



WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY®

MCCAP Student Guide

Welcome From WGU

Welcome to the Medical Coding Career Advancement Program (MCCAP) at WGU. This flexible, innovative program is designed with input from employers and industry experts to give you the skills and credentials you need to advance your career. We are excited that you have decided to further your coding career by completing this program. During your time here, you will find the resources needed to be successful. Our highly trained staff and robust training and curriculum are just what you need to become proficient in coding. Our goal is prepare you to pass the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) exam, and with the personal skills to transition your career. Again, welcome to the program. We are glad to have you here!

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MCCAP Overview

The purpose of the MCCAP is to educate and shape the workforce through coding education. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs for certified medical coders will increase 22 percent through the year 2022.¹ You can help to meet the industry demand by completing the MCCAP program and then becoming a certified medical coder. This certification is your first step to a successful career in healthcare revenue cycle management.

The MCCAP education and training provides the industry with highly skilled candidates who are ready for the workforce when they leave the program. The courses offered in the program address social, emotional, and leadership skills, and coding fundamentals. Real-life coding exercises are also included. In addition to preparing you for the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) exam, the program will train you in relevant health information technology.

On average, this program can be completed in about 9 months, if you are moving at a medium pace. If you move faster, you could complete this program in 6 months; if you move a little slower, it may take a year. You're in control of your own speed but be sure to maintain a reasonable minimum pace based on your individual needs. Our most successful students commit 20 hours per week to study, attend the required online cohort sessions, and meet with their mentor and course instructor regularly.

During the program You will have a program mentor—a faculty member personally assigned to you—to support and coach you along the MCCAP journey. You are required to meet with your program mentor weekly, as regular interactions will support your efforts to complete the program. You will also be assigned a course instructor, who serves as a content expert and is available to answer any content-specific questions you may have in each of your courses. You will be assigned different course instructors for each course as they specialize in different content areas.

Following are a few key strategies for program success:

- ✓ Read course content carefully, to ensure you understand how to complete your course successfully.
- ✓ Develop a thorough understanding of what is expected from you to complete each course.

¹ AAPC. (n.d.). CPC exam: All you need to know. Retrieved from <https://www.aapc.com/cpc-exam/all-about-cpc-exam.aspx>

- ✓ Plan a minimum of 20 hours weekly study hours to meet the program's study time requirements.
- ✓ Designate time each day to study your coursework and complete your exercises.
- ✓ Find a quiet place to set up your workspace and eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- ✓ Log in to your course each day. Even if you are ahead, log in to review your material and get an even clearer understanding of the course concepts.
- ✓ Stay connected to your mentor and remember you are required to meet with your mentor at least weekly.
- ✓ Make sure you respond to your mentor and course instructor emails, keep your appointments and reach out to them as soon as you have questions or issues.
- ✓ Attend live sessions and study halls with your course instructor to help you learn and retain coding information. During study halls you will meet with your course instructor and ask any questions you have about the coding content. Your instructor will also provide you additional practice exercises during this time to help increase your coding skills.

The MCCAP program is a non-credit bearing program, meaning credit hours are not assigned to the program coursework. With no credit hour assignment, the program does not qualify students for an enrollment status (e.g. full-time, half-time, three-quarter time, less than half-time.)

Technology Overview

To complete this program, you must have access to high-speed internet and a desktop or laptop computer. You must also have access to a webcam and microphone when the program begins.

The program uses a variety of systems and platforms to support your learning experience. The learning environment contains your coursework, which includes the social-emotional learning modules, the AAPC course work, a medical coding tool, and encoder training. Each course in the program will use different technologies. Additional information about the technology requirements can be found in your courses.

Your entire learning experience and all courses will take place in the MCCAP learning environment.

