

# **Health Information Management and Technology**

**HIMT 490: Capstone  
Site Supervisor Guide**

## Introduction

This HIMT Capstone Course Site Supervisor Guide is to provide information and best practices to site supervisors on the expectations of students, and procedures for clinical practice sites and the capstone experience. The underlying goal is for capstone sites, educational institutions, and students to partner together to create a meaningful experience for all involved.

This guide uses the term “capstone experience” to refer to the internship that each HIMT student participates in at the end of the HIMT Program. Each HIMT student must have at least one capstone experience that provides the opportunity to assimilate theory with practical application in order to work toward achievement of AHIMA’s entry-level competencies in a real-world environment (Appendix A). In the 2004 Workforce Study commissioned by AHIMA, 80% of the baccalaureate students agreed or strongly agreed that the capstone experience was beneficial in their decision process regarding future employment.

This guide is intended to provide information and best practices to Site Supervisors in the capstone experience. Each Site Supervisor can contribute in a meaningful way to guide the academic development of HIMT students through the capstone experience.

Learning opportunities within the capstone experience may vary considerably and change periodically. This manual is a resource used to introduce and guide capstone Site Supervisors to blend education with experience. This blending is a mix of serving the educational needs of students, recognizing the operational capacities and constraints of the organizations serving as capstone sites, and supporting the health information management and technology needs of healthcare-related entities.

The capstone experience is a time of transition for students as they apply their HIMT education in a particular healthcare practice or healthcare-related setting. It is an applied, culminating experience in which the student assumes responsibility for a significant project as a health information management and technology professional. The student is a potential source of innovation for the healthcare affiliation site. Within the environment of an approved capstone site and under the supervision of a healthcare professional, each student begins the adjustment from the role of student to the role of health information professional in a practice setting. This manual is divided into sections to provide information and best practices to site supervisors on the expectations for a successful capstone experience.

## Capstone Objectives

The major objectives of the capstone are to enable the student:

1. To apply realistically the knowledge and skills attained in completing the HIMT curriculum to a specific practical HIMT project in a health information management or a health information technology setting.
2. To apply health information management and technology knowledge, skills, and principles to tasks, operations, and projects at the affiliation site.
3. To prepare for future employment and/or advanced education in the Health Information Management and Technology professions.

## Overview of the Capstone Experience

The following are key attributes of the capstone experience.

- The capstone experience is college credit based. Students pay tuition for completing the Capstone course.
- The Capstone Coordinator and Capstone Instructor evaluate the appropriateness of the capstone site to ensure they are placing students into a secure and productive environment that furthers the student's education.
- The capstone experience will be guided by learning outcomes the student is expected to complete. These learning outcomes require at least 75% substantive time on the student's part to complete.
- The Site Supervisor and Capstone Instructor assign the capstone student duties that are career-related, progressive, and challenging, consistent with the *AHIMA Baccalaureate Degree Entry-Level Competencies*.
- The Site Supervisor receives a copy of the final student project proposal with desired learning outcomes and acknowledges his or her responsibility to the student by agreeing to allow and guide the student in the completion of the project.
- An assigned Capstone Instructor contacts each student during the capstone experience (either in-person or remotely) to monitor the student's progress toward completing his or her goals.

- The Site Supervisor completes an evaluation of the student's experience, and this evaluation is considered when determining the student's final grade for the capstone.

Where applicable:

- Organizations with AHIMA-credentialed staff are eligible to claim 5 CEUs for providing on-site mentorship and supervision of students. The student's daily log is used to vet the involvement of the credentialed member.

## Key Definitions

Following are key definitions related to the HIMT Capstone course that are referenced in this manual.

**Capstone experience:** A required professional experience at an approved capstone site for students in the HIMT Program. The experience is a one-semester, 3-credit opportunity conducted after the student has satisfactorily completed or is in the process of completing all the required HIMT courses and is in good academic standing with the home university.

