



Program Handbook 2020/2021

Medical Coding Certificate Program

2221 Madison Avenue
Toledo, Ohio 43604

419.251.1313
888.80.MERCY
www.mercycollege.edu

The purpose of this handbook is to familiarize the student with the policies of the program, so as to give direction to the student throughout their course of study

HANDBOOK POLICY/RIGHTS RESERVED

The Mercy College of Ohio Medical Coding Certificate Handbook is published by the Mercy College of Ohio Medical Coding Certificate Program and is the Medical Coding Certificate program's official notification of its policies, procedures and standards of conduct applicable to students. Each student is responsible for knowledge of the policies, procedures and standards of conduct described in the Handbook; enrollment is considered acceptance of all conditions discussed in this Handbook. However, the provisions of this Handbook do not constitute a contract between any student and Mercy College of Ohio.

The College reserves the right to change any of the policies, procedures and standards of conduct at any time as may be necessary in the interest of the College. The College also reserves the right to modify or discontinue any of the services, programs or activities described in this Handbook. If a material revision to a policy, procedure or standard of conduct is made and becomes effective during the academic year, students will be notified of such and will be expected to abide by the updated terms. Questions regarding this Handbook should be directed to the Program Director.

Students are expected to be familiar with all the material contained in the Medical Coding Certificate Program handbook and the MCC Resource Center, in addition to relevant policies and procedures in the College catalog and on the College website.

WELCOME

Welcome to the Medical Coding Certificate Program! We are glad you have made the decision to take advantage of the excellent educational opportunities available at Mercy College of Ohio. During your time here, we will be working closely with you to develop the knowledge base and the skills needed to work both independently and as an important member of the healthcare team.

Our faculty and staff are dedicated to your success and pride themselves on offering personal attention and support. We encourage you to contact our faculty and use the College resources if you need additional information or assistance.

MEDICAL CODING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Medical Coding Certificate Program prepares students to work as part of the healthcare team as integral members in the health information industry. Medical coders are responsible for selecting the appropriate diagnostic and procedural codes of various medical services for data analysis and reimbursement.

The program includes didactic and simulated laboratory components designed to educate students for entry into professional practice as medical coders and prepare them for the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) exam through the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA).

The Medical Coding certificate program is offered over three semesters. Program content includes several courses that are part of the Associate of Applied Science degree program in Health Information Technology (HIT). The credit certificate program in Medical Coding allows students to seamlessly transition into the Associate degree program in HIT.

PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

To provide an educational experience which includes the professional and technical skills necessary for entry-level positions in the field of medical coding.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Consistent with the College mission statement, the philosophy of the Medical Coding program is to provide a certificate-level education based on Christian value. It is a belief that the education of medical coders is responsive to national and community needs.

Course goals and objectives are based on the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) standards. The goal is to prepare competent practitioners who can function in a rapidly changing healthcare environment as well as pass the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) exam.

Education is a continual process whereby learners develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes resulting in cognitive, affective, and psychological changes. The faculty facilitates the teaching/learning process through the sequential presentation of concepts, theories, and experimental activities within an environment that promotes mutual trust, critical thinking, and self-development.

CIVIL RIGHTS/NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Mercy College of Ohio is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the bases of race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, religion, pregnancy, genetic information, and any other legally protected class in admissions and educational programs, services and activities, in accord with applicable federal and state law.

Go to <https://mercycollege.edu/about/compliance-consumer-information> for more information.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Mercy College of Ohio strives to be an inclusive environment in which faculty, staff, students and the greater community are respected and embraced regardless of variations in thoughts, experiences, values and traditions.

TITLE IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

The College’s Title IX policy also addresses the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Both SaVE and VAWA specifically address sexual violence in the form of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. They expand upon Title IX and provide guidance for addressing issues beyond gender discrimination by the College.

In accordance with the Education Amendments of 1972, 34 CFR Part 106, Mercy College of Ohio has designated a Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Title IX Coordinator (Youngstown location) to ensure compliance regarding sex, gender, or sexual orientation discrimination of any type. *Discrimination on the basis of sex can include pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions.*

PLEASE DIRECT QUESTIONS/CONCERNS TO:

Leslie Erwin, Title IX Coordinator
419.251.1710
Leslie.erwin@mercycollege.edu
titleIX@mercycollege.edu

Betsy Cardwell, Deputy Title IX Coordinator
330.480.2170
Elizabeth.Cardwell@mercycollege.edu

Go to <https://mercycollege.edu/student-affairs/title-ix> for more information

COLLEGE CATALOG

In addition to this reference tool, the Undergraduate College Catalog is an important resource during your time here at Mercy College. A PDF version of the College Catalog is available on the College's website for download: www.mercycollege.edu/catalog

COURSE DELIVERY

All courses are delivered online. Due to program and field of study requirements, prospective students are expected to demonstrate computer and keyboarding proficiency.

