HIMAA Project -
Certificate IV in Clinical Classification

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This report focuses on the work HIMAA is currently undertaking to add the new Certificate IV in Clinical Classification to its scope of delivery.

Background
For many years HIMAA has been lobbying government and the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council for the development of a full qualification for Clinical Coders (CCs) under the Vocational Education and Training system. Three units of competency are currently available for CC training within the Health Training Package\(^1\) however it has long been recognised that the entry level unit does not meet industry needs. Despite additional lobbying by some of the jurisdictions and recognition by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council that a qualification was needed, Commonwealth funding was not available to undertake the development work by the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council.

The Victorian Department of Health (DH)\(^2\) undertook research in 2013 to develop a Clinical Coding Capability Framework with the aim of improving the education of entry level CCs (Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, 2013). The framework formed the basis for the development and validation of a skills and knowledge profile on which a new qualification could be based. A project steering committee was established by the DH to guide and oversee the development of the 22274VIC Certificate IV in Clinical Classification which was accredited by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority in 2014 (Australian Government Training, 2014).

The qualification consists of twelve units of competency, all of which are core units which must be completed in order for students to be awarded the qualification. They are:

**UNIT CODE** | **UNIT TITLE**
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BSBWHS201A | Contribute to health and safety of self and others
HLTHIR402D | Contribute to organisational effectiveness in the health industry
BSBMED301B | Interpret and apply medical terminology appropriately
BSBMED305B | Apply the principles of confidentiality, privacy and security within the medical environment
BSBWOR401A | Establish effective workplace relationships
BSBWOR501B | Manage personal work priorities and professional development
VU21652 | Apply knowledge of the health system for clinical coding purposes
VU21653 | Prepare for clinical coding
VU21654 | Analyse clinical documentation
VU21655 | Abstract clinical information to support clinical coding
VU21656 | Assign codes to an episode of care
VU21657 | Participate in clinical coding audits

The first six units of competency are existing units that have been previously developed by Industry Skills Councils for other qualifications. These units form part of other training packages and qualifications and have been “imported” into this qualification. Five of the units have been imported from the Business Services Training package (Australian Government Training, 2016) and one unit from the Health Training Package (HLTHIR402D) (Australian Government Training, 2015). The remaining six units are new and have been developed specifically for the Certificate IV in Clinical Classification.

The Certificate IV in Clinical Classification has now enabled Registered Training Organisations such as HIMAA to develop a more robust training program around a qualification rather than a single unit of competency. The outcome of such a program should be a more work ready graduate. As a result, in 2015 the HIMAA Board made a decision to invest in putting the qualification onto its scope of delivery.

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\(^{1}\) See page 18 for definition of Training Package
\(^{2}\) The Victorian Department of Health is now known as the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
And so it began …
This has by no means been a small undertaking for HIMAA from a financial or a human resource perspective. The subsequent project plan required an investment timeline of twelve months to complete. It was anticipated that the majority of the work would take place in the first six to nine months with the final few months concentrating on an application for a change of scope of delivery to the Australian Skills and Quality Authority and addressing the compliance requirements of the application.

Establishing a project plan and team
A project team was assembled consisting of: Ragni Lal - Team Leader Clinical Coding; Jo Williams - Team Leader Comprehensive Medical Terminology; Angela Morgan - Education Officer, Accelerated Program; and myself - Training Manager.

The project plan identified the need for a number of additional resources to undertake the elements of the project. It was determined that there was no capacity within the existing staffing levels to undertake the project, while concurrently maintaining the functions associated with the normal student workload. Consequently a decision was made to backfill existing education staff to enable redirection of their knowledge, skills and time to the project. In May 2015, HIMAA advertised for three FTEs and we were fortunate to recruit five highly skilled HIMs to backfill the positions. The temporary education staff commenced in July 2015 and after an induction period assumed the roles of training and assessment of students across all existing courses.

Unpacking the qualification
The project team was now able to commence “unpacking” the qualification. This task identified all the requirements for training and assessment for each of the units and the qualification as a whole. The performance criteria and required skills and knowledge were identified for each unit of competency and a delivery and assessment plan developed for each. Since many of the units of competency overlapped in their content it was decided to use a more integrated training and assessment approach so that students did not need to repeat any work. To achieve this, the twelve units were grouped into four clusters for delivery, which also allows for a more holistic assessment process.