Log into the learning environment from the program landing page:

<https://www.wgu.edu/lp/programs/mccap.htm>

or from your BlackBoard portal: <https://wgu.blackboard.com>

Program Mentor

Your program mentor will provide you with continuous support, coaching, and guidance throughout your program, while also ensuring you are successfully prepared for the next steps in your professional journey. Each week, you will meet with your program mentor to talk about any questions you have, how to overcome obstacles, receive career readiness guidance, and to learn how to progress successfully through your program. These meetings are required and may use phone and webcam technologies to support your discussions. You will work with your mentor to find a time to talk when you are able to be in front of a computer in a place that is free of distractions. These sessions with your program mentor are designed to help you stay on track to complete the program and to develop your professional skills

for the workplace. You can schedule a meeting with your program mentor by using the scheduling feature in your mentor's signature line, by calling your mentor, or by sending your mentor an email.

Course Instructor

Your course instructor will assist your learning progress by supplying content-focused guidance, providing a learning environment that encourages growth and development, and integrating the program's core competencies. Each course in the program is assigned course instructors who are experts on that course material. Your course instructor will work in partnership with your program mentor to help you become competent in the content area and stay on track to complete your program. Course instructors will be available to answer questions by phone, email, and Blackboard messaging. You can schedule a meeting with course instructor by using the scheduling feature in your course instructor's signature line, by calling your course instructor, or by sending an email to your course instructor.

Working with Your Faculty - Strategies for Success

- ✓ Stay connected to your program mentor and course instructors, they are here to help!
- ✓ Schedule a meeting with the course instructor as soon as you start a course
- ✓ Use your resources. There are many useful learning resources that you will find to help you along
- ✓ Plan and schedule time to study 20 hours per week
- ✓ Be prepared to engage with others and stay positive

Program Outcomes

Badges and Skills Transcript

The MCCAP provides badges at key milestones in the program. These badges show that you have completed the courses and have skills with proven competency. You will be awarded three badges from WGU: The Professional Communication and Leadership Badge, the Medical Coder Novice Badge and Ready to Work Badge. Each badge is received after course completion and recorded on your skills transcript. A skills transcript is created as you move through the program. This transcript is a record of the accomplishments, competencies and skills you have demonstrated throughout the program. You can use this skills transcript to demonstrate the mastery of skills important to success in the field of medical coding.

Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) Certification Examination

The Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) credential from AAPC demonstrates medical coding excellence and proficiency. The exam is recognized by employers, government, providers, and payers, which gives CPC®-credentialed medical coders an advantage in the current competitive job market.²

² AAPC. (n.d.). CPC exam: All you need to know. Retrieved from <https://www.aapc.com/cpc-exam/all-about-cpc-exam.aspx>

Certification

At the end of this program, you will be awarded a Certificate of Completion in the Medical Coding Career Accelerator Program (MCCAP).

Getting Started

The program's orientation course will acclimate you to the full program experience and prepare you for success. During the orientation course, we will show you how your certificate program at WGU will work, where to go, what to do, and who will help you every step of the way.

As part of your orientation, you are asked to complete a self-assessment called Smarter Measures. This tool will help you identify your strengths as well as any areas of opportunity you may have. Your program mentor will then offer support and resources to help you plan for success. This support will include help in navigating the learning journey, implementing time management and pacing strategies, providing insights about the healthcare industry, and offer general life-skill coaching.

As an MCCAP student, you are responsible for completing reading assignments, workbook exercises, interactive lectures, practical applications, and chapter quizzes. In addition, you are required to communicate with your mentor weekly through scheduled phone and webcam meeting and emails. Your mentor and course instructors are ready to guide you throughout the program and to help you understand course content.

Areas of Study for MCCAP

Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare (L001)

The Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare course is designed to help you prepare for success in the online environment at WGU and beyond. Your success starts with social support and self-reflective awareness which will prepare you to weather the challenges of academic programs and working as a professional. In this course, you will participate in group activities and complete several individual assignments. The goal of the group activities is to provide you support and allow you to gain insight from other students. The assignments are intended to give you an opportunity to reflect about where you are professionally and where you would like to be. The activities completed during each group meeting are designed to give you several tools you can use to achieve success.

This course is designed as a six-part intensive learning experience. Students are required to attend six virtual group meetings during the first month of the program. Each group meeting is two hours long and facilitated by a live Course Instructor. In each meeting, you will engage in activities to help you understand your educational journey and find support and inspiration in the journeys of others. You will also record reflection videos and participate in peer reviews. The preparation for each live session and video components of the course, typically take one to two hours to complete, in addition to the time attending each live session.