As defined in the College Catalog under the heading "Types of Course Delivery Methods", the following instructional delivery methods may be implemented, as determined by course faculty, to reach course objectives for course requirements including but not limited to clinical, laboratory, practicum, and other course requirements: Face to Face, Web-Enhanced (also web-facilitated), Blended (also hybrid), Online, and/or Accelerated.

Computer and technical requirements, including access to specific browsers, may vary based upon individual software applications (AHIMAs Virtual Lab, etc.). It is the students' responsibility to access and use all software applications to complete all assignments, activities, and simulations throughout the program.

PROCTORED TESTING

A proctored exam is one that is overseen by an impartial individual (called a proctor) who monitors or supervises a student while he or she is taking an exam. The proctor ensures the security and integrity of the exam process.

Proctored testing will be required at only a few select points during the entire program. Students will be able to use proctors within their own local community and will not be required to be on campus for testing.

Mercy College strongly believes proctored testing safeguards the integrity of your degree and follows best practices in distance learning. Your instructor will indicate when a proctored test is required via the syllabus, course announcements or email. The Testing Center staff and your instructor will assist you with the process and requirements of your proctored test. Please be advised that some proctoring sites may charge a fee.

CHANGE OF NAME/ADDRESS

Any change in name, local address, permanent address (if different from the local address) or telephone number should be reported to the Program Director and the Student Records' Office promptly.

RESIDENCE STATUS

The MCC program is currently authorized in designated states. If you move to an unauthorized state, you may no longer be permitted to continue your studies at Mercy College. State law can change at any point. Please contact the Program Director immediately if you plan to move out of state.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mercy College of Ohio has implemented a Hard Waiver Insurance Program that is mandatory for students taking 6 (six) or more credit hours. In order to hard waiver out of the insurance program, students must have health insurance that meets the basic minimum requirements covered under the College's plan. Students taking 6 (six) or more credit hours will be automatically billed for the health insurance unless the student has completed and submitted the hard waiver. Students can do this by logging into their *My Mercy* account and clicking on the student insurance link.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) is the professional organization for those who are interested in the health information field (including medical coding). All Mercy College Medical Coding Certificate students are required to become student members of AHIMA in addition to the students' local chapter (ex. NWOHIMA), if available, during their first semester in the program. It is the students' responsibility to insure continuity of membership throughout the program as access to AHIMA's website (members-only content) may be required for course assignments.

CERTIFIED CODING ASSOCIATE

Upon successful completion of the program, graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination offered by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) to become credentialed as a certified Coding Associate (CCA). This examination is offered electronically at testing locations throughout the United States.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Upon admission to the Medical Coding Certificate (MCC) Program, each student is assigned to an Academic Advisor. Students are encouraged to meet with the academic advisor each semester prior to registering for courses.

It is ultimately the student's responsibility to carefully follow the MCC Program of Study. Most program courses are offered only once per year, therefore, if a course is dropped, or a pre-requisite course is not taken in sequence, graduation can be delayed by one year.

If any program course is dropped, the Program Director or assigned academic advisor should be notified immediately (preferably prior to dropping a course) via e-mail or other communication by the student. Information on how to add or drop a course can be found on the Mercy College website/College Catalog.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE

All Medical Coding Certificate students are encouraged to become involved with Mercy College of Ohio, the MCC program, and professional organizations.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Most medical coders work in hospitals or physicians' offices. Others work in nursing care facilities or for third party payers. Medical coders typically work at desks or in offices and may spend many hours in front of computer monitors.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

AT THE COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM, THE GRADUATE WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Apply diagnostic and procedural codes and groupings per current guidelines and evaluate for accuracy.
- Apply legal policies, regulations, principles and standards for the control, disclosure, retention, and destruction of protected health information.
- Analyze, compile, and report healthcare data for statistical, planning, research, and health information exchange purposes.
- Apply policies and procedures for the use of data required in healthcare reimbursement and the revenue cycle management processes
- Apply policies, procedures, and processes as they relate to the collection, maintenance, appropriateness, integrity and presentation of health data.
- Demonstrate evidence of knowledge in the supporting content areas (pathophysiology, pharmacology, anatomy and physiology, and medical terminology).