Cluster 1
- VU21652 Apply knowledge of the health system for clinical coding purposes
- HLTHIR402D Contribute to organisational effectiveness in the health industry
- BSBWHS201A Contribute to health and safety of self and others
- BSBMED305B Apply the principles of confidentiality, privacy and security within the medical environment

Cluster 2
- BSBMED301B Interpret and apply medical terminology appropriately
- VU21654 Analyse clinical documentation

Cluster 3
- VU21653 Prepare for clinical coding
- VU21655 Abstract clinical information to support clinical coding
- VU21656 Assign codes to an episode of care

Cluster 4
- BSBWOR401A Establish effective workplace relationships
- BSBWOR501B Manage personal work priorities and professional development
- VU21657 Participate in clinical coding audits

The next step was to look at HIMAA’s existing training and assessment material and map it to each of the performance criteria, skills and knowledge. Subsequently, HIMAA’s Comprehensive Medical Terminology course, Introductory Clinical Coding course and Intermediate Clinical Coding course were mapped and incorporated into the coursework for the new qualification. Some of the existing HIMAA coursework was further expanded to meet the requirements of a full unit of competency such as material relating to abstracting (VU21655), work health and safety (BSBWHS201A) and privacy (BSBMED305B).

New training and assessment material was developed for those areas that had not been previously covered by HIMAA’s courses. There was an opportunity to purchase coursework for the six imported units; however, a decision was made to develop our own coursework in order to contextualise the units specifically to the clinical coding role.

The Certificate IV in Clinical Classification has now enabled Registered Training Organisations such as HIMAA to develop a more robust training program around a qualification rather than a single unit of competency.
Compliance with the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework

It is a requirement of the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework that trainers demonstrate their competency in each unit they are delivering and assessing (Australian Government Skills Quality Authority, 2015, n.d.). Consequently, education staff needed to enrol with another Registered Training Organisation in the six imported units of competency. Educators were set the challenge of fitting in study and completing unit assessments, while completing work on the project. It was quite frustrating at the time and we were all very relieved when this aspect was completed.

As a Registered Training Organisation, HIMAA has to ensure that it is compliant with the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework at all times in order to maintain its registration. The process of adding a new qualification to the HIMAA scope means that there are plenty of activities to keep our Quality and Compliance Officer busy. Certain processes must be followed, evidence must be collected and decisions documented to demonstrate that we have complied with the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework in the development of the coursework.

Industry consultation regarding the training and assessment strategies is a requirement under the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework and this has been sought through the HIMAA Clinical Coding Advisory Committee. All of this documentation will form part of our application for a change to our scope of delivery.

Almost there …

The project timeline is currently seventy-five percent complete, yet there are still plenty of tasks to complete. The final phase of the project involves:

- **Completion and validation of assessment tools.** Validation ensures that assessment tools meet the principles of assessment and rules of evidence, as required under the Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework.
- **Developing and validating processes for recognition of prior learning.** Since many of our students are already employed or have previous work experience in the health industry, it is anticipated that they will be eligible for recognition of prior learning.
- **Development of course intake dates and timetables.** If a large number of students apply for recognition of prior learning we will need to ensure that they can commence study at different points within the delivery program, without disrupting the logical flow of the training.
- **Changes to electronic management systems.** The coursework and assessments need to be built into our Learning Management System for students to access online. The qualification also needs to be built into the Student Management System, which will track student progress and collect the relevant data for issuing the qualification.
- **Changes to administrative processes.** Administrative processes need to be completed such as updating enrolment forms, student handbooks and policies and procedures. New website content needs to be developed as well as marketing material.

Finally, HIMAA cannot deliver this qualification until the Australian Skills and Quality Authority approves our application for a change to scope of delivery. If we are successful, we hope to start delivery in the next financial year (2016/2017).

The future …

The Certificate IV in Clinical Classification aims to better prepare students for entering the CC workforce. The qualification also creates pathways to further study such as Health Information Management and provides a career structure for more of the health information workforce. The qualification enables increased professional recognition for CCs and allows for improved integration of the job role into industrial awards, which will hopefully lead to better remuneration. A qualification also opens up access to traineeship funding and funding from other commonwealth and state training strategies which healthcare organisations can utilise.

HIMAA looks forward to the completion of this project and to the next chapter in CC training.

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3 The Australian Skills and Quality Authority has now approved HIMAA to deliver this qualification.
What is a training package?
Training packages are developed by Industry Skills Councils to meet the training needs of an industry, or a group of industries (Australian Government Skills Quality Authority, n.d.). Training packages do not suggest how a learner should be trained, rather, they specify the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace.

Each training package is made up of three components:
- Units of competency: define the skills and knowledge to operate effectively and how they need to be applied to perform effectively in a workplace context.
- Qualifications framework: groups of units of competency ranging from Certificate I to Graduate Diploma level.
- Assessment guidelines: the industry’s preferred approach to assessment, including the qualifications required by assessors, the design of assessment processes and how assessments should be conducted.

References