

## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction to the RHIT and RHIA Certification Exams

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In this chapter, we explore the following:

- Confirm eligibility to take the RHIT/RHIA certification exams
- Compare the requirements to take the RHIT and RHIA certification exams
- RHIT and RHIA certification exam application process
- Prepare for exam day
- Find success with multiple-choice exams
- Obtain exam results

## Confirm Eligibility to Take the RHIT/RHIA Certification Exams

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If you have purchased this book, congratulations! You are close to reaching a monumental education goal. Let's take a moment to acknowledge the hard work it took for you to get here.

Students graduating from a Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM)-approved associate's degree program in health information technology are eligible to take the Registered Health Information Technologist (RHIT) exam. Students graduating from a CAHIIM-approved bachelor's degree or post-baccalaureate program are eligible to take the Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) exam. To confirm that you are enrolled in a CAHIIM-approved education program, (please visit [www.cahiim.org/directoryofaccredpgms/programdirectory.aspx](http://www.cahiim.org/directoryofaccredpgms/programdirectory.aspx)).

## Value of Certification

You have worked very hard to earn this degree. Why would it be valuable for you to earn the RHIT or RHIA credential as well? Through your education program, you have learned the daily operations of information in the healthcare facility. However, passing the certification exam proves that you are competent and proficient in your knowledge of Health Information Management (HIM). Both RHIT and RHIA certification exams provide evidence that you have met the minimum knowledge standards to effectively manage health information. In other words, the certification offers a professional step beyond earning your degree, so it can add great value to your resume.

Not all HIM programs at the associate's, baccalaureate, and/or master's level are approved by CAHIIM, so these candidates do not have the option of taking these exams. The opportunity to take these exams is a privilege that your educational institutional program worked hard to obtain for your professional benefit, so take advantage of it!

## Course Mapping

Part of the process to meet CAHIIM education requirements is that all the HIM courses need to map to American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) competencies or standards. You may have come across a document that looks similar to **TABLE 1-1**. This map is used to ensure that you have learned about all of the requirements to become a credentialed professional. This alone should give you confidence as you prepare for your exam.

## Compare the Requirements for the RHIT and RHIA Exams

We will cover the requirements for both the RHIT and the RHIA exams in this one exam prep book and online modules. The RHIA exam covers the same topics for the most part, just to a deeper level, so prepping with RHIT materials provides a strong foundation for success on the RHIA exam. In Chapter 28, we will highlight topics just for RHIA candidates are not adequately covered in the RHIT exam prep 28. Download the Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM) candidate guide for specific vital information on the application process; it can be found at [www.ahima.org/downloads/certification/Candidate\\_Guide\\_2019\\_Updates.pdf](http://www.ahima.org/downloads/certification/Candidate_Guide_2019_Updates.pdf).

## RHIT Eligibility and Exam

RHIT applicants must meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

	Healthcare Delivery and Processes	Introduction to the Health Care Record	Information Systems in the Health Care Environment W/Lab	Healthcare Statistics W/Lab	Healthcare Data Sets and Registers	Coding I W/Lab	Coding II W/Lab	Procedural Coding W/Lab	Health Insurance Reimbursement W/Lab	Healthcare Law and Ethics	Quality and Performance Improvement	Leadership Roles, Theories and Skills	Health Information Practicum
<b>Subdomain I.A Classification Systems</b>													
1. Apply diagnosis/procedure codes according to current guidelines						X	X	X					
2. Evaluate the accuracy of diagnostic and procedural coding						X	X	X			X		
3. Apply diagnostic/procedural groupings						X	X	X	X				
4. Evaluate the accuracy of diagnostic/procedural groupings													
<b>Subdomain I.B. Health Record Content and Documentation</b>								X					
1. Analyze the documentation in the health record to ensure it supports the diagnosis and reflects the patient's progress, clinical findings, and discharge status		X											X
2. Verify the documentation in the health record is timely, complete, and accurate		X											X
3. Identify a complete health record according to, Organizational policies, external regulations, and standards		X							X				X
4. Differentiate the roles and responsibilities of various providers and disciplines, to support documentation requirements, throughout the continuum of healthcare	X												

**TABLE 1-1** HIM map for an associate's degree program  
 Modified from Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) Exam; Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) Examination Content Outline, AHIMA.

- Successfully complete the academic requirements, at an associate's degree level, of an HIM program accredited by CAHIIM  
OR
- Graduate from an HIM program approved by a foreign association with which AHIMA has a reciprocity agreement

The RHIT certification exam includes 150 multiple-choice questions for an exam time of 3.5 hours. Out of the 150 questions, only 130 are scored; the other 20 questions are pretest questions, which are not scored, so they cannot count for or against the final score. The passing score for the RHIT exam is 300 out of 400, which is a scaled score. When you are taking practice exams, aim for scores above 75%. For an outline of the RHIT exam, please visit Appendix A. Take a few minutes to read through the content outline and check off the competencies about which you feel more confident and circle the ones that you feel you might need to work on.

