

# Spectrum of Opportunities: HIM Educators Needed at All Levels

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*How can you share your expertise? Consider a career in education, where plenty of opportunities await you—and the profession needs you.*

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Educators play a critical role in the viability of the HIM profession. But will there be enough of them to sustain the profession in the future? If current trends continue, the answer may be “no.”

Consider this: AHIMA’s work force study’s survey of education program directors found that recruiting qualified faculty is a top concern for both HIA and HIT programs. HIA program directors cited faculty recruitment as one of their top three concerns.<sup>1</sup> And a 2000 white paper on HIM education indicated that while the number of HIT programs has grown in recent decades, it’s estimated a third of current HIM educators anticipate they will retire within 10 years.<sup>2</sup> As a result, many AHIMA-approved programs are likely to need instructors in the future.

These facts reveal an opportunity for HIM professionals who may be interested in a career in education. The idea of HIM professionals as teachers isn’t new—many are already educating colleagues about HIPAA or training new employees about confidentiality and security. If you’ve enjoyed this role and suspect you may harbor an urge to teach, now is a good time to consider becoming an educator.

The most obvious avenue is to become a full-time instructor in an accredited program. This article details the education, skills, and experience needed to pursue a career as a faculty member. And it takes a look at other roles, such as clinical site preceptor, which allow professionals the opportunity to interact with students in the workplace—and provide important guidance in shaping the work force of tomorrow.

## Career Opportunities in Education

### In-service Educator

**Description:** Provide educational offerings within scope of HIM or position, such as privacy, confidentiality, and security of health information

**Education and knowledge needed:** Knowledgeable in topic of in-service

**Skills needed:**

- Ability to plan lessons (assessing need, writing objectives, evaluating outcome)
- Public speaking
- Knowledge of computer presentation programs

**Duties:** Organize, teach, and evaluate educational session

**Salary:** Included in position

**Job titles:** Director, manager, or supervisor in an HIM position

**Where to look for opportunities:** Opportunities are typically available within place of employment

### **Clinical Site Preceptor**

**Description:** Provide a professional practice experience for students from a formal educational program

**Education and knowledge needed:** Hold an HIM position required by the educational program

**Skills needed:**

- Ability to organize and plan student activities that relate to the educational objectives
- Ability to communicate well
- Ability to teach and assess the understanding and performance of student
- Ability and willingness to provide appropriate feedback to student and the educational program

**Duties:**

- Communicate with student
- Understand educational program's expectations
- Plan student's assignment
- Communicate with other employees regarding the student's assignment
- Assess student participation and revise activities as appropriate
- Complete student evaluation as directed

**Salary:** Included in current position

**Job titles:** Clinical site supervisor; directed experience supervisor

**Where to look for opportunities:** Contact AHIMA-accredited programs; all HIT, HIA, and approved coding certificate programs require professional practice experience

### **Guest Lecturer/Field Trip Speaker**

**Description:** Share expertise on a particular topic in the classroom setting or during a student field trip to the facility

**Education and knowledge needed:** Knowledgeable in topic of presentation

**Skills needed:**

- Communication and presentation skills
- Ability to assess level of student audience and plan accordingly

**Duties:**

- Conduct presentation or tour as requested by program faculty

**Salary:** Included in current position; sometimes a small stipend is available for speaking on campus

**Job titles:** Not applicable

**Where to look for opportunities:** Contact any HIM academic program to offer services and discuss opportunities

### **Adjunct/Part-time Faculty Member**

**Description:** Formally becoming the teacher of record for a course or a lab

**Education and knowledge needed:** Depends on the level of the program and the requirements of the school; most will require a bachelor's degree or a certain level of certification; some may require a master's degree

**Skills needed:**

- Communication skills
- Ability to develop lesson plan based on required content
- Ability to conduct lectures
- Ability to develop assessment tools, including exams, exercises, and assignments
- Ability to interact with students
- Ability to maintain required documentation
- Computer literacy in word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and Internet software

**Duties:**

- Prepare class material
- Conduct classes at required times
- Execute appropriate evaluation activities
- Assess student performance
- Determine final grades
- Provide appropriate documentation and reports
- Be available to interact with students outside of class

**Salary:** Depends on years in the field and educational degrees; the range could be from \$700-1,000 per credit hour taught per class

**Job titles:** Lecturer; instructor; adjunct faculty

**Where to look for opportunities:** Contact any HIM academic program to offer services and discuss opportunities

## **Faculty, HIT Program**

**Description:** Full-time faculty member in an HIT program at the two-year or community college level

**Education and knowledge needed:** Most schools will require a bachelor's degree and a certain level of certification, though a master's degree will likely increase salary; faculty must demonstrate current knowledge of course content and effectiveness in teaching assigned subjects pertinent to the professional curriculum; attendance at Assembly on Education (AOE) meetings and teacher preparation workshops is important

