

Professional Practice Experience (PPE) Student Handbook



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Congratulations! You are about to enter an exciting and challenging phase of your educational career – your Professional Practice Experience (PPE).

The value of your internship experience will be determined, in large part, by your **attitude, work ethic, and professionalism.**

YOUR desire to learn and contribute is critical to a successful PPE experience.

Introduction to Professional Practice Experience

The Professional Practice Experience (PPE) is an 80 hour, applied, culminating experience in which the student observes and participates in HIM department functions and/or assumes responsibility for a special project as a Health Information professional. The PPE is designed to provide students with practical experience in the Health Information competencies and domains that focus on skill building and practical application of theory.

The PPE is a credit-based course, which applies toward degree completion, and requires tuition, fees, and costs as normally occurs according to institutional policy. Completing a PPE is not only a vital part of the HIT program curriculum; the program's accrediting body, CAHIIM, also requires it.

This supervised PPE can take place through the Health Information department of a hospital, a non-acute healthcare facility, a government agency, an insurance company, a software vendor, or other non-traditional healthcare organizations. Students will work under the supervision of a qualified HIM or other healthcare professional.

The PPE is an experience, so there may be several ways in which to gain this experience. While some experiences may include virtual options, at least a portion of the PPE just be a field-based practicum.

A contractual arrangement between the college and the healthcare organization is required to be in place before a student can begin working as an intern. If an agreement is not already in place one must be developed. The program reserves the right to evaluate the appropriateness of a PPE site to ensure students are placed into a secure and productive environment that furthers their education.

Once assigned to a specific healthcare organization or site for the PPE experience, the student will follow their onboarding process. Although each organization/site will have a unique process, most will include a process for the student to provide proof of immunizations, proof of a cleared background check, a confidentiality agreement, and a general orientation. Some organization/sites will also require drug screening and/or additional requirements. Ultimately, the student must complete all onboarding processes before the PPE experience can begin.

Preparing for the PPE Experience

Students will need to prepare for their PPE experience well in advance of their site assignment. It is recommended that students gather their documents at least 8 weeks prior to the beginning of spring quarter.

Immunization Requirements

Each student must provide the following proof of immunizations prior to participation in the PPE experience.

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (Tdap)
 - Must be documentation of a Tdap booster within the past 10 years
- Tuberculous (TB) Test – can be either:
- QuantiFERON GOLD Blood Test
 - 2-step PPD (1-3 weeks apart)
- Influenza (current season)*
- COVID-19*

***The program does not determine if a PPE site will accept an exception for Influenza or COVID vaccines. Students must initiate communication to their assigned site to discuss possible exemption. If the PPE site does not allow exemption, and the student does not wish to proceed with the placement, the student will be responsible for locating his/her own PPE site.**

What does proof of immunization look like?

Accepted proof of immunization is either proof of vaccination, a positive Antibody Titer, or proof of TB testing.

Proof of immunization documentation must be from a medical clinic or pharmacy.

Documentation should include student name, DOB, name and date of vaccine administration, date of a blood titer and results, date of TB testing and results.

Immunization/Vaccine Tips

Do not wait!

If it has been more than 10 years since your MMR, Varicella, Tdap, you may need to receive a booster. If you cannot locate verification of each immunization immediately, we recommend scheduling an appointment with your physician to request an Antibody Titer blood test right away. If your Antibody Titer result is negative (no immunity), then you will need to receive the vaccines.

Take note of the vaccine schedule as per the CDC.

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
 - 2 doses at least 28 days apart
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
 - 2 doses at least 28 days apart
- Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (Tdap)
 - Required every 10 years

Proof of Health Insurance

Each student must provide proof of health insurance. Documentation such as an insurance card or policy statement is acceptable.

If the student does not have health insurance, TCC may be able to refer the student to a low-cost insurance plan.

Criminal Background Check

Each student must complete a criminal background check through a TCC contracted vendor at the student's expense. Any result found on the background check is reported to the PPE site and the site will have the option to decline the student.

The program will provide a web page and code for students to access the background check.

Some PPE sites will require a second background check such as the WA Access to Criminal History (WATCH) report at the student's expense.

Drug Testing

Some PPE sites will require students to consent to a drug screen test at the student's expense before beginning their PPE experience. If this is required, the student will be notified during the onboarding process for the PPE site.

Although recreational marijuana is legal in the state of Washington, most PPE sites adhere to federal regulations. Students are advised to refrain from using recreational drugs, tobacco, or some prescription medications that may adversely affect drug-testing policies.

Placement Service Partners

Some PPE sites collaborate with a third-party placement service organization to facilitate a standardized set of requirements and onboarding practices. If assigned to a PPE site that uses a third-party placement partner, the student will be required to register with and pay a fee to the placement partner.

Costs of PPE Site Placement

The following costs are approximate and will vary from student to student.

- Immunizations (prices vary)
- Criminal Background Check (\$72)
- WA Access to Criminal History (WATCH) (\$12)
- Drug Testing (\$45-\$85)
- Placement Service Partners (\$25-\$75)

Assignment of PPE Sites

The course instructor will assign each student to a PPE site. Prior to receiving their site assignment, each student will need to complete a demographics survey and identify his or her site preferences. The course instructor will match students to sites as best as possible based upon site availability, student location and preferences.

