatomy and Physiology ◆ ◆ • Study of the structure and function of the human body systems • Course needs to cover all body systems; (lab not required)	**45-60**	**60**	**BIO 127 (A&P I)**	**Note: A&P is a foundation course for the coding process and should be taken prior to the coding classes.**
Medical Terminology ◆ ◆ • Spell, define, and pronounce (through supplemental CD tools), medical terms as well as understanding the concepts of root/suffix/prefix word builds. • Common medical terms of major disease processes, diagnostic procedures, laboratory tests, abbreviations, drugs, and treatment modalities.	**30-45**	**45**	**AH 185 Basic Medical Terminology**	**Note: Medical Terminology is a foundation course for the coding process and should be taken prior to the coding classes.**
Pathophysiology ◆ ◆ • Specific disease processes • By human body system • Causes, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.	**30-45**	**45**	**AH 201 Medical Science**	**Note: Pathophysiology (Disease Processes) is a foundation course for the coding process and should be completed prior to the coding classes, or during the first coding class.**
Pharmacotherapy ◆ ◆ • Emphasis is placed on the understanding of the action of drugs such as: absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion of drugs by the body. • Drug classifications • Most commonly prescribed drugs • What is a formulary	**20-30**	**15**	**AH 194 Basic Pharmaceuticals**	

Information Technology ◆ ◆ • **Introduction to Computers** -- Concepts related to hardware and software, the impact of computers on society and computer systems/data communications networks. • **Computer Software Applications in Healthcare** - Overview of commonly available software tools used in health care, including introduction to encoding tools and computer assisted coding software used in health care data processing today. Introduction to the electronic health record. (Recommend 45 contact hours)	**30 - 45**	**45** **45**	**CIT 110: Intro to Computers** **HI 236, HI 237, HI 256, Hi 257** **Basic ICD, CPT; Intermediate ICD; CPT**	**Note:** Intro to Computers may be waived through a pretesting placement process – for example testing level of competence of prior knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite, or else, a beginning computer course is required. **NOTE: The intent of the Computer software applications in healthcare knowledge cluster is t**o introduce the concepts of computer technology related to healthcare and the tools and techniques for collecting, storing and retrieving healthcare data. Taking a keyboard course, or a standard intro to computers course will not satisfy this KC.
Introduction to Health Information Management & Healthcare Data Content and Structure ◆ ◆ • Emphasis is placed on content and components of the health record including: • Content of the health record • Documentation requirements • Primary vs. secondary records • Legal/ethics issues • Privacy, confidentiality and computer security • HIPAA requirements • Release of information • Code of Ethics of the AHIMA • Standards of Ethical Coding of the AHIMA	**45-60**	**45**	**HI 132 Health Data Content and Structure**	
Healthcare Delivery Systems & Computer Applications in Healthcare (eHIM) ◆ • A thorough understanding of the types and levels of Healthcare Delivery Systems in the U.S., and of the governing bodies that regulate the HIM processes, and understanding the eHIM environment: • Organization of healthcare delivery • Accreditation standards • Licensure/regulatory agencies • Identify the issues involving the migration from a paper-based HIM to an electronic HIM • The student should be aware of the major acute care environment vendors and their system strengths. • Knowledge of different types of encoder systems, and the effect of natural language processing on the coding process.	**30-60**	30	AH 101 Healthcare Delivery	NOTE: As a separate course, this is optional for Physician Coding Programs, but required for the Comprehensive Coding Programs. The fundamental KCs in this domain should be introduced to the Physician Coding Program student in their Medical Office Procedures course with special emphasis on the agencies and practices that affect physician coding and billing issues.
Basic Diagnosis Coding Systems ◆ ◆ Detailed Instruction in:	45-60	45	HI 236 ICD Coding	Note: Coding courses must include hands-on experience to computerized encoding systems – local and distance students must