**Skills needed:** Same as above, plus:

- Ability to work independently
- Ability to research material for inclusion in courses

**Duties:** Same as above, plus:

- Participate in other activities expected of faculty such as student advising and participation on committees
- Eligible to serve on AHIMA's panel of accreditation reviewers

**Salary:** Depends on years in the field and educational degrees; AHIMA members report salary ranges of \$20,000-100,000 per year, with 61 percent reporting \$30,000-59,999 per year; years of experience and a master's degree will likely increase the salary

**Job titles:** Instructor; assistant professor

**Where to look for opportunities:** See AHIMA's Web site for a list of accredited programs and contact programs directly; contact other local colleges or the state HIM professional association to learn of developing programs

## Faculty, HIA Program

**Description:** Full-time faculty member in an HIA program at a four-year college, university, or medical science center

**Education and knowledge needed:** Most institutions will require a bachelor's degree and many will require a master's degree; faculty must demonstrate current knowledge of course content and effectiveness in teaching assigned subjects pertinent to the professional curriculum; attendance at AOE meetings and teacher preparation workshops is critical

**Skills needed:** Same as above

**Duties:** Same as above, plus:

- Tenure-track positions will also require scholarly contributions such as research and publication of articles

**Salary:** Depends on years in the field and educational degrees; AHIMA members report salary ranges of \$30,000-100,000 per year, with 73 percent reporting \$40,000-79,999 per year; years of experience and a master's degree will likely increase the salary

**Job title:** Instructor; lecturer; assistant professor; associate professor; professor

**Where to look for opportunities:** See AHIMA's Web site for a list of accredited programs and contact program directly; contact other local colleges or the state HIM professional association to learn of developing programs

## Faculty, Master's Level

**Description:** Teaching in a program that offers the master's degree

**Education and knowledge needed:** Similar to the bachelor's level, however, a doctorate may be required

**Skills needed:** Same as above, plus:

- Ability to teach at a level appropriate for master's degree students
- Ability to make scholarly contributions (academic research and publication of articles)

**Duties:** Similar to other teaching positions; students' expectations would be different, consequently course preparation and delivery would vary; scholarly activity would likely be an expectation

**Salary:** Insufficient data available; likely comparable to salaries reported at the HIA level with increases dependent on advanced degrees

**Job titles:** Instructor; lecturer; assistant professor; associate professor; professor

**Where to look for opportunities:** Institutions offering master's degree programs

## Program Director

**Description:** Responsible for the organization, administration, continuous review, planning and development, and general effectiveness of an accredited HIT or HIA educational program

**Education and knowledge needed:** Program director for an HIT program must have a bachelor's degree (master's degree is desirable) and be certified as an RHIA or RHIT; program director for an HIA program must have a master's degree and be certified as an RHIA; program directors usually have had considerable experience as faculty; attendance at AOE is critical

**Skills needed:**

- Teaching skills
- Organizational, administrative, conceptual, and problem-solving skills
- Knowledge of word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and Internet software
- Ability to understand and apply curriculum design for an entire program, and to evaluate and apply quality improvement principles in the evaluation process of the program
- Excellent oral and written communication skills to communicate with school administration, faculty, students, and accrediting personnel
- Excellent personnel management skills; ability to engender support and enthusiasm within local HIM community

**Duties:** Same as above, plus function as an advocate and representative of the program at various levels such as the college, university, state higher education approval bodies, and healthcare communities

**Salary:** Depends on type of program, area of the country, and advanced degrees; some HIT programs pay program directors the same salary as faculty, but reduce the teaching load by one-third to one-half, while others add an extra stipend; HIA program directors tend to have a higher salary from \$5,000-10,000 more per year than the faculty salaries with fewer teaching responsibilities in recognition of their significant administrative duties

**Job titles:** Program director; program chair; department chair; program coordinator

**Where to look for opportunities:** Contact programs; check Chronicle of Higher Education, where many higher education positions are advertised

**Other Academic Positions**

**Description:** Administrative responsibilities for other programs or functions within the academic unit or organization

**Education and knowledge needed:** Previous experience in academia needed; advanced degree such as a PhD may be required at some institutions for these positions

**Skills:**

- Organizational, administrative, conceptual, and problem-solving skills
- Computer literacy in word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and Internet software

**Job Duties:**

- Depends on the position held, but typically would be an expanded role of the program director

**Salary:** Insufficient data

**Job titles:** Department chair, allied health or related programs; assistant or associate dean; dean; project manager or coordinator for a specific educational activity, such as distance education

**Where to look for opportunities:** Within division of the institution and, with experience, other colleges or universities for similar positions

**Notes**

1. Wing, Paul et al. "Data for Decisions: The HIM Workforce and Workplace: 2002 Educator Survey." Chicago: AHIMA, 2003. Available at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).

2. Joint Committee on Education. "White Paper on the Health and Well-being of Professional Education in the Health Information Management Discipline." Chicago: AHIMA, 2000.

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