**Capstone site:** An organization that provides an HIMT student with the opportunity to complete a health information management and/or health information technology project. The capstone site must be approved by the Capstone Coordinator and the Capstone Instructor at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse. The capstone site may also be referred to as *site*.

**Capstone Coordinator:** An HIMT UW System staff and/or faculty member who serves as liaison between the university and capstone sites. The Capstone Coordinator is responsible for establishing and maintaining the legal relationship between the university and the capstone site. In addition, the Capstone Coordinator assists students and faculty in matters related to the capstone experience.

**Site Supervisor:** The capstone site employee/staff member at an approved capstone site who serves as an on-site coordinator and guide for the student during the capstone experience.

**Student:** The HIMT student enrolled in the Capstone course.

**Capstone Instructor:** The HIMT faculty member assigned to communicate and work with the Site Supervisor, student, and Capstone Coordinator to define and approve the student project, guide the student in the completion of the project, and evaluate the student project at the end of the capstone experience.

**Capstone agreement:** Agreements or contracts are established between the UW System and employers that define the conditions for accepting students in the workplace to complete a capstone experience.

## **HIMT Capstone Course Overview**

The HIMT Capstone course involves four individuals: a student, a Site Supervisor, the Capstone Coordinator, and the Capstone Instructor. It is essential for these four individuals work in a coordinated and collaborative manner to achieve the common and individual objectives of the capstone experience.

Preparation for the capstone experience begins approximately 12 months prior to the semester during which the student would like to complete the capstone experience. There are three major milestones in the Capstone course process:

### **Milestone 1: Capstone Site Identification**

The student researches potential capstone sites and identifies three potential sites at which to complete the experience.

### **Milestone 2: Capstone Site Selection and Capstone Project Proposal**

The student completes an interview with the top potential sites. The capstone site is confirmed, and a capstone project is approved for the capstone experience.

### **Milestone 3: Completing the Capstone Experience**

The student participates in the capstone experience and completes the capstone project. The student presents the capstone project to the Site Supervisor, the Capstone Instructor, and fellow students.

Appendix B – Capstone Process and Timeline provides detailed information regarding the steps and responsibilities for each participant. Here is information that details the Site Supervisor’s responsibilities during the process:

## **Milestone 1: Capstone Site Identification – Starting Approximately 12 Months before Capstone Experience**

During this period, the Site Supervisor’s responsibilities include:

- Meeting with the HIMT student to discuss a potential capstone experience. This may include one or more of the following:
  - Interviewing the student
  - Allowing the student to shadow employees
  - Allowing the student to provide volunteer service
  - Talking to the HIMT Academic Director, HIMT Student Academic Adviser, or other personnel about the student’s fit with the site
- Meeting with the Capstone Coordinator via phone, in-person or video conference to discuss a possible capstone experience

- Establishing an agreement (see below) with the UW System to accept a capstone student

## Capstone Sites

There are two types of capstone sites: an **Affiliated Capstone Site** and a **New Capstone Site**.

### *Affiliated Capstone Site*

Affiliated capstone sites are organizations that have an existing capstone agreement (Appendix M) with UW System to accept students for internships. The capstone agreement is a formal legal contract that allows for HIMT students to complete a nonpaid or paid capstone experience.

**Note: All capstone sites must have a current affiliation agreement with the UW System in place before a student can begin a capstone experience.**

The HIMT student is considered a contributing member of the capstone site staff and is supervised by a capstone site employee. Depending on the type of capstone experience, the student will observe and experience day-to-day health information–related operations during his or her time on the site and complete a project under the supervision of the Site Supervisor.

### *New Capstone Site*

Because of professional or personal interest, geographic limitations, or a lack of affiliated capstone sites, a student may see the need to identify a new capstone site. Since many potential sites have a presence on the Internet, students are encouraged to search the Internet and to identify potential HIMT-related sites that may be appropriate for completing a capstone experience.

Students are encouraged to consider potential employers as potential capstone sites. We encourage students to contact potential sites through the human resources department to identify possible internship opportunities. Students may independently contact a potential capstone site to do an interview, job/department shadowing, volunteer work, etc., to learn about the structure and operations of the potential capstone site. Students are also encouraged to share information about the HIMT Program, including the capstone requirement, when visiting the site.