## RHIA Eligibility and Exam

RHIA applicants must meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

- Successfully complete the academic requirements, at the baccalaureate level, of an HIM program accredited by CAHIIM  
OR
- Successfully complete the academic requirements, at the master's level, of an HIM program accredited by CAHIIM and following a specific set of criteria  
OR
- Graduate from an HIM program approved by a foreign association with which AHIMA has a reciprocity agreement  
OR
- Be an RHIT who meets the Proviso conditions approved by the 2017 CCHIIM

The RHIA certification exam includes 180 multiple-choice questions for an exam time of 4 hours. Out of the 180 questions, only 160 are scored; the other 20 questions are pretest questions, which are not scored, so they cannot count for or against the final score. The passing score for the RHIA exam is 300 out of 400, which is a scaled score. When you are taking practice exams, aim for scores above 75%. For an outline of the RHIA exam, please visit Appendix B. Take a few minutes to read through the content outline and check off the competencies about which you feel more confident, and circle the ones that you feel you might need to work on.

# RHIT and RHIA Certification Exam

## Application Process

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Qualified candidates should visit the AHIMA webstore to purchase the exam and to begin the online application process. Other requirements of the application include the following:

- Official college transcripts via email to [CertificationTranscripts@ahima.org](mailto:CertificationTranscripts@ahima.org) or mailed to AHIMA, Certification Transcripts 233 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Fl. Chicago, IL 60601

Once AHIMA has verified the transcript and confirmed that the exam fees have been paid, they will issue an authorization to test (ATT). Candidates with an approved exam application will receive the ATT letter within 5 business days. The ATT letter contains an authorization number, the eligibility period for testing, and instructions for scheduling an appointment at a testing center. Candidates may only schedule their appointment within their assigned 4-month eligibility window. The eligibility start date and end date are provided in the ATT letter.

With the ATT letter in hand, visit the Pearson Vue testing locations website. To schedule a date, provide the authorization number listed on the ATT letter. For a list of testing locations nationwide, please visit [pearsonvue.com/ahima](http://pearsonvue.com/ahima).

Be sure to note the time and location of the testing center in multiple places, including your phone and your laptop! Before the day of the examination, please be sure the address and directions to the test center are correct; map the directions to confirm driving time so that you are not late. If a candidate goes to the wrong test center on the day of the examination and cannot test, the exam fee will be forfeited and the candidate must re-apply and re-submit another application and fee.

## Early Testing

Students enrolled in a CAHIIM-accredited programs for RHIT or RHIA, who are enrolled in their final term of study, are eligible to apply for and take their respective certification exam early. Eligible students include the following:

- Students currently enrolled and in their last term of study
- Students who have completed their coursework but have not yet graduated
- Graduates who are currently waiting for their official transcripts

To apply as an early tester, purchase the exam through the AHIMA webstore. When completing the online exam application, select the early testing options and upload the completed application for early testing. Please be sure to only submit your exam application with the completed application for early testing; otherwise, your application will not be approved.

Candidates who apply for early testing and successfully pass their exam will have their credential granted once official transcripts (must include graduation date) are received. The exam date will be used as the official date the credential is granted.

## Appointment Changes

AHIMA's policies about changing a testing appointment are as follows:

- Candidates may cancel and reschedule the examination up to 15 days prior to the scheduled examination date at no charge.
- Any candidate who reschedules or cancels his or her appointment between 14 days and 24 hours prior to the exam date will be charged a penalty of \$30 by Pearson VUE. Rescheduling and payment must be completed using a valid credit card through [pearsonvue.com/ahima](http://pearsonvue.com/ahima) or by calling the Pearson VUE Call Center at (888) 524-4622.
- Candidates may not reschedule the examination less than 24 hours prior to the examination appointment.
- Candidates who do not arrive or who arrive late to their scheduled exam appointment time will be considered no-shows and will forfeit their application fee.
- Candidates who fail to appear for the scheduled appointment or who are over 15 minutes late will not be allowed to test. A new application and the full application fee must be submitted in order to test.

## Prep for Exam Day

The Pearson VUE staff adheres to approved procedures to ensure the test center meets AHIMA's testing criteria. Please review the following information prior to the testing date to ensure familiarity with the procedures:

- Plan to arrive at the test center 30 minutes before the scheduled appointment. Candidates arriving at the test center 15 minutes after the scheduled appointment will not be allowed to test and will forfeit the testing fee.
- Know when and where the test will be given and be ready to be tested (no materials are allowed in the exam).