Competency will be assessed through participation in the live, webcam group meetings and completion of the activities. Each student must complete all required activities within seven days of attending the final group meeting. Upon completion of this course, students will earn a WGU Professional Communication and Leadership badge.

The course supports the following competencies:

- ✓ The graduate evaluates and displays behaviors consistent with the process of self-discovery and mindfulness
- ✓ The graduate demonstrates the ability to apply the concept of working styles to leadership skills
- ✓ The graduate demonstrates appropriate patterns of effective communication
- ✓ The graduate identifies and applies appropriate communication strategies to develop a supportive community of peers

You will gain skills in:

- ✓ Professional and effective communication among peers
- ✓ Working styles and leadership development
- ✓ Effective communication strategies to support a community of peers

Strategies for Success:

- ✓ Review the content in the online course prior to attending each live session
- ✓ Fully participate in each live session
- ✓ Stay connected! Reach out to your program mentor and course instructors when you need help

AAPC Physician Coding for CPC Preparation (L002)

The AAPC Physician Coding for CPC Preparation teaches medical coding principles, coding guidelines, and coding fundamentals related to the three main code systems: CPT®, ICD-10-CM, and HCPCS Level II. This course is for anyone who is preparing for a career in medical coding for a physician's office or preparing for AAPC's CPC certification examination.

This course includes 21 chapter reading assignments, practical applications, quizzes, interactive lectures, and chapter exams, all of which are found in the learning environment. You should plan on spending around 20 hours per week on each chapter in order to complete the course within 6 – 9 months. To receive the certificate of completion, you are required to complete all chapter quizzes and practical application assignments and achieve a passing score of at least 70 percent on all chapter review exams, on the final exam, and in the course overall.

The course covers the following competencies:

- ✓ Identify the purpose of the CPT®, ICD-10-CM, and HCPCS Level II code books
- ✓ Understand and apply the official ICD-10-CM coding guidelines
- ✓ Code a wide variety of patient services using CPT®, ICD-10-CM, and HCPCS Level II codes
- ✓ List the major features of HCPCS Level II codes
- ✓ Provide practical application of coding operative reports and evaluation and management services

You will gain skills in:

- ✓ Accurate assignment of procedure, diagnosis, and service/supply codes in various healthcare settings
- ✓ Coding guidelines
- ✓ Regulatory compliance specific to revenue cycle management

Books and Instructional Resources

You will be provided with a membership to the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) along with the following textbooks and codebooks. Please contact your mentor for additional information.

Textbooks

- ✓ 2019 Medical Coding Training: CPC®; AAPC; AAPC publisher;
- ✓ 2019 Medical Coding Training: Practical Application CPC®; AAPC; AAPC publisher

Code Books

- ✓ CPT® Professional Edition code book (2019 year), AMA publisher
- ✓ ICD-10-CM code book (2019 year), any publisher
- ✓ HCPCS Level II code book (2019 year), any publisher

Your final score for the course is based on the following calculations:

Total average of chapter quizzes: 10%

Total average of practical applications: 20%

Total average of chapter review exams: 50%

Final exam: 20%

Upon the completion of this course, you will receive a WGU Medical Coding Education badge and an AAPC Certificate of Completion.

Strategies for Success:

- ✓ Log in to the learning environment daily to stay on top of your assignments
- ✓ Ask questions! If you get stuck on a concept or content, please reach out to your course instructor or program mentor right away
- ✓ Stay connected!

AAPC Assessment—Certified Professional Coder (CPC)

The CPC is a widely recognized certification that proves competency in medical coding in physician office and outpatient settings. Over 105,000 certified professionals work in outpatient, physician office, and

other healthcare settings to help maintain compliance and profitability within healthcare organizations through accurate medical coding.

The CPC exam proves competence in all code systems (CPT®, ICD-10-CM, HCPCS Level II), evaluation and management principles, and surgical coding; adherence to documentation and coding guidelines; and proficiency in medical coding.