Students who live outside of the Tacoma/Seattle area bear the primary responsibility of locating a PPE site in their local area. Close coordination with the PPE Coordinator will be necessary to ensure the site meets program requirements and an affiliation agreement is in place. It is recommended that the student begin this process in January to be ready for the PPE experience in April.

Required Number of PPE Hours

The HIT program requires 80 documented hours of PPE experience. The PPE time may be spread out throughout the quarter in any way agreed upon between the student and the PPE Supervisor. PPE hours are to be completed during regular business hours (Monday – Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm) Currently employed students may need to take time off to participate in a PPE experience.

Students Employed by a Healthcare Organization

A PPE experience completed at a student's place of employment must adhere to the following guidelines.

- The PPE experience must be completed outside of the students' regular job duties
- The PPE Supervisor should not be the students' direct supervisor
- The PPE site will determine if the student will need to undergo normal internship placement onboarding processes

Students with Substantial Health Information Industry Experience

Students with substantial HIM industry experience may request pre-approval from the course instructor to modify their PPE in such a way to ensure a positive learning experience.

Modification options include:

- Reduction of required number of PPE hours
- Completion of a special project through the students' employer

The student must request a consultation with the course instructor prior to the beginning of spring quarter to discuss options.

PPE Experience is Required

The PPE Experience is a required component of all CAHIIM accredited programs. This means that even if the student is a working HIM professional, the PPE Experience must be completed.

Student Conduct Expectations

All students are required to adhere to the following student conduct expectations.

Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of every student to protect the privacy, security, and confidentiality of all patients at all times. Any violation of privacy, security, or confidentiality during the PPE Experience can result in course failure and/or suspension from the HIT Program.

Attendance

Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will adversely affect the student's grade for the PPE course. While there may be times when a student may be absent due to illness or other valid reasons, it is the student's responsibility to:

- Notify the PPE Supervisor prior to an absence and arrange to make up the missed time.
- Communicate to the PPE Supervisor if running late and provide an estimate arrival time.
- Stay at the PPE site until the end of the assigned time unless otherwise released early.

Professional Communication

Professional behavior and communication is expected at all times during the PPE experience.

- Be cognizant of professional titles used in the setting (Ex: Doctor Smith, Mrs. Smith)
- Always maintain professional relationships with PPE site staff.
- Avoid gossiping or complaining with site staff or other students.
- If there are any issues, they should be discussed with the PPE Supervisor and the course instructor

Appearance

Students should:

- Practice professionalism by presenting a professional appearance
- Adhere to the PPE site's dress code
- Be aware of personal hygiene such as strong perfumes/colognes, tobacco odors, and deodorant issues when working in close proximity with other staff
- Always wear an identification badge in accordance with PPE site policy
- If any questions about proper attire, discuss with PPE Supervisor or course instructor

General Conduct

Students should:

- Demonstrate professional conduct throughout the PPE Experience
- Demonstrate initiative by completing activities as assigned
- Ask appropriate questions for clarification as needed
- Complete PPE activities and assignments early, asking for additional work rather than waiting for the PPE Supervisor to noticed
- Do not use cell phones during working hours, including texting
- Web access should be limited to the scope assigned by the PPE Site
- Adhere to all applicable ethical codes of conduct

HIT 255 Course

The HIT 255 course serves as a mechanism for student's to submit PPE related assignments and documents. In addition to PPE specific assignments, students will be completing weekly virtual learning labs to review HIM concepts.

Note: Students must submit all graded assignments in the HIT 255 course for successful completion of the PPE Experience.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply policies, procedures, and regulations related to the management of information, and information governance. (CC I)
2. Apply strategies to protect health information and comply with regulations (CC II)
3. Utilize technologies related to the management of health information, informatics and analytics (CC III)
4. Apply guidelines, policies, and procedures for the assignment of diagnostic and procedural codes and the management of revenue cycle (CC IV)
5. Adhere to legal processes, policies and procedures to demonstrate compliance with external forces. (CC V)
6. Apply leadership skills to inter-professional relationships, change management, performance improvement, financial management and other aspects of organizational management and leadership. (CC VI)

Course Deliverables

This list of assignments is intended to give an overview of the types of assignments required in the course and is not an all-inclusive list.

- Preparing for PPE
 - Required forms to sign and upload
 - Proof of Health Insurance
 - Proof of Immunizations
 - Background Check
- HIM Competencies Assignment
- Special Projects Assignment (if pre-approved)
- PPE Timesheet
- PPE Supervisor Evaluation of Student
- PPE Power Point Presentation
- PPE Student Experience Survey
- Weekly Virtual Learning Lab Assignments

Program Contact Information

HIT Professor and PPE/Internship Coordinator

Dona Aubrey, BS, RHIT
(Phone) 253-460-3813
(Email) daubrey@tacomacc.edu



Health Information Program Chair

Corinne Jarvis, M.Ed, RHIA, CHDA
(Phone) 253-566-5077
(Email) cjarvis@tacomacc.edu

