



Dear Prospective Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate Program. Enclosed you will find a Fast Facts about the Cancer Registry Certification Program. The document answers the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the Cancer Registry profession and our program.

After reading this document you should meet with an academic counselor to plan your prerequisite course schedule. If you meet all of the prerequisite objectives, then you can contact the program manager directly.

Applications which are submitted prior to enrollment in the final Health Information Management Technology courses will not be considered, so be sure you are enrolled in the final HIMT program required course.

If you have any questions or are unsure how to complete the online application, please contact the HEALTH CAREER ENROLLMENT CENTER at 216-987-4247 or a Tri-C academic counselor at 216-987-4900.

Again, thank you for your interest in Cuyahoga Community College and the Cancer Registrar Post-Degree Certificate Program

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Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program

## **FAST FACTS and FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **CANCER REGISTRAR POST DEGREE CERTIFICATE**

This program is designed for those interested in becoming a Certified Cancer Registrar (CTR). Cancer registrars are data information specialists that capture a complete history, diagnosis, treatment, and health status for every cancer patient in the United States. The data provides essential information to researchers, healthcare providers, and public health officials to better monitor and advance cancer treatments, conduct research, and improve cancer prevention and screening programs. Registrars work closely with physicians, administrators, researchers, and health care planners to provide support for cancer program development, ensure compliance of reporting standards, and serve as a valuable resource for cancer information with the ultimate goal of preventing and controlling cancer.

#### **1. How do I become Certified Cancer Registrar?**

- a) The first step begins with formal education. Students must have an Associate Degree or higher in an allied health sciences career with college credit that included Medical Terminology, Anatomy and Physiology I and II, and Pathophysiology courses.
  - ▪ Students who have graduated from any Health Information Management degree program and hold current credentials as a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA), Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT), or the Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) are perfectly suited to become cancer registrars.
- b) Students who have earned a college degree that *did not* include Medical Terminology, Anatomy and Physiology I and II, or Pathophysiology courses will need to complete these prerequisites courses prior to applying for the cancer registrar program. These courses cannot be more than five (5) years old.
- c) Students then complete *either* a post degree certificate program for Cancer Registrars or earn an associate of applied science degree for Cancer Registrars. The formal education programs must be accredited by the National Cancer Registrar's Association (NCRA).
  - ▪ Tri-C's Post Degree Certificate program for Cancer Registrars is accredited by the National Cancer Registrar's Association.
- d) Students who successfully complete the post degree certificate program for Cancer Registrars are then eligible to sit for the national Certified Tumor Registrar examination to earn the credentials CTR. The examination is administered by the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA)

#### **2. What if my health care degree is really old? Can I still apply to the Cancer Registrar program?**

If a student is currently working in the field of medicine, the earned degree does not expire. It may be recommended that the student take a refresher course in Anatomy and Physiology and/or Pathophysiology just so the student is current on current terminology and refreshed in body systems outside of their daily scope of practice.

#### **3. Where does a Cancer Registrar find employment?**

Cancer registry professionals are needed in hospital-based and central cancer registries throughout the United States. In addition to managing and reporting cancer data, registrars serve in multiple other professional activities.

Since the passage of the Cancer Registries Amendment Act in 1992, the number of central cancer registries has increased dramatically and health care facilities and physicians are required to report their cancer cases. Due to limited educational opportunities, there are not enough cancer registry professionals available to fill positions in this rapidly growing field.

#### **4. How long is the program?**

The program is delivered over the fall, spring and summer semesters consecutively. It takes one full year to complete once the student begins the program courses.

#### **5. Briefly describe the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate program.**

The Cancer Registrar program is designed to accommodate students who work full time by delivering classes online or during the evenings.

## 6. Is financial aid available?

Generally, post degree certificate programs are not eligible for Federal Aid such as Pell Grants. However, students are encouraged to talk to the financial aid office to inquire about other options for financial aid and student loans.

## 7. Where can I obtain additional information regarding the profession?

- Check the Tri-C campus resource center or your neighborhood library for professional journals, directories and trade publications in the specific field you are exploring.
- Talk to people who work in the Cancer Registry field. (Do they enjoy their jobs? If given a chance would they do it over again?)
- Call companies that employ people in the field you are researching. Let them know you are only seeking information and advice.
  - ❖ Develop and take along a list of questions.
  - ❖ After each interview, ask if there is anyone else they would recommend as an informational resource.
- Do a job search on an internet search engine like Monster.com or Indeed.com
- Do some additional internet research about the actual profession:
  - ❖ National Cancer Registrar's Association <http://www.ncra-usa.org>
  - ❖ American Health Information Management Association <http://www.ahima.org>

