



Dear Prospective Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate Program. Enclosed you will find Fast Facts about the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate Program. The document answers the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the Cancer Registry profession and our particular program. Cancer registrars, now known as ***Oncology Data Specialists***, work behind the scenes in hospitals, central registries, and government agencies, collecting high-quality patient-level cancer data that drive public health efforts by increasing our knowledge about cancer. It's the work of dedicated cancer registrars that inform cancer researchers, assist in cancer prevention, encourage the development of new treatment options, and contribute to the search for the cure.

After reading this document you should contact the program director to plan out your entrance into the certificate program. If you meet all of the prerequisite objectives, then you should complete the online Health Careers Interest form using this link [HC Interest Form](https://portal2.tri-c.edu/Player/HealthCareersRequest?_gl=1*1ligpq3*_ga*MTMxNjE4ODczMy4xNjA5Nzg1MjEy*_ga_TS01T87355*MTY4NjYxMTQxMC42Ni4xLjE2ODY2MTE2NTQuMTMuMC4w). If the link does not work, you may need to copy and paste the link directly into your web browser [https://portal2.tri-c.edu/Player/HealthCareersRequest?\\_gl=1\\*1ligpq3\\*\\_ga\\*MTMxNjE4ODczMy4xNjA5Nzg1MjEy\\*\\_ga\\_TS01T87355\\*MTY4NjYxMTQxMC42Ni4xLjE2ODY2MTE2NTQuMTMuMC4w](https://portal2.tri-c.edu/Player/HealthCareersRequest?_gl=1*1ligpq3*_ga*MTMxNjE4ODczMy4xNjA5Nzg1MjEy*_ga_TS01T87355*MTY4NjYxMTQxMC42Ni4xLjE2ODY2MTE2NTQuMTMuMC4w)

Please also send a copy of **your current business resume** to [Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu](mailto:Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu). Resumes should include work history for the past ten years and your college degree information. You will also need to submit official sealed college transcripts directly to Cuyahoga Community College if you have obtained your degree at another school or university.

Once your resume' has been reviewed and your transcripts have been transferred to Cuyahoga Community College, you will receive an email confirming your admission into the program.

Again, thank you for your interest in Cuyahoga Community College and the Cancer Registrar Post-Degree Certificate Program

*Kathy Loflin, R.H.I.A.*

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Health Information Management Technology  
Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program

**FAST FACTS and FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**ONCOLOGY DATA SPECIALIST / CANCER REGISTRAR**  
**POST DEGREE CERTIFICATE**

**\*\*Please note that on January 1, 2024 the new name for a cancer registrar will be Oncology Data Specialist in accordance with the National Cancer Registrars Association. This document will use the titles interchangeably.**

This program is designed for those interested in becoming an Oncology Data Specialist (ODS).

**1. What is a Cancer Registrar / Oncology Data Specialist?**

Cancer Registrars, or Oncology Data Specialists, are data information specialists that capture a complete history, diagnosis, treatment, and health status for every cancer patient in the United States. The data provides essential information to researchers, healthcare providers, and public health officials to better monitor and advance cancer treatments, conduct research, and improve cancer prevention and screening programs. Registrars work closely with physicians, administrators, researchers, and health care planners to provide support for cancer program development, ensure compliance of reporting standards, and serve as a valuable resource for cancer information with the ultimate goal of preventing and controlling cancer.

**2. How do I become certified as an Oncology Data Specialist?**

a) The first step begins with formal education. Program students must already have an Associate Degree or higher in an allied health sciences career with college credit that includes Medical Terminology, and Anatomy and Physiology I and II.

➤ Students who have graduated from any Health Information Management degree program and hold current credentials as a Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA), Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT), or the Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) are perfectly suited to become cancer registrars.

b) Students who have earned a college degree that *did not* include Medical Terminology, or two semesters of Anatomy and Physiology I and II will need to complete these prerequisites courses prior to applying for the cancer registrar program. **These courses cannot be more than five (5) years old. However, if the applicant is currently working in a health career role, the program director may be able to waive the five year requirement.**

c) Students then complete *either* a post degree certificate program for Cancer Registrars / Oncology Data Specialists or earn an associate of applied science degree for ODS. The National Cancer Registrar's Association (NCRA) must accredit these formal education programs if students wish to be able to take the CTR (now ODS) examination after completion of training.