- Please ensure that both forms of your identification meet the requirements posted on [pearsonvue.com/ahima](http://pearsonvue.com/ahima) under “On Examination Day.”

When arriving at the Pearson Vue test center, candidates will:

- Receive the Professional Examination Rules Agreement
- Submit two valid, correct forms of identification (ID)
- Have their digital signature captured to verify that signatures match
- Have their palm vein pattern captured
- Have a photograph taken
- Store belongings
- Show reference materials for approval (when applicable)

A dry erase board will be provided to all candidates for use during the examination. No scratch paper is allowed.

## Identification Requirements

To be allowed to test, candidates must present a primary form of ID containing their signature and picture, and a second form of ID showing their signature. **The candidate’s name on the primary and secondary forms of ID must match the name appearing on the ATT letter.**

Acceptable forms of primary ID must be valid and nonexpired, and feature the candidate’s photograph and signature. These include:

- Government-issued driver’s licenses, including temporary licenses with all required elements (refer to “Unacceptable Forms of Candidate Identification” for an exception when presented with a Texas driver’s license that carries two expiration dates)
- U.S. Department of State driver’s license
- U.S. learner’s permit (plastic card only with photo and signature)
- National/state/country identification card
- Passport
- Passport card
- Military ID
- Military ID for spouses and dependents
- Alien registration card (green card, permanent resident visa)
- Government-issued local language ID (plastic card with photo and signature)

Acceptable forms of secondary ID must be valid and nonexpired and must feature the candidate’s signature. These include:

- Social Security card
- Debit/ATM card
- Credit cards (must have a visible expiration date)
- Any form of ID on the primary list

The following are examples of unacceptable forms of ID:

- Expired driver's license or expired passport
- Library card
- Marriage certificate
- Voter's registration card
- Club membership card
- Public aid card
- Temporary driver's license without proper paperwork and photo identification
- Temporary Social Security card without signature
- Video club membership card
- Traffic citation (arrest ticket)
- Fishing or hunting license
- AHIMA membership card

## Find Success with Multiple-Choice Exams

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All of the questions on both the RHIT and the RHIA exam are multiple choice. This means that you can employ a few test-taking methods to deduce the correct response. Here are some tips to find success in multiple choice exams:

- Read the entire question  
At times, we may feel overconfident and answer a question prior to reading the entire question and inadvertently get it wrong! You will have almost a minute per question on either exam; it sounds like a short amount of time, but it's not!
- Answer the questions you are confident you know  
Do not spend too much time on these, but don't go too fast through them. Be sure to read through the entire question, and if you're confident, answer it and go on!
- Eliminate the obvious wrong answer  
These questions will be done on the computer, but you will be able to keep notes on a provided dry erase board. If you are unsure about a question, flag it on the computer, write out the answers that you know are wrong, and continue with the test. As you complete the rest of the test, the answer may come to you.
- Key words *always, never, sometimes, not*  
These words may not be highlighted or bolded, and they can be easy to miss. Be sure to read each and every question thoroughly.
- Final check!  
Use your dry erase board to keep a record of the answers you get right and the ones that you are not sure about. Before you click submit, take the time to review each question.



## Types of Questions

On the RHIT and RHIA exams, there are a mix of three categories of multiple-choice questions, which include:

- **Recall questions.** These are questions that designed to test your memory. You'll be required to identify HIM terms, specific facts, data and information management procedures, and so on.
- **Application questions.** These use critical thinking skills to apply the facts that you have learned.
- **Analysis questions.** These are used to measure the depth of your knowledge and ability to apply it to various situations.

## Obtain Exam Results

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Once the candidate submits the exam, he or she returns to the exam proctor to collect the score report. The score report informs the candidate about whether they passed right after they completed the exam, so there is no wait time! The score report contains some valuable information, especially if the candidate did not pass. The report separates the results based on the domains listed on the exam content outlines to identify possible areas of improvement for future testing.

Candidates who pass are considered credentialed professionals from the date of the exam! Newly credentialed professionals (if authorized) will appear on AHIMA's website at [secure.ahima.org/certification/newly\\_credentialed.aspx](https://secure.ahima.org/certification/newly_credentialed.aspx).

## Beta Period Testing

At times, AHIMA publishes a new testing format and closes instant grading for a period of time. In this case, the results are not released after the exam, but AHIMA will mail the results to the candidates once the exam is graded. To check if your exam is scheduled during a beta period, please contact AHIMA directly to confirm.