## 8. How do I apply or begin taking courses in the Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program?

- ❖ Make an appointment with a Tri-C academic counselor. The counselor will discuss your career goals with you and then help you plan a program of related courses that will guide you toward your career in cancer registry. A Tri-C counselor can give specific information about required pre-admission courses, course substitution, course transfers, etc.
- ❖ Submit a Health Careers Enrollment Application form to the Health Careers Enrollment Center if you meet the above criteria for application.
  - When you are enrolled in the final pre-admission course(s), you may submit an application for admission to the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate program.
  - Applications which are submitted prior to enrollment in the final required prerequisite admission course will not be considered, so be sure you are enrolled in the final required prerequisite course for consideration for admission to the next available Cancer Registrar cohort.
- ❖ The Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program uses a "rolling admission" process for admittance into the program. After a student has met all the admission requirements and submitted his/her online application, a letter of acceptance will be emailed to the student informing the student of the next available opening. A new class of cancer registrar students begins every fall semester. If the application is incomplete it will not be considered. Students must achieve or complete the following before applying to the program:
  - a) Submission of a completed Cuyahoga Community College Admissions Application
  - b) Proof of an earned associate degree (or higher) in a health care related field by submission of official transcripts from all colleges or universities attended. Your application will not be considered complete until all external transcripts have been evaluated by the Tri-C Registrars Office which may take 4-6 weeks once received.
  - c) Submission of any Substitution and Waiver forms for courses approved by HIMT program manager; or submit a note stating that a Substitution/Waiver has been requested and is pending.
  - d) Upon acceptance to the program and prior to clinical practice, the student will be required to submit evidence of good health and complete a criminal background check.
- ❖ The Cancer Registrar program courses are offered in a modular format. The courses are offered in sequential order one immediately following the other one time each year. If a student cannot complete the sequence they will have to wait one full year until the course is offered again in order to complete the certificate program.

- e) **Non-native English speaking applicants** must demonstrate competence in verbal, written and oral communications skills. Applicants whose native language is not English must take the TOEFL exam at <http://www.toefl.org> and score at least a 21 in Reading and Listening, a 23 in Writing, and a 25 in Speaking. (see next page for more information)

**WRITTEN / VERBAL ENGLISH COMMUNICATION / COMPREHENSION SKILLS**

According to the operating procedures of the Health Careers programs, students in health careers programs must become competent in interpersonal and communication skills to effectively interact with diverse populations. The ability to communicate in English both verbally and in writing is basic to the provision of allied health services in order to perform services in a safe and effective manner.

Non-native English speaking applicants must demonstrate competence in verbal, written and oral communications skills. Therefore,

1. Students whose native language is not English must take and pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) <http://www.toefl.org> and receive the minimum scores of : Reading 21, Listening, 21, Writing 23, and Speaking 25.
  2. If problems with English communication and/or comprehension skills are identified by the program's instructional staff at any time during the program, the student will be required to take the TOEFL
  3. If a student scores below the minimum expected score on the TOEFL, the student may be required to take a leave of absence (maximum 12 calendar months) in order to improve their English communication skills. The specific course work required will be determined by the Tri-C ESL Coordinator in collaboration with the Health Careers Program Manager.
  4. All ESL course work will have to be completed with a minimum grade of B or higher.
  5. At the completion of the assigned ESL work, the student will be required to repeat the TOEFL evaluation test(s) and achieve the expected minimum score(s) stated in item #1 in this section. Failure of the student to achieve the expected score(s) on the repeat TOEFL test may result in dismissal from the HIMT program
  6. Students experiencing English communication and/or comprehension problems will not be permitted to start their clinical practice experience until he/she achieves the expected scores as outlined in #1 of this section
  7. Arrangements and costs incurred for the TOEFL tests will be the responsibility of the student/applicant.
- f) All information should be sent to:
- The Health Careers Enrollment Center Cuyahoga  
Community College  
2900 Community College Avenue Cleveland,  
Ohio 44115  
Attn: Cancer Registrar Program
- ❖ When these requirements are met and verified, the student's information and file will be forwarded to the HIMT/CTR Program Manager for further evaluation. A letter will be emailed to the student informing him/her of his/her status.

**9. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Most healthcare facilities require criminal background checks for their employees. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations Hospital Accreditation Standards Manual requires hospitals to implement "a process to ensure that a person's qualifications are consistent with his/her job responsibilities." This standard "applies to staff, students and volunteers," and it further states that the hospital is responsible for verifying "the following according to law, regulation or hospital policy: information on criminal background." As such, Cuyahoga Community College students who participate in professional practice experiences in the Cancer Registry Certificate program may be required to undergo a criminal background check prior to placement at the facility. In addition, the facility may require students to undergo a physical examination (on-site at the facility or by the student's primary care provider) prior to beginning the professional practice experience that may include drug screening. Students may be required to incur costs associated with the criminal background check and/or the drug screening

## 10. **DRUG TESTING**

Students may be required to undergo drug testing prior to starting a clinical experience. The student is responsible for the cost of this testing. The type of testing needed, time restrictions and the cost of the testing will be dependent on the clinical site. Test results will be sent to Clinical Site Coordinator, Healthcare Career Initiatives at Cuyahoga Community College and they will be kept confidential.