➤ Tri-C's Post-Degree Certificate program for Cancer Registrars is fully accredited by the National Cancer Registrar's Association.

➤ Tri-C does not have an applied science degree for Cancer Registrars at this time. However, it is being explored as a viable option.

➤ **Or** students could have **at least 60 college credits towards a degree**. If a student wishes to go this route, then the courses in 2b would be needed along with HIM-1301 (*Introduction to HIM*), HIM-1311 (*Legal and Ethical Aspects of Health Information Management*), HIM-1423 (*Health Data Documentation*) and HIM-1432 (*Computer systems in HIM*), English-1010, and IT-1090 Microcomputer Applications (or equivalent)

d) Students who successfully complete the post degree certificate program for Cancer Registrars are then eligible to sit for the national Oncology Data Specialist (ODS) certification examination to earn the credentials ODS. The examination is administered by the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) and is offered three times during the year.

**3. What if my health care degree is really old? Can I still apply to the Cancer Registrar program?**

If a student is currently working in the field of medicine, the earned degree does not expire. It may be recommended that the student take a refresher courses in Anatomy and Physiology just so the student is current on medical terminology and refreshed in body systems which may be outside of their daily scope of practice.

**4. Where does an Oncology Data Specialist find employment?**

Cancer registry professionals and Oncology Data Specialists are needed in hospital-based and central cancer registries throughout the United States. In addition to managing and reporting cancer data, registrars serve in multiple other professional activities.

Since the passage of the Cancer Registries Amendment Act in 1992, the number of central cancer registries has increased dramatically and health care facilities and physicians are required to report their cancer cases. Due to limited educational opportunities, there are not enough certified cancer registrar professionals available to fill positions in this rapidly growing field.

**5. How long is the program?**

The Cancer Registrar program courses are delivered over three consecutive semester and include the summer semester. It takes one full year to complete once the student begins the Cancer Registrar courses.

**6. Briefly describe the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate program.**

The courses are designed and offered online VIRTUALLY during the evening hours to accommodate working healthcare professionals who desire a change of career. The day of the week may change based on the year the program is offered.

**7. Can the program be taken completely online?**

Yes, the courses are *only available online* at this time. However, for the student who wants that face-to-face interaction with classmates and the instructor, we have a live virtual class for the courses every Wednesday night from 5:30 PM until 8:00 PM. The live WebEx is recorded during each class so students who are unable to be on the Webex won't miss out on any instruction. This format allows distance learners to log in and be "present" during the classroom sessions allowing them to interact with the instructor and get real-time answers to questions, or to watch/listen the recording at a time that is more convenient for them. The recording is also sent out to all students the next morning for reference purposes during the semester. It is strongly recommended that the students have a headset with a microphone so they can interact during the live presentation. A camera is optional.

**8. What if I live out of state or out of your area?**

Yes, you can take our courses completely online if you live outside the state of Ohio, or even just outside of Cuyahoga County. There is a price difference in tuition (see #9). However, there are a few states where Cuyahoga Community College is **NOT** permitted to offer classes under the NC-SARA (National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements):

California, Massachusetts, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.

EXCEPTION NOTE\*\*\*California can be taught to, so long as a similar program "on ground" does not exist within 50 miles of the student's residence.

**9. How much does the program cost?**

Tuition is the top cost associated with the program. The cost per credit hour is based on where the student resides: inside Cuyahoga County, outside Cuyahoga County but still inside the state of Ohio, or out-of-state. This link will take you to the website for up-to-date tuition costs for students and provide information on paying for college: <http://www.tri-c.edu/paying-for-college/index.html>

The textbook and staging manual could cost between \$200 and \$350, but many are available online for deep discounts. There may also be a cost for your pre-program background check. Students may be required to have a medical/physical exam and this will vary based on your personal insurance coverage. There may also be costs associated if you visit a clinical site for parking and food, but again this will vary based on location.