As the AAPC CPC exam is only offered a few times a year, it is recommended to begin speaking with your mentor about the scheduling process when you have reached Chapter 17 of the AAPC CPC material.

To check for dates and times the exam is offered please review the [AAPC Certification Exam Locations website](https://www.aapc.com/certification/locate-examination.aspx) (<https://www.aapc.com/certification/locate-examination.aspx>) and meet with your mentor to discuss your next steps.

The CPC certification covers the following competencies:

- ✓ Ability to assign accurate codes for diagnoses, procedures, and services performed by physicians and other qualified healthcare providers across a wide range of services, including E/M, anesthesia, surgery, radiology, pathology, and medicine
- ✓ Knowledge of medical coding guidelines and regulations, including issues related to compliance and reimbursement (i.e., medical necessity, claims denials, bundling issues, and charge capture)
- ✓ Ability to integrate medical coding and payment policy changes into reimbursement processes
- ✓ Knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology that is necessary to correctly code provider diagnoses and services

Strategies for Success:

- ✓ Become familiar with the coding manuals (CPT®, ICD-10-CM, HCPCS Level II), especially the CPT®! While there are questions from all three manuals on the exam, get comfortable with the CPT®, as most questions focus on this code set
- ✓ Take notes. If you reach a body system or coding convention that is not clear, make a note and spend more time studying that system or content
- ✓ Manage your time. You will be given nearly six hours to complete the exam. Pace your work to ensure you have enough time to complete the entire exam
- ✓ Review the Study Guide for CPC and take the CPC practice exam

Books and Resources

You will be provided with the following books and resources to help you study for the CPC exam. Your mentor will have additional information.

- ✓ Study Guide for CPC
- ✓ CPC Practice Exam Questions

Exam Information

After completing the AAPC Physician Coding for CPC Preparation course work, you will register for the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) examination. You need to register 3 weeks prior to the date you plan on sitting for the exam. The proctored exam consists of 150 multiple-choice questions. You will be allotted 5 hours and 40 minutes to finish the open codebook/manual exam. You can bring the ICD-10-CM, HCPCS Level II, and CPT coding manuals to the examination. You may also bring manual calculators and highlighters. This examination contains questions about the correct application of CPT, HCPCS Level II, and ICD-10-CM codes. You must also demonstrate competence in proper modifier use, coding guidelines, and regulations.

If you do not achieve a passing score on your initial attempt of the Certified Professional Coder (CPC) examination, you will be granted one additional retake at no charge. You can schedule your additional attempt with your program mentor.

CPC-A Apprentice Status

If you have less than two years of documented experience in medical coding, you will be issued a CPC-A designation on your certificate. The completion of the CPC course and certificate will count toward one year of coding experience. The successful completion of the coding simulation included in the Transition to Practice course will count towards an additional year.

Transition to Practice - Workforce Readiness (L004)

The Transition to Practice component of the program will prepare you to work within the industry. You will participate in coding simulation, encoder training, and career readiness modules.

Coding Simulation

This part of the course includes an online coding simulation tool that teaches and tests medical coding proficiency using real redacted medical records. These records concentrate on the top hiring medical specialties. This coding simulation practice comprises three modules, each containing 200 medical records. The practice modules do not have a minimum score and are intended to be used as practice; you may attempt each case once. The case and the correct coding are available for your review as many times as you would like.

You will complete a 20-case assessment at the end of each module and must pass each assessment with a 70 percent or higher proficiency rate. You will have three chances to obtain 70 percent.

The coding simulation portion of the program develops your competence in:

- ✓ Applying coding conventions when assigning diagnoses and procedure codes
- ✓ Understanding and applying the official ICD-10-CM coding guidelines
- ✓ Practical application of coding operative reports and evaluation and management services
- ✓ Applying coding conventions when assigning diagnoses and procedure codes

You will gain skills in:

- ✓ Understanding the accurate assignment of ICD-10-CM, CPT®, and HCPCS Level II codes

- ✓ Abstracting patient data from records for the correct assignment of diagnosis, procedure, and supply/service codes

Strategies for Success:

- ✓ Read the chapter and then complete the quiz.
- ✓ Watch the lecture's and pay close attention to what the speaker is saying about the slides.
- ✓ Complete the practical applications.
- ✓ Review the chapter and watch the lecture again.
- ✓ Complete the chapter review study.
- ✓ Review the module before attempting a practice case, remember you may only attempt each case once.
- ✓ Review each case and the correct coding answers to gain competency in all areas.
- ✓ Ask questions! If you get stuck when reviewing a module or understanding a correct answer, please reach out to your course instructor or program mentor right away.