• Student will learn about the International Classification of Diseases ICD-9-CM, how to code, and guidelines for usage. • Volumes I, II, and III				have equal access to the encoding application. The encoder may be introduced in the basic or advanced coding coursework, or both. Explain how your program uses encoders:
Basic Procedure Coding Systems ◆ ◆ • Student will focus on Basic HCPCS coding, with a focus on CPT-4 coding (Anesthesia, E&M, Surgical, Pathology/Laboratory, Radiology and Medicine) and HCPS II codes.	45-60	45	HI 237 CPT Coding	Note: Students must attain a minimum of 45 hours of diagnosis training, and an additional 45 hours of procedure training. Programs that combine the diagnosis and procedure KCs into a single basic coding course should have a minimum of 90 hours of instruction.
Intermediate (or Advanced) Diagnosis Coding ◆ ◆ • Having attained basic coding skills, this course focuses on case studies using more complex code assignments to determine the correct diagnoses. Students should be exposed to medical records and learn how to interpret actual charts. • Student should be introduced to diagnostic based prospective payment groupers: DRG, APR-DRG, & RUGS. • An introduction to International Classification of Diseases ICD-10-CM, and other diagnosis coding systems (DSM-IV, ICD-0) • Introduction to Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine (SNOMED) – Includes a brief overview of its role in the health care delivery system as the basis for an electronic health record ,	45-60	45	HI 256 Intermediate ICD Coding	Note: Students must attain a minimum of 45 hours of intermediate/advanced diagnosis training, and an additional 45 hours of intermediate/advanced procedure training. Programs that combine the diagnosis and procedure KCs into a single intermediate/advanced coding course should have a minimum of 90 hours of instruction. Physician programs will emphasize physician based coding issues while comprehensive programs will emphasize acute care and ambulatory setting coding. Note: Coding courses must include hands-on experience to computerized encoding systems – local and distance students must have equal access to the encoding application. The encoder may be introduced in the basic or advanced coding coursework, or both. Explain how your program uses encoders
Intermediate (or Advanced) Procedure Coding ◆ ◆ • Using case studies, students should practice more complex procedure code assignments with ICD-9-CM and CPT-4.. • Student should be introduced to procedure based payment systems: RBRVS, E&M codes, and APC assignments and the impact coding and sequencing has on reimbursement.	45-60	45	HI 257 Intermediate CPT Coding	Note: Students must attain a minimum of 45 hours of intermediate/advanced diagnosis training, and an additional 45 hours of intermediate/advanced procedure training. Programs that combine the diagnosis and procedure KCs into a single intermediate/advanced coding course should have a minimum of 90 hours of instruction. Physician programs will emphasize physician based coding issues while comprehensive programs will emphasize acute care and ambulatory setting coding.

Reimbursement Methodologies ◆ • Prospective payment system • Diagnosis Related Groups • Ambulatory Payment Classifications • ASC Groups • Resource Based Relative Value Scale • Third party payers • Billing and insurance procedures • Explanation of benefits • Quality Improvement Organizations (QIO) and their role in the payment process • Charge master description and maintenance • Managed care/capitation • Compliance issues • Health plan claims processing and coding • Billing for healthcare services using codes • Auditing and monitoring the coding process for regulatory compliance	30-45	30	OO 111 Fundamentals of Health Insurance	NOTE: As a separate course, this is optional for Physician Coding Programs, but required for the Comprehensive Coding Programs. The fundamental KCs in this domain should be introduced to the Physician Coding Program student in their Medical Office Procedures course with special emphasis on the reimbursement issues that directly affect physician coding and billing. This course is also used in the College's Medical Billing, Medical Assistant, and Medical Transcription programs. Therefore some of the content is specifically geared towards those programs/professions thus increasing the total contact hours and credits of the class.
Medical Office Procedures ◆ Provide a working knowledge of concepts, processes and procedures encountered in the physician office management setting, to include: physician payment systems, scheduling, End of Month Reporting, insurance processes, EOB explanation, series billing, filing appeals, and auditing and monitoring of coding for regulatory compliance.	45-60	30	OO 111 Fundamentals of Health Insurance	NOTE: Optional for Comprehensive Coding Programs but required for Physician Coding Programs. It is in this course the Physician Coding Program student covers the Reimbursement Methodology and the Healthcare Delivery System/Computer Applications in Healthcare knowledge clusters (KCs) from the perspective of physician practice. In this course, the student must have an opportunity to experience hands-on learning with a computerized physician office application. Local and distance students must have equal access to the practice management application.
Professional Practice **Experience/Practicum/Internship** **(40 - 60 dedicated hours)** ◆ ◆ • **Field Based PPE**: To provide the student with coding practice experiences in a hospital, physician's office, clinic or other healthcare setting with directed projects common to a clinical coding specialist on the job. • **Virtual PPE:** Review presentations from coding specialist guest speakers (CCS, CCS-P) either pre-recorded or live. Practicum hours to focus on building speed and accuracy using paper and scanned medical records.	40-60	30	HI 270 Professional Practice Experience (80 hours of clinical experience)	Note: Lab hours that focus on coding workbook assignments in the basic and intermediate coding courses do not satisfy the virtual PPE practicum hours. Students should gain experience coding a variety of record types including: acute care, ambulatory surgery, emergency records, and physician office. Practicum hours should be based on analysis of actual medical records with a learning focus on coding accuracy and speed.
Contact Hours:	**525-750**	**600**		Total contact hours.