**10. Is financial aid available?**

Generally, post degree certificate programs are not eligible for Federal Aid such as Pell Grants. However, students are encouraged to talk to the financial aid office to inquire about other options for financial aid and student loans.

### 11. Where can I obtain additional information regarding the profession?

- Check the Tri-C campus resource center or your neighborhood library for professional journals, directories and trade publications in the specific field you are exploring.
- Talk to people who work in the Cancer Registry field. (Do they enjoy their jobs? If given a chance would they do it over again?)
- Call companies that employ people in the field you are researching. Let them know you are only seeking information and advice.
  - ❖ Develop and take along a list of questions.
  - ❖ After each interview, ask if there is anyone else they would recommend as an informational resource.
- Do a job search on an internet search engine like Monster.com or Indeed.com
- Do some additional internet research about the actual profession:
  - ❖ National Cancer Registrar's Association <http://www.ncra-usa.org>

### 12. How do I apply or begin taking courses in the Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program?

- A. Submit a **business resume** which includes work history and educational degrees to the Cancer Registrar Program Director by email at [Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu](mailto:Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu) . You will receive either an email or phone call from the program director to discuss your enrollment in the program.
- B. If you are not already a student of Tri-C, apply to the college by following these steps:  
<http://www.tri-c.edu/get-started/index.html> and select the student description that best fits your situation
- C. Request any other colleges or universities where you graduated or took classes to send your **official** transcripts directly to Tri-C. If all of your classes were taken at Tri-C you can skip this step.
- D. Submit a Health Careers Enrollment Interest Form to the Health Careers Enrollment Center if you meet the above criteria for application.  
[HC Interest Form](#)
  - If you are currently working on prerequisite courses, you may Health Careers Enrollment Interest form to request admission to the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate program when you are enrolled in the final pre-admission course(s).
- E. The Cancer Registrar post degree certificate program uses a "rolling admission" process for admittance into the program. After a student has met all the admission requirements and submitted his/her online health careers interest form, a letter of acceptance will be emailed to the student informing the student of the next available opening. A new class of cancer registrar students begins every year, but the starting semester may be different each year. If the Interest Form is incomplete it will not be considered. Students must achieve or complete the following before applying to the program:
  - a) Submission of a completed Cuyahoga Community College Admissions Application
  - b) Proof of an earned associate degree (or higher) in a health care related field by submission of official transcripts from all colleges or universities attended. Your Health Careers Interest Form will not be considered complete until all external transcripts have been evaluated by the Tri-C Registrars Office which may take 4-6 weeks once received.
  - c) Submission of any Substitution and Waiver forms for courses approved by HIMT program director; or submit a note stating that a Substitution/Waiver has been requested and is pending.
  - d) Upon acceptance to the program and prior to clinical practice, the student will be required to submit evidence of good health and complete a criminal background check.

- F. Participate in a phone interview with the Cancer Registrar Program Director to determine which cohort you will be participating in.

**NOTE:** *The Cancer Registrar program courses are offered in a modular format. The courses are offered in sequential order with one course immediately following the other, one time each year. If a student cannot complete the sequence they will have to wait one full year until the course is offered again in order to complete the certificate program.*

- ❖ When these requirements are met and verified, the student's information and file will be forwarded to the HIMT/CTR Program Director for further evaluation. A letter will be emailed to the student informing him/her of his/her status. Typically, acceptance letters are sent in June each year for August enrollment