CPC-A Apprentice Status Removal

Successful completion of the coding simulation will result in the removal of the A from your CPC credential. A letter of completion experience will automatically be generated and sent to the Membership Department at AAPC. Processing of the letter takes two to four weeks.

You will receive a WGU Medical Coding Novice badge and AAPC Letter of Completion upon the completion of the coding simulation modules and assessments.

Encoder Training

Encoders enable coding professionals to stay current on constantly changing coding regulations and policies. Most encoders have coding references and an electronic copy of a tabular and alphabetical code index. Many hospitals use cutting-edge electronic health record and encoder software to complete code assignments in the department. This training will help you become familiar with the encoder software used in many major facilities.

Career Readiness

The career readiness module is focused on defining yourself in your career, developing your personal brand, preparing you for interviews and starting your new job. Additionally, throughout the MCCAP program you and your mentor will be working together to further develop your job readiness skills you focused on during your experience in the interprofessional communication and leadership in healthcare course.

You will gain skills and knowledge in:

- ✓ Emotional intelligence in the management of self and others
- ✓ Standards of Ethical Coding as set forth by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and adhere to official coding guidelines
- ✓ Completing the assigned tasks (i.e. time entry, resource utilization, continuing education) designed to promote autonomy and personal and professional growth
- ✓ Gathering and disseminating information and communicating it clearly, logically, and persuasively in professional contexts

- ✓ Personal steps that will help you succeed in your career
- ✓ Required components of a personal portfolio
- ✓ Oral and written communication skills to meet the needs of employers
- ✓ Strategies specific to helping your employer achieve its goals and to developing the personal skills you need to adapt to a new job

You will receive a WGU Ready to Work badge upon the completion of the encoder training, career readiness, and career development modules.

MCCAP Attendance Policies and Requirements

WGU is committed to facilitating student success toward program completion. WGU in collaboration with students requires consistent engagement and activity. Student engagement requirements, mentor activities and recovery attempts are specified here within. Students who do not meet the requirements for engagement will be dropped from the MCCAP program.

Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare (L001)

Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to attend all sessions. While accommodations are needed and will be provided, students who miss the first cohort will be provided another specific time for a cohort. Those who miss twice, unless the circumstance is dire/personal, etc., will not be allowed to continue forward in the program. All students who miss a cohort will have a last-chance-opportunity cohort. Failure to attend will result in being dropped from the program.

Medical Coding Education & Certification Preparation (L002) and Transition to Practice - Workforce Readiness (L004)

Weekly communication with your program mentor is expected. The following policy describes program inactivity.

Inactivity is defined as:

- ✓ Missing a program mentor call – unexcused
- ✓ Not completing the course activities
 - ✓ Activity is defined as reading/engaging in course material, completing assignments, and taking webinars.
 - ✓ Demonstration of activity is confirmed by logging into the course(s) and/or program organization at least every 5 days.

Mentor outreach begins when a student misses a scheduled appointment and/or fails to demonstrate participation in course. Course Instructor and Program Mentor communication overtures will begin at least two weeks before the program start date to generate your engagement in the program. Outreach will be provided by phone and email.

Recovery from inactivity occurs when the student:

- ✓ Initiates a connection with their Program Mentor by day 5 after referral
- ✓ Commits to complete all requirements to date by day 5 after referral

If you demonstrate inactivity behaviors requiring referral to SEIU-UHW for outreach more than once you will be dropped from the program.

We believe that education provides individuals and families with one of the surest pathways to a better life, and WGU has established and maintained our leadership position through obsessive focus on the student and consistent adherence to our mission.

- President Scott Pulsipher