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS PLAN

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES ARE ASSESSED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. Like all of the academic programs offered by Mercy College, the Medical Coding Certificate program participates in the Mercy College institutional assessment and assessment of student learning outcomes plans.
2. The Program Advisory Committee is involved with the program planning, evaluation, and improvement.
3. Students complete evaluations of the course and the professor at the end of each semester.
4. Students complete evaluations of the course learning objectives at the end of each semester.
5. Graduates are asked to complete a Mercy College Graduate/Alumni Survey.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The program includes lecture and simulated laboratory components specifically designed to prepare students for entry into professional practice as medical coders. Those with medical coding knowledge are employed in a variety of healthcare-related settings, including hospitals, clinics, physician offices, and third-party payers.

GRADING POLICY

The grading scale used in Health Information Technology/Medical Coding Certificate Program courses* is as follows:

- 93-100% - A
- 85-92% - B
- 78-84% - C
- 70-77% - D
- 69% and below – F

This grading scale is used by all courses with the “HIT” course number prefix. Please refer to course-specific syllabi as grading scales in other courses may vary.

Missed assignments, discussion board posts, quizzes, exams, etc. will result in a grade of zero for the activity and can significantly lower the overall grade for the course. See individual course syllabi for grading policies. Medical Coding Certificate students must earn a grade of “C” or higher in all courses within the program.

PROGRAM RETENTION CRITERIA/STANDARDS OF PROGRESS

ONCE ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM THE STUDENT IS REQUIRED TO:

1. Maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA);
2. Abide by all rules and regulations of the college and the program.
3. Earn a “C” grade, or higher, in all program courses. Any grade lower than a “C” is considered a failure and must be repeated. Students who fail a professional course or withdraw from a professional course failing may repeat the course one time. Students must receive permission from the Dean to repeat a course a second time. If a student should fail two core program courses, the student may be dismissed from the program. It is the expectation that MCC students should be maintaining grades far higher than the minimum requirements if they expect to be successful in passing the CCA examination.

4. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the field, it is the expectation that students will complete the program within 2 years of taking HIT 114. Students must receive permission from the Program Director to extend their program enrollment beyond 2 years. Core courses older than three years may have to be repeated.

5. Appeals processes for program and academic dismissal are found in the Mercy College of Ohio Catalog.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Please refer to the College Catalog for details of the Student Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures. The faculty will strive to ensure your success at Mercy College. However, your success will depend greatly on your commitment to and participation in the professional online learning community designed to maximize your learning experience. Adhering to the following guidelines will help ensure your own success as well as enrich the learning environment for your colleagues.

STUDENTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO:

- Contribute to the professional learning community through substantial discussion through the threaded or video discussions associated to online course.
- Complete all assignments on time.
- Make every effort to participate in all activities each module presents in each course.
- Notify the instructor as soon as possible in cases of absence from class.

- Communicate with instructor immediately if they encounter difficulties in completing their assignments.
- Cooperate with fellow students, faculty and staff at Mercy College.
- Seek clarification from the instructor when content, guidelines, or expectations are unclear.

It is the student's responsibility to stay on track with all assignments and weekly modules. In addition, it is important to remember that the professors are not available 24/7. Please see course syllabi for the professor's communication policy.

Students are asked to plan their time appropriately for assignment due dates and have contingencies for alternate computers should there be a failure, virus, or power-outage. Missed assignments, discussion board posts, quizzes, exams, etc. may result in a grade of zero for the activity.

CIVILITY

The online classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn and respect for the professionalism of the faculty are maintained. Student conduct which disrupts the teaching/learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from the online class.

ONLINE LEARNING NETIQUETTE

Over time a set of rules (conventions) have emerged to make online communication more pleasant and more effective. Your E-mail messages and discussion board postings should be written in a professional manner, using complete sentences and free of grammatical or spelling errors. In addition, you are to conform to the following guidelines:

Brief is best. Readers find it difficult to process and remember too much information at one time, so keep messages short and focus on a single idea or topic. When you need to address multiple ideas or topics, use a separate message for each one. Similarly, use separate files for different kinds of data/information instead of putting it all in one large file.

Be careful with formatting. Don't use fancy formatting (e.g., tables, fonts, layouts) unless you are sure that all users can read it. Don't type in all capital letters—use upper- and lower-case letters, which are easier to read. Don't use a font size that's too big or too small, both of which are hard to read. Ten- or 12-point font is effective. Make messages more readable by using spacing, paragraphing, and subheadings. Don't include graphics, images or multimedia components (audio/video clips) in messages or files unless you are sure your intended audience can view them.