**Note: Students cannot negotiate, promise, or otherwise imply that they can establish new capstone sites.**

If a student identifies a potential capstone site that does not have an existing affiliation agreement in place with the UW System, the student must notify the Capstone Coordinator as soon as possible. Students can propose a new site by providing name and contact information to the Capstone Coordinator. The Capstone Coordinator is responsible for contacting the new site and coordinating the affiliation agreement process.

**Note: All parties should be aware that the time required to secure affiliation agreements is unpredictable, but may take as long as 2 to 6 months.**

### **Select Three Potential Capstone Sites**

It is the student's responsibility to investigate, select, and rank at least **three potential capstone sites** that the student believes would best address his or her professional/personal interests (see Appendix E – Capstone Site Selection Form). The Capstone Coordinator will advise the student during this selection process and contact the sites to determine whether the site will consider accepting the student.

**Note: Three capstone sites are required, because one or more of the selected sites may not be accepting students for the semester in which the student wants to complete the capstone experience.**

A preliminary student interview may be requested by the site, and the Capstone Coordinator may accompany the student for the interview. If necessary, video conferencing may be used to complete the interview. The Capstone Coordinator and Site Supervisor must mutually agree on the selected student for a possible capstone experience. It is the Capstone Coordinator's responsibility to ensure that an affiliation agreement is in place before the student starts the capstone experience.

### **Milestone 2: Capstone Site Selection – Approximately 12 Weeks before Capstone Experience**

During this period, the Site Supervisor's responsibilities include:

- Interviewing potential capstone students (if necessary)
- Reviewing or providing a capstone project for the student to complete
- Assisting the Capstone Coordinator with completing the affiliation agreement
- Communicating with the Capstone Coordinator and Capstone Instructor regarding matters pertaining to the capstone experience

- Hosting a site visit for the student and Capstone Coordinator and/or Capstone Instructor (if necessary)

### **Capstone Project Selection**

Prior to the formal capstone interviews, the student identifies up to three different HIMT-related projects that are aligned with his or her professional/personal interests. These proposed projects will be sent to the capstone Site Supervisor prior to the interview, so the capstone Site Supervisor will have an idea of what type of project the student would like to complete.

**Note: The capstone Site Supervisor may already have a project selected for the student, which would be shared with the student at the time of the interview.**

### **Participating in Capstone Site Interview**

The Capstone Instructor will schedule capstone site interviews with the capstone Site Supervisor and the student. Ideally, these interviews should be in-person, but video conferencing may be used. The student will present his or her résumé and professional/personal interests. In addition, the student will present the three different project proposals he or she would like to complete—unless a project has already been identified. We encourage Site Supervisors to assign a project that will be of value to the site. The capstone Site Supervisor will provide an overview of the organization and explain a project that he or she would like the student to perform (if one is defined at this time).

### **Capstone Site Selection**

After all of the site interviews are completed, the student—in conjunction with the Capstone Instructor and with Site Supervisor input—will decide which capstone experience is most appropriate. The Capstone Instructor will notify the Site Supervisor of the student's selection.

### **Capstone Project Proposal**

The student may revise the capstone project based on the needs of the capstone site selected. Again, the capstone site may select a project submitted by the student or have a project already selected. The final proposal will be submitted on the Capstone Project Proposal (Appendix H). Because the Capstone Instructor will be grading the assignment, the Capstone Instructor will review and recommend changes to the project as necessary.



## **Immunizations, Drug Testing, Background Check**

Depending on the site selected, the student may have to provide a personal immunization history, and undergo drug testing and a background check. This will be determined by the site's personnel policies and procedures. The student will be responsible for completing and paying any fees associated with the drug testing and/or background check. If necessary, the Capstone Coordinator will provide guidance on drug testing and background checks, but it is ultimately the student's responsibility to meet the capstone site's requirements before starting the capstone experience.