**13. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS (if required by the college)**

Most healthcare facilities require criminal background checks for their employees. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations Hospital Accreditation Standards Manual requires healthcare organizations to implement "a process to ensure that a person's qualifications are consistent with his/her job responsibilities." This standard "applies to staff, students and volunteers," and it further states that the organization is responsible for verifying "the following according to law, regulation or hospital policy: information on criminal background." As such, Cuyahoga Community College students who participate in an *in-person professional practice experience* in the Cancer Registrar Certificate program will be required to undergo a criminal background check prior to placement at the facility. In addition, the facility may require students to undergo a physical examination (on-site at the facility or by the student's primary care provider) prior to beginning an in-person professional practice experience that may include drug screening. Students will be required to pay the costs associated with the criminal background check and/or the drug screening

**14. DRUG TESTING**

Students may be required to undergo drug testing prior to starting a clinical experience. The student is responsible for the cost of this testing. The type of testing needed, time restrictions and the cost of the testing will be dependent on the clinical site. Test results will be sent to Clinical Site Coordinator, Healthcare Career Initiatives at Cuyahoga Community College and they will be kept confidential.

If a student fails a drug test, Cuyahoga Community College is under no obligation to place a student at another clinical site. It is the student's responsibility to provide proper documentation to the Clinical Site Coordinator, Healthcare Career Initiatives if they failed the test due to justifiable drug use.

A student may not be able to complete the health career program if they cannot be placed in a clinical site due a failed drug test.

**15. PASS/NO PASS GRADE OPTION**

Students can elect up to 12 credits taken Pass/No Pass (P/NP) to fulfill degree requirements at Tri-C. **However, courses used as pre-requisites or core courses for any of the Health Information Management Technology Program(s) must have a traditional letter grade.** This means that all courses within the HIMT degree sequence, Medical Billing Specialist program, Cancer Registrar Oncology Data Specialist program, or the Health Unit Coordinator program must have a letter grade including the general education courses required for graduation.

**16. If I have additional questions, who may I contact?**

If after reading this entire FAQ document a student still has unanswered questions they may also contact Kathy Loflin, RHIA, the Program Manager for Cancer Registrar program at 216.987.4456 or by email at [Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu](mailto:Kathy.Loflin@tri-c.edu).

If students have any questions or are unsure how to complete the online Health Careers Interest form, please contact the HEALTH CAREER ENROLLMENT CENTER at 216-987-4247

## Curriculum for Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate:

### **Admission requirements:**

A minimum of an Associate Degree from a state accredited College that includes college transfer credit in:

	<b>Equivalent Tri-C Course(s)</b>
Intro to Medical Terminology	MA-1010; or MA-1020
Two semesters of Anatomy & Physiology that include lab components	BIO-2331 A&P I <i>and</i> BIO-2341 A&P II
College Level Math	Math 1000-level or higher

- The above prerequisite courses must all have a minimum of a C grade or higher.
- Graduates of an accredited HIMT degree program are best suited for this certificate.
- Students who do not have a college degree of any level are encouraged to complete the HIMT degree program first before attempting the Cancer Registrar Post Degree Certificate
- Students who have a degree that does not include the above courses must complete these courses before applying for the CTR program.
- Students are required to submit:
  - A current business resume to the Cancer Registry Program Director via email and participate in an interview via phone or in person
  - A Health Careers Online Enrollment Interest Form [HC Interest form](#)
  - Official Transcripts from the college(s) where the above courses were taken if not at Tri-C
  - Official Transcripts from the college(s) where the highest degree has been conferred if not at Tri-C

### **Students begin the program each SPRING semester as a cohort.**

#### **SPRING SEMESTER :**

##### ***HIM-2500 Intro to Cancer Registry and Disease Management***

**2 credits**

Introduction to the organization of the Cancer Registry, including cancer data management and utilization, quality control activities and the cancer program and accreditation processes. The function of the cancer registry in the electronic environment including Health Information Privacy and Security., Registry Organization, Types of Registries (central and hospitals), Cancer Registry Management, and Standard Setters (COC, SEER, NPCR)

##### ***HIM-2510...The Cancer Disease Process and Management***

**3 Credits**

Introduction to the Pathophysiology of the cancer disease process. Ascertainment of presenting symptomatology, diagnostic evaluations, extent of disease, evaluations and treatment modalities to include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormonal therapy, immunotherapy, palliative therapies, and alternative therapies. Introduction to the role of clinical research trials in development of cancer treatments; Registry Standards and Networking; Commission on Cancer (COC); Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program; National Program of Cancer Registries –Cancer Surveillance System (NPCR-CSS); and Registry Standards for Approved Cancer Programs.