Provide structure. Take the time to create meaningful subject headings or file names to help readers understand the purpose and context of the information. Also, begin messages and postings with a summary, recap, or reminder of an ongoing discussion to provide context. When people are reading dozens of messages or files, they need a brief orientation to help them understand how the new message relates to what has come before.

Remember the public domain. Think carefully about what you write. First of all, readers can easily forward some or all of your E-mail messages and files to others, so always assume that anything you post could be made quite public. Also, your message may be read by a wide variety of people (particularly if posted to a public forum on the Internet), so be especially sensitive to any form of cultural bias in what you say.

Be kind. Avoid sarcasm and mean-spiritedness. If you read something that upsets you, don't immediately reply with an angry message of your own; either ignore it or wait a day and send a rational response. Remember to be civil and considerate. In general, the same rules apply online as they do in person. Be respectful of other students. Foul discourse will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary action.

-adapted from Greg Kearsley's Guide to Online Education

STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CODING

In addition to abiding by the Code of Ethics, students are also required to abide by the American Health Information Management Association's Standards of Ethic Coding:

1. Apply accurate, complete, and consistent coding practices that yield quality data.
2. Gather and report all data required for internal and external reporting, in accordance with applicable requirements and data set definitions.
3. Assign and report, in any format, only the codes and data that are clearly and consistently supported by health record documentation in accordance with applicable code set and abstraction conventions, and requirements.
4. Query and/or consult as needed with the provider for clarification and additional documentation prior to final code assignment in accordance with acceptable healthcare industry practices.
5. Refuse to participate in, support, or change reported data and/or narrative titles, billing data, clinical documentation practices, or any coding related activities intended to skew or misrepresent data and their meaning that do not comply with requirements.
6. Facilitate, advocate, and collaborate with healthcare professionals in the pursuit of accurate, complete and reliable coded data and in situations that support ethical coding practices.
7. Advance coding knowledge and practice through continuing education, including but not limited to meeting continuing education requirements.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of protected health information in accordance with the Code of Ethics.³
9. Refuse to participate in the development of coding and coding related technology that is not designed in accordance with requirements.
10. Demonstrate behavior that reflects integrity, shows a commitment to ethical and legal coding practices, and fosters trust in professional activities.
11. Refuse to participate in and/or conceal unethical coding, data abstraction, query practices, or any inappropriate activities related to coding and address any perceived unethical coding related practices

AHIMA'S CODE OF ETHICS

The Health Information Management (HIM) professional has an obligation to demonstrate actions that reflect values. The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Code of Ethics sets forth these principles. The code is relevant to all AHIMA members, non-members with the Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) certifications, and students enrolled in a formal certificate or degree granting program directly relevant to AHIMA's Purpose regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. These purposes strengthen the HIM professional's efforts to improve overall quality of healthcare.

THE AHIMA CODE OF ETHICS SERVES SIX PURPOSES:

- Promotes high standards of HIM practice.
- Summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values.
- Establishes a set of ethical principles to be used to guide decision-making and actions.
- Establishes a framework for professional behavior and responsibilities when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
- Provides ethical principles by which the general public can hold the HIM professional accountable.
- Mentors practitioners new to the field to HIM's mission, values, and ethical principles.

A HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT/MEDICAL CODING PROFESSIONAL SHALL:

- Advocate, uphold, and defend the individual's right to privacy and the doctrine of confidentiality in the use and disclosure of information.
- Put service and the health and welfare of persons before self-interest and conduct oneself in the practice of the profession so as to bring honor to oneself, their peers, and to the health information management profession.
- Preserve, protect, and secure personal health information in any form or medium and hold in the highest regards health information and other information of a confidential nature obtained in an official capacity, taking into account the applicable statutes and regulations.
- Refuse to participate in or conceal unethical practices or procedures and report such practices.
- Advance health information management knowledge and practice through continuing education, research, publications, and presentations.
- Recruit and mentor students, peers and colleagues to develop and strengthen professional workforce.
- Represent the profession to the public in a positive manner.

- Perform honorably health information management association responsibilities, either appointed or elected, and preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information made known in any official capacity.
- State truthfully and accurately one's credentials, professional education, and experiences.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration in situations supporting health information practice.
- Respect the inherent dignity and worth of every person.

Source: American Health Information Management Association

TECHNICAL STANDARDS MEDICAL CODING CERTIFICATE (MCC)

To be qualified for the Medical Coding Certificate program, individuals must be able to meet both academic standards and the technical standards listed below, with or without reasonable accommodation(s). It is the student's responsibility to request reasonable accommodations following the procedures outlined in the *Mercy College of Ohio Undergraduate Catalog* or on the College's website at www.mercycollege.edu; requests for reasonable accommodations will be reviewed and considered by the College. For further information regarding services and resources for students with disabilities and/or to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Accessibility at 419.251.1784 or ADA504@mercycollege.edu.

These standards are not intended to deter any student who may be able to complete the requirements of the program with reasonable accommodations.

- Ability to learn in the online classroom and various educational settings.
- Ability to speak, hear, observe, read, and understand the English language in a manner sufficient to provide safe and effective patient care.
- Ability to effectively use technologies, information systems, and communication devices that support safe and effective health information management practice.
- Ability to think critically, solve problems, exercise professional judgment, promptly complete responsibilities, and make decisions for the care of persons, families, and/or communities across the health continuum and in a variety of settings.
- Ability to show concern for others, compassion, human dignity, ethical conduct, and accountability.
- Ability to adapt to and function effectively to stressful situations in both the classroom and simulated settings.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PROTECTED INFORMATION

By law, all information contained in a patient's medical record is confidential. Information pertaining to the facility or relating to physicians or employees is considered confidential as well. All information that is discussed or made available in class or simulated lab setting is therefore considered confidential and may not be discussed outside of the classroom. Students may not disclose confidential information to unauthorized individuals, including family and/or friends. Failure to respect confidential information will result in program dismissal.

ONLINE EXAMINATIONS AND QUIZZES

Online examinations and quizzes are an integral component within the online courses. Exams are strictly timed and are administered in a secure browser. Students must set aside the appropriate amount of time to devote to taking an exam. It is highly recommended that students NOT wait until the last minute (just before the deadline) to begin an online exam, as certain technical issues are often unforeseen and may delay the students' ability to access the exam.

Online exams are to be treated with the same respect and integrity as exams taken in a classroom setting. Students are NOT to print (including print screen), copy, or share exam materials and questions with any other student at any time, even after an exam deadline has passed. This includes but is not limited to posting exam questions in Discussion Boards and email exam questions to any student. Students found in violation of this policy may be subject to the College's disciplinary process for academic dishonesty.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Because this is an online program, your attendance is based on your activity and participation inside Canvas. It is the expectation that students will meet all deadlines.

Please note: Refer to your course syllabus as instructors may have specific attendance/participation requirements.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE STUDENTS EXPECTED PARTICIPATION:

- Log into each course a minimum of two times per week, including weeks with holidays. It is helpful to set a routine to log in at specific times throughout the week to break up the workload and keep up with ongoing assignments or discussions. If a situation that might cause multiple days of class to be missed, discuss it with your instructor in advance or as soon as possible.
- Check Mercy College email, discussion boards, & course announcement feed often and on a regular basis: Communications between students and/or instructors, will take place most commonly through discussion boards and email. Important updates and reminders are posted to the Course Announcements.
- Office hours and live sessions: See course syllabus for policy.

**MERCY COLLEGE OF OHIO
MEDICAL CODING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT**

I, _____, have received a copy of the Student Handbook of the Medical Coding Certificate (MCC) Program of Mercy College of Ohio.

I understand that it is my responsibility to read ALL the material contained in this handbook and abide by all program and college policies.

I agree to abide by the regulations and the Confidentiality of Protected Health Information Policy described within. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions for clarification of all policies.

To be qualified for the Mercy College MCC program, individuals must be able to meet both academic standards and the technical standards listed previously, with or without reasonable accommodation(s). It is a student's responsibility to request reasonable accommodations following the procedures outlined in the college catalog or on the College's website. Requests for reasonable accommodations will be reviewed and considered by the College.

For further information regarding services and resources for students with disabilities and/or to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Accessibility and Testing Services at 419-251-1784 or ADA504@mercycollege.edu.

The technical standards are not intended to deter any student who may be able to complete the requirements of the program with reasonable accommodation.

Please indicate below (check one):

- I **can** meet the technical standards with or without reasonable accommodations.
- I **cannot** meet the technical standards with or without reasonable accommodations.

Date

Student's Signature

Student's Printed Name

Please submit the signed acknowledgement statement to the Program Director through the Program Resource Center in the CANVAS Learning Management System.

Please Note: Though the MCC program does not require students to undergo a Criminal Background check or Drug Screen, please keep in mind that these may be required (along with other health requirements) by employers in the hiring process.