## **Milestone 3: Capstone Experience**

Over the course of a semester, the student will complete the capstone experience. It is important to note that the capstone experience may or may not be a full-time, on-site experience. This will be determined by the Site Supervisor.

During the capstone experience, the Site Supervisor will:

- Review Appendix I – Student Capstone Performance Expectations
- Prepare a student orientation (see below)
- Prepare student schedule of activities
- Identify departmental site preceptor and mentor(s)
- Prepare written descriptions of any specific assignments (if applicable)
- Arrange for the following: facility identification, parking instructions, employee orientation (if applicable), information systems access, any additional facility-specific requirements
- Communicate with the student on a routine schedule
- Provide guidance on the capstone project
- Attend the student's Capstone Project Presentation (in-person or video conference)
- Evaluate the student's performance during capstone experience (see Appendix K – Capstone Student Evaluation Form).

## **Complete Capstone Site Orientation**

Orientation responsibilities for the Site Supervisor at the beginning of the capstone experience include:

- Provide an organizational chart of the department and facility
- Provide departmental policies and procedures
- Provide a facility tour
- Introduce the student to all members of the HIM department, including those individuals whom the student may report to

- Review expectations—your expectations of the student and his or her expectations of you
- Assign a primary supervisor (and a backup supervisor in case of primary supervisor's illness or absence), and provide the student with contact information (phone number and email address)

We encourage the capstone site to have the HIMT student participate in a formal employee orientation. Since we would like the student to function as a member of the organization's staff, the employee orientation process usually covers all the policies, procedures, and practices with which the student must comply (attendance, HIPAA, health and safety, dress code, etc.). The orientation may be a day or a week in time; the student is obligated to complete the employee orientation as you define it, and must make accommodations in his or her personal schedule to be able to complete the orientation.

### **Communicate with Site Supervisor**

During the capstone experience, the student is required to communicate with the Site Supervisor on a daily basis, unless otherwise instructed. The communication may be accomplished via person-to-person, email, phone, or video conference.

### **Complete Capstone Project**

The student will be required to submit a final project. If there are "milestone" reports that must be submitted, the student must comply. Any variations from the written proposal must be approved by the Site Supervisor and Capstone Instructor during the daily and weekly communication process.

### **Capstone Project Presentation**

The student will be required to do a five-minute executive presentation on the capstone project. This presentation can be done using video conferencing, and it will be recorded for review by future students who are considering the capstone site.

### **Student Evaluation**

At the conclusion of the capstone experience, the capstone Site Supervisor will be expected to complete a student evaluation (see Appendix K – Capstone Student Evaluation Form).

## Student Capstone Expectations

The capstone is intended to provide a meaningful and rewarding experience for all involved. If all parties are knowledgeable about their respective roles and responsibilities, the positive aspects of the experience will be enhanced.

### Student Responsibilities

1. Become familiar with, accept, and adhere to the policies and regulations governing the affiliation site including:
  - a. HIPAA privacy and security policies and procedures
  - b. Health and wellness policies and procedures for the student, employees, and patients
  - c. All personnel policies and procedures that apply to the student (absence from work, tardiness, etc.)
2. Act in a professional and ethical manner as a member of the affiliation site.
3. Inform the affiliation Site Supervisor as quickly as possible when he or she is unable to report for work due to illness or emergency.
4. Consult with the affiliation Site Supervisor when confronted with problems related to affiliation site operations.
5. Notify and consult with the faculty Capstone Instructor about unresolved problems at the site or associated with university requirements.
6. Follow instruction in assignments as presented in HIMT 490: Capstone Course Syllabus.

### Student Behavior Expectations

The capstone experience is designed to provide the student with practical work experience in the HIMT competencies and focus on skill building and practical application on theory. Since the experience will be completed in a “real-world” work environment, the student will be expected to function in the role of an “employee” at the capstone site. Outlined below are student performance expectations. If the student fails to comply with these performance expectations, the capstone experience may be canceled.

### *Attendance*

Absenteeism and tardiness are considered unprofessional and undesirable traits. While there may be times when he or she may be absent because of illness or other valid reasons, it is the student's responsibility to make up the time.

- If a student is unable to work on a specified day, it is his or her responsibility to notify the Site Supervisor and make arrangements to make up the missed time with both the Site Supervisor and capstone faculty.  
**Note:** Follow site policies and procedures for reporting absence and/or tardiness.
- If a student is running late, he or she must contact his or her primary supervisor and provide an estimated arrival time.  
**Note:** Follow site policies and procedures for reporting absence and/or tardiness.
- The student will not ask to leave early—a student needs to complete a certain number of hours in the field to fulfill his or her capstone experience.
- Excessive absenteeism and tardiness adversely affect the student's grade.

### *Appearance*

Students should practice professionalism by presenting a professional appearance.

- Adhere to the facility's dress code—dress in suitable business casual or office attire. For example, women should wear blouses and skirts, dresses, or dress slacks with hose or socks. Men should wear dress shirts, ties, and dress slacks with socks. Jeans, shorts, sneakers, or T-shirts should not be worn—avoid extremes in jewelry, hairstyles, body piercing and tattoos, and makeup.
- The student may be working in close proximity with professional staff, and as such must be aware of personal hygiene. Issues such as the use of strong perfumes/colognes, tobacco odors, deodorant issues, and the like must be considered.
- Students should wear their authorized identification badge at all times.
- If there are questions regarding proper attire and appearance, the student will discuss them with the Site Supervisor.

## *Conduct*

The student will demonstrate professional conduct as noted below throughout the capstone experience:

- The student is to demonstrate initiative by completing activities as assigned.
- If a student completes assignments early, he or she will ask for additional work rather than waiting for someone to notice.
- There may be times when clinical personnel are unavailable to work with the student. During those times, the student is to use initiative to interview staff, maintain a log of activity, review policy manuals, etc.
- The student is not to use a cell phone or surf the Internet during working hours (even if employees are doing so). This includes texting. Make personal calls and text only during breaks and lunchtime. Additionally, the use of other electronic devices is generally considered to be unprofessional.
- The student is to demonstrate a professional attitude during any unexpected situation that might occur. The student is encouraged to assist if possible and otherwise observe.
- The student is to follow professional communication practices:
  - Contact his or her capstone Site Supervisor prior to the capstone experience to make introductions, obtain driving and parking information, and ask questions related to appropriate attire.
  - Be cognizant of the professional titles used in the healthcare setting. Medical professionals, patients, and coworkers should be addressed in the appropriate manner at all times.
  - Maintain a professional demeanor by avoiding personal discussions.
  - As a professional, the student is expected to handle minor difficulties that arise, on his or her own. However, if attempts to solve the situation have been unsuccessful, these matters should be brought to the attention of the Site Supervisor and the Capstone Instructor.
  - Avoid gossiping or complaining with site staff or other students.
- The student is to maintain a daily log of activities accomplished during the capstone experience. This log might be shared with the Site Supervisor. Its purpose is to document what has been accomplished and experienced, what still needs to be completed, and what activities can be added or deleted.

- At the end of the capstone, the student is encouraged to send personal, handwritten thank-you notes to the Site Supervisor and specific individuals who contributed to the experience.

### *Health and Safety*

Student, employee, and patient health and safety are priorities regardless of the setting in which the student is completing the capstone experience.

The student must:

- Familiarize himself or herself with the organization's health and safety policies. This may be accomplished via a formal orientation or a meeting with the Site Supervisor, where the policies and procedures are reviewed with the student.
- Notify the Site Supervisor immediately when health and safe practices are not consistent with the organization's policies and procedures.
- Notify the Capstone Instructor of possible health and safety concerns encountered at the capstone site immediately.

### *Ethics and Confidentiality*

Students are expected to:

- Adhere to the AHIMA's Code of Ethics
- Abide by the school's Code of Student Conduct
- Abide by applicable facility policies and procedures
- Abide by HIPAA regulations