If a student fails a drug test, Cuyahoga Community College is under no obligation to place a student at another clinical site. It is the student's responsibility to provide proper documentation to the Clinical Site Coordinator, Healthcare Career Initiatives if they failed the test due to justifiable drug use.

A student may not be able to complete the health career program if they cannot be placed in a clinical site due a failed drug test.

## 11. **PASS/NO PASS GRADE OPTION**

Students can elect up to 12 credits taken Pass/No Pass (P/NP) to fulfill degree requirements at Tri-C. **However, courses used as pre-requisites or core courses for the Health Information Management Technology Program(s) must have a traditional letter grade.** This means that all courses within the HIMT degree sequence, Medical Billing Specialist program, Cancer Registrar program, or the Health Unit Coordinator programs must have a letter grade including the general education courses required for graduation.

## 12. **If I have additional questions, who may I contact?**

If students have any questions or are unsure how to complete the online application, please contact the HEALTH CAREER ENROLLMENT CENTER at 216-987-4247 or a Tri-C academic counselor at 216-987-4900.

If after reading this entire FAQ document a student still has unanswered questions they may also contact Kathy Loflin, RHIA, the Program Manager for Cancer Registrar program at 216.987.4456 or by email at [Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu](mailto:Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu).

## Curriculum for Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate:

Admission requirements: minimum of an Associate Degree from an ACE accredited College that includes college credit in:

MA-1010 Intro to Medical Terminology (or MA-1020 and MA-2010)

BIO-2331 A&P I

BIO-2341 A&P II

BIO-2600 Pathophysiology

ENG-1010

MATH-1000 level or higher

- These courses must all have a minimum of a C grade. Graduates of an accredited HIMT degree program are best suited for this certificate. Students who do not have a degree that includes the above courses must complete the courses before applying for the CTR program.

### **FALL SEMESTER :**

HIM-2500 Intro to Cancer Registry Structure and Management 3 credits  
Course must include topics of Cancer Registration, Legal and Ethical Issues and Standards, Registry Organization, Types of Registries (central and hospitals), Cancer Registry Management, and Standard Setters (COC, SEER, NPCR)

HIM-2510...Cancer Registry Operations 3 Credits  
Course to include topics related to Cancer Case Ascertainment and Case Finding; Disease Registry Files; General Principles of Abstracting and Data Set Identification; Registry Standards and Networking; Commission on Cancer (COC); Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program; National Program of Cancer Registries –Cancer Surveillance System (NPCR-CSS); and Registry Standards for Approved Cancer Programs.

HIM-2520....Cancer Disease Coding and Staging 3 Credits  
Cancer and its Natural Disease Course. Coding Systems: ICD-0-3 (International Classification of Diseases-Oncology-3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and MP/H (Multiple-Primary Histology coding rules; Coding Diagnosis and Sequencing. Evaluating Extent of Disease. Cancer Staging. American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) staging system. Summary Staging. Collaborative Staging Data Collection System Coding Instructions (part 1 and part 2).

### **SPRING SEMESTER:**

HIM-2530....Oncology Treatment, and Coding 3 Credits  
Treatment and management of cancerous diseases. Surgery and surgical coding. Radiation and radiation coding. Chemotherapy and chemotherapy coding. Immunotherapy and coding. Hormones and hormonal codes. Alternative, palliative and experimental treatments. Other treatment coding. Clinical Trials. Coding and monitoring.

HIM-2540....Abstracting Principles and Methodologies 3 Credits  
Components of patient health records. Structure and content of source documents. Abstracting principles. Abstracting patient health record information.

HIM-2550....Database Analytics, Data Quality and Tracking 3 Credits  
Policies and procedures for Cancer Program Standards including the patient follow-up process. Managing follow-up files. Data quality and database management. Gathering, manipulating, storing, retrieving and classifying recorded information. Monitoring statistics and epidemiology factors.

### **SUMMER SEMESTER:**

HIM-2560....Oncology Databases 3 Credits  
Investigating and exploring the coding rules in the Multiple Primary Histology Database and the Hematopoietic Database. Exploration of hematopoietic and lymphoid neoplasms.

HIM-2870...Field Experience for Cancer Registrars 1 Credit  
160 hours in direct clinical practice at a Cancer Registry site that will include: Data collection and abstracting using ICD-0-3 coding; Staging cancer (CS, AJCC TNM, SEER Summary); treatments; case follow-up; Cancer Committee activities; reporting; quality control and management studies; Case-finding; Cancer Conference; HIPAA; Central Registry Operations; and Electronic Health Record exposure.