APPENDIX C

AHIMA Approved Coding Certificate Programs

Accredited Program Averages	
Total Credits: 44	Notes: Average of programs including related instruction = 47.85 credits
Alexandria Technical College	
Total Credits: 50	Notes:
Anoka Technical College	
Total Credits: 42	Notes:
Camden County College	
Total Credits: 36	Notes: does not include communication, human relation, or computation coursework
College of Lake County	
Total Credits: 55	Notes:
Community College of Southern Nevada	
Total Credits: 42	Notes: Uses embedded Computation and Human relations
Dakota State University	
Total Credits: 58	Notes: includes 24 credits of Gen Ed
Davenport University	
Total Credits: 49	Notes: Does not include a Human Relations course
Gwynedd-Mercy College	
Total Credits: 41	Notes: Pre-reqs include proficiency in verbal/oral skills, keyboarding, and computer science – may require additional coursework. No Computation, Communication, or Human Relations.
Herzing College	
Total Credits: 45	Notes:
Loma Linda University	
Total Credits: 32	Notes: Does not include pre-reqs of *Human anatomy and physiology (5), Medical terminology (2), Essentials of human diseases (3), Introduction to computer applications (2)*. No related instruction included.
Lone Star College-North Harris	
Total Credits: 49	Notes: One pre-req semester. Program entrance requires college-level reading and writing readiness skill; completion of ENGL 0305 & ENGL 0307 or higher (3 for higher course); and completion of MATH 0306 or higher (3) = 6 extra credits Combined-49 cr
Montana State University-College of Technology	
Total Credits: 47	Notes:
Moraine Valley Community College	
Total Credits: 40	Notes: Required Gen Eds (Comp 1, Speech, A&P, Math for AH, HR in organizations, & a soc. Class)– 18 credits for a total of 40 program credits
National Park Community College at Hot Springs	
Total Credits: 50	Notes: Includes 15 credits of general education coursework.

North Dakota State College of Science	
Total Credits: 43	Notes: No Communication, Computation or Human Relation coursework.
Palm Beach Community College	
Total Credits:	Notes: Program in transition from non-credit to credit
Paris Junior College	
Total Credits: 35	Notes: No Communication, Computation or Human Relations coursework.
Phoenix College	
Total Credits: 39.5	Notes: No Communication, Computation or Human Relations coursework (requires ENGL placement scores).
Rasmussen College	
Total Credits: 57.7	Notes: With Math and English foundational courses (8) totals 79 quarter credits or 57.7 semester credits.
Santa Barbara City College	
Total Credits: 33	Notes: No Communication, Computation or Human Relations coursework.
Santa Fe Community College	
Total Credits: 37	Notes: Could not find a curriculum description.
Seminole Community College-Altamonte	
Total Credits: 39	Notes: No Communication, Computation or Human Relations coursework.
Shoreline Community College	
Total Credits: 48	Notes: 72 quarter credits = 48 semester credits
South Suburban College	
Total Credits: 47	Notes: ENGL (3 credits) and MATH (3 credits) required for entrance into the program for total of 47 credits.
The Community College of Baltimore County	
Total Credits: 43	Notes: No Computation or Human Relations coursework.
Trident Technical College-MRC	
Total Credits: 50	Notes: Includes 13 credits of pre-reqs in one semester.
Tulsa Community College	
Total Credits: 37	Notes: