HIMAA and education

HIMAA Education Services

HIMAA members will be aware that the Education Services Division of HIMAA provides an important service to them and to the wider community in offering a suite of training courses in relevant areas.

Currently, distance education courses are focused on clinical classification (including medical terminology as a preparatory step in coder training) for the Australian environment as well as certain international settings. Details of the programs can be obtained by entering the Education pages of the HIMAA website (HIMAA 2003b).

HIMAA also offers a service to design and deliver to organisations a range of specialist courses on request, in areas such as:

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Health information systems
- Medico-legal issues in health information management
- Casemix
- Quality improvement in health information services
- Electronic health records
- Human resources issues for health information managers.

As confirmed at a strategic planning session in 2002, HIMAA will in future focus more attention on development of programs in response to the needs of health information managers seeking continuing professional development opportunities.

How do training programs come to be offered?

Although current programs available through HIMAA Education Services and how the service is administered (see the website also for information about Education Services staff) are quite widely known, members may be less aware of the process for determining education needs and development of training programs.

The Education Services Working Party is a standing committee of the HIMAA Board and is made up of: nominees from each State Branch who have an interest in the area of continuing professional development; a member of the National Conference Committee; and the team leader of HIMAA Education Services. As well, the services and advice of other HIMAA staff, HIMAA members and experts from outside the HIM profession may be co-opted as and when necessary.

Members of the working party are appointed for a finite period to complete set tasks. Provision will be made for extension of projects where required. The Chairperson is elected by the working-party membership and is appointed for a term of two (2) years (renewable).

The current terms of reference (HIMAA, 2003a) and work program for the Education Services Working Party are to:

1. Review all papers to the HIMAA Board from Manager, Education Services and Team Leader, Education Services regarding products, services and future directions for HIMAA.
2. On the basis of the outcomes of the most recent Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Planning Session, confirm the HIMAA CPD vision and pose a “principle to practice” approach for CPD activities at State and National levels.
3. Perform market and business appraisal on an identified new product range for HIMAA Education Services.
4. Advise and assist in the conceptual development of the Clinical Coder Certification program.
5. Encourage and facilitate a CPD culture within the clinical coding and health information management profession.
6. Explore the concept of credentialling CPD activities in the health information management profession and make recommendations to the HIMAA Board.
7. Liaise, where relevant and appropriate, with other HIMAA committees and other professional and employer groups on matters affecting the operation of Education Services.
8. Undertake other specific activities as requested by the HIMAA Board and Executive Officer, HIMAA.

The strategy to move into the broader area of continuing professional development will be comprehensively discussed in an upcoming edition of this journal.

HIMAA Education Committee

The Memorandum of Association of the HIMAA (HIMAA, 1996) sets out its formal objectives that include a responsibility for the following:

- To suggest general policies or standards for all matters concerning the affairs of health information managers. [2.2(3)]
- To prescribe and adopt standards and classifications for health information managers and their associates and all other persons concerned with the profession of health information managers and to provide for and regulate training and education and to set up or approve examinations in the theory and practice of health information management for members and students and all others desirous of being enrolled as members and to issue certificates of classification but any such certificate must show that it is merely a certificate granted under the rules of the Company and does not take effect under any statutory or public power. [2.2(6)]

The HIMAA Board has devolved, in part, the responsibility for attaining these objectives to the HIMAA Education Committee.

HIM Course Accreditation

The principal function of the HIMAA Education Committee is to periodically evaluate and accredit Health Information Management education programs.
Information Management education programs offered by Australian institutions.

In order to obtain or retain approval by the HIMAA Board, an educational institution must demonstrate that its program is consistent with sound educational policies and can produce graduates who are competent health information managers. It does this by establishing that it is being operated in accordance with the Standards set by HIMAA (HIMAA, 2003c), and the current HIM Competency Standards (in HIMAA, 2003c). Graduates of programs that, in the view of the Board, do not meet the Standards will not be eligible for full membership of the HIMAA.

The HIMAA seeks in this approval process to:
1. Establish and maintain minimum standards for educational programs for health information managers in Australia.
2. Provide recognition for educational programs which meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document and the HIM Competency Standards.
3. Develop a list of approved courses to assist in the classification of membership applications.

Conclusion
Clearly, the Education Working Party and Education Committee play important roles in the continued vitality of the HIMAA as a professional organisation.

The current members of this committee and working party, as well as all their predecessors, are to be congratulated on their expertise and willingness to participate and thereby maintain the professional obligations and ongoing development of the Association.

References
HIMAA (2003c). Policies and Standards For Approval Of Educational Programs For Health Information Managers. Sydney: HIMAA.
HIMAA (1996). Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations for the Conduct of State and Territory Branches. Sydney: HIMAA.

Joy Smith
Associate Editor, HIMJ
Senior Project Officer (Clinical Forms Management Project)
Information Strategy, IMU
Queensland Health
Brisbane, QLD
Tel: +61 7 3405 5778
E-mail: Joy_Smith@health.qld.gov.au

To find out more about these important entities (including the HIM Competency Standards which were developed by the Education Committee) or to register your interest in assisting with their work, please contact the HIMAA Board via the Executive Officer at the National Office (tel: 02 9887 5001 or e-mail: EO@himaa.org.au).