##### ***HIM-2520....Oncology Coding and Staging***

**3 Credits**

Explanation of oncology coding methodologies and cancer staging systems. Students will use a variety of resources to accurately assign correct oncology codes for topography, histology, grade, tumor status, nodal status, metastatic status, stage group and summary state. Students will use a variety of cancer staging resources to determine the stage of the disease for reporting purposes. This course will provide an overview of cancer and the natural course of the disease progression.

Coding Systems: ICD-0-3 (International Classification of Diseases-Oncology-3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and MP/H (Multiple-Primary Histology coding rules; Coding Diagnosis and Sequencing. Evaluating Extent of Disease. Cancer Staging. American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) staging system. Summary Staging. Collaborative Staging Data Collection System Coding Instructions (part 1 and part 2).

## **SUMMER SEMESTER:**

### ***HIM-2530....Oncology Treatment and Coding***

**3 Credits**

Covers treatment and management of cancerous diseases. Includes identification and coding of surgical treatments, radiation treatments, chemotherapy treatments, immunotherapy treatments, hormonal treatments, alternative, palliative and experimental treatments, and other treatment coding. Clinical Trials with coding and monitoring also discussed

### ***HIM-2540....Abstracting Principles and Methodologies for Oncology***

**3 Credits**

Covers the components and organization of a cancer patient health record. This course provides both general and specific instructions for abstracting pertinent information from: the patient record; and source documents using sample operative and pathologic reports. Instruction includes details on what should be recorded and how to record cancer information on the cancer registry abstract, study of the structure and content of source documents from the record, as well as abstracting principles and practices using patient health records. Normal methods and procedures used to diagnose cancer also discussed.

## **FALL SEMESTER:**

### ***HIM-2550....Database Analytics, Quality and Tracking***

**3 Credits**

Policies and procedures for Cancer Program Standards including the patient follow-up process. Managing follow-up files, data quality, and database management. Gathering, manipulating, storing, retrieving and classifying recorded information. Monitoring statistics and epidemiology factors.

### ***HIM-2560....Oncology Databases and Manuals***

**3 Credits**

Investigating and exploring the coding rules in the Multiple Primary Histology (MP/H) Manual and the Hematopoietic database. The course will also provide study in hematopoietic and lymphoid neoplasms

### ***HIM-2871... Professional Practice Experience (PPE) for Oncology Data Specialists***

**3 Credits**

160 hours in direct clinical practice at a Cancer Registry site that will include: Data collection and abstracting using ICD-0-3 coding; Staging cancer (CS, AJCC TNM, SEER Summary); treatments; case follow-up; Cancer Committee activities; reporting; quality control and management studies; Case-finding; Cancer Conference; HIPAA; Central Registry Operations; and Electronic Health Record exposure.

- Tri-C has opted to participate in a fully online (virtual) professional practice experience through the NCRA and SEER Educate virtual experience. Students are required to pass six assessments directly through the NCRA in order to successfully complete the PPE.
- Students *may* be required to do an internship of at least 80 hours in a Cancer Registry that has an affiliation agreement on file with Cuyahoga Community College. The student must work under the direct supervision of a Certified Tumor Registrar who will verify hours worked at the clinical site.
- The other 80 hours of clinical experience are done remotely online using Cancer Registry software under the direct supervision of the Certified Tumor Registrar faculty staff of Cuyahoga Community College.
  - **NOTE:** Cuyahoga Community College uses a leading cancer registry software as part of the post degree certificate program so as to provide a one-of-a-kind virtual PPE experience for our graduates.
  - **HIM-2871 may be offered as a 10-week or 14-week session to allow sufficient time for students to complete all six of the NCRA online assessment modules.**