

2011 Guidelines for CEU Approval

AAPC CEU Mission

All members and business associates of AAPC must uphold a higher standard in education. Certified Professional Coders must choose continuing education that stretches their skill levels. Vendors must provide quality in curriculum. AAPC's national office must develop a comprehensive list of CEU opportunities, and provide vendors with timely and consistent CEU approvals.

Through AAPC, medical coders undergo a rigorous examination to ensure they are qualified to become Certified Professional Coders. AAPC's 19 specialty credentials enable coders to demonstrate superior levels of expertise in their respective specialty disciplines. All are expected to update their skills throughout their careers. To verify the continuation of their education, AAPC requires all credentialed coders to obtain continuing education units (CEUs) and submit them to AAPC every two years. The CEUs must come from a large pool of CEUs that have received prior approval by AAPC. AAPC grants prior approval for continuing education programs based on the relevance of the program content to the medical coding, reimbursement, compliance, and billing profession.

This document outlines the standards and processes for obtaining AAPC CEUs.

Benefits of Prior Approval

1. Application materials have been reviewed by AAPC for worthy educational content and will be recognized by coding professionals.
2. If an application fee has been paid, your products and events will be included on the AAPC Web site under your company heading and marketed to over 101,000 coding professionals.

Application Process

To apply for prior approval, applicants should:

1. Read through the entire 2011 Guidelines for CEU Approval
2. Visit <http://www.aapc.com/medical-coding-education/help/ceu-help-vendors.aspx> open the Application Tab and select the application according to the medium of presentation.
3. 2011 Guidelines for the specific media you are using are included as a convenience on the application form. Complete all applicable portions.
4. Submit the exact title as it will appear in all marketing materials. An approved title cannot be changed.
5. Provide the names of all presenters, along with their current credential, professional licenses or other acceptable proof of expertise in the subject matter.
6. All required documents, including handouts and agendas, copies of pre and post-tests, and payment must be submitted with the application at least 21-30 days prior to your marketing or first event date. ***Your power point presentation may be requested for further evaluation. ***
7. Incomplete applications will either be returned to the vendor or held in an incomplete file until all information has been received. An email will be sent to the applicant informing them of what information is missing. The review cycle does not begin until the application is made complete.
8. To reapply for an expired product, resubmit the information as detailed above for review.
9. Applications can be completed electronically and emailed with all supporting documents to: vendor@aapc.com or faxed to 801-236-2258.
10. If you are paying with a check please mail the check and all accompanying documents to:
AAPC
2480 South 3850 West, Suite B
Salt Lake City, UT 84120

Title

Submit the title exactly as it will appear in all marketing materials. An approved title cannot be changed. Vendors are not permitted to use the AAPC Credentials, in the title or on the cover of any product, or title or headline of any marketing materials.

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Presenters/ Post Secondary School Instructors

Presenters without a credential, (e.g., CPC®, CPC-H®, CPC-P®, RN, MD, CCS-P, JD) or professional license relevant to the subject matter must provide a resume for consideration of CEUs. Credentials with an apprentice status will not be approved as a presenter/instructor. If the presenter/instructor is a CPC-A® please refer to <http://www.aapc.com/certification/index.aspx> for guidelines on how to remove the apprentice status.

- Presenters that teach the same course to different audiences will receive CEUs for their 1st presentation only.
 - They will use the same certificate and index number and receive the same CEUs for presenting as the attendees do for attending. AAPC will accept up to 16 CEUs for first time presentations per core credential, per two-year renewal period, for presentations specific to the credential. An index number can be submitted only one time. AAPC **does not** award CEUs for time spent in preparation.
- An instructor at a post secondary school may receive up to 16 CEUs per core credential during a two-year renewal period, for teaching a face-to-face course specific to the credential. This does require prior approval.

Approval Documents

Approval documents including a letter of approval and a PDF certificate with a unique index number and assigned CEU value will be emailed to the applicant; if payment was provided a paid invoice would also be emailed. Multi-specialty conferences with breakout sessions may be issued a PDF CEU Code Card rather than a certificate. This allows each session to be assigned its own specialty designation.

Approved Event Titles: Approvals are title based; titles are from information provided from the application. All approved titles are valid for one calendar year from the first listed presentation date or from the date of approval if no initial date was provided. The CEU Index number provided to you via our PDF certificate or Code Cards are only valid for the exact title printed on the documents. Do not change titles in anyway once the approval is granted. If you decide that you want to take several of your approved titles and offer them as a boot camp, conference, or workshop please contact the CEU Vendor Department and let us know.

Advertising/Marketing – Don'ts: AAPC will not give a mailing list of our members please do not ask. Do not advertise a title as approved or pending approval for CEUs prior to submitting an application or before receiving the approval documents from AAPC.

Original PDF Certificate, CEU Code Card and Personalized Certificates

A copy of the original PDF Certificate or CEU Code Card (new for multi-specialty conferences with breakout sessions) sent to you upon approval are the only documents AAPC will accept if a member is selected for verification. **The approved documents cannot be changed other than adding a name, a date, or an index number when one is not recorded. The CEU Code Card may also require session titles and specialty assignments be added. Please do not alter these certificates in any other way.**

- *This includes adding your company logo, company/organizations President Name and signature.*

It is acceptable for you to make a personalized certificate for your event that includes the above information. However, it is not permissible to include the following on your certificate: the approved index number, CEU value, the AAPC CEU Approved Logo, or the statement: *“This program has the prior approval of AAPC for _____ continuing education hours. Granting of prior approval in no way constitutes endorsement by AAPC of the program content or the program sponsor.”*

Expired CEU Index Numbers

All expiration dates will appear below the index number on the certificate. It is the responsibility of each vendor to monitor your expiration dates. The CEU Vendor Department does not monitor this for you.

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You will be contacted if our members report an expired CEU index number to us. We will inform you of the expired title and what you need to do to correct the problem.

Types of CEUs

Two types of CEUs are awarded at AAPC. Core A focuses on the technical side of professional medical coding, while Core B addresses general business skills. Coders may claim all of their CEUs earned from core A. Core B can comprise no more than 33% (1/3) of the total CEUs earned per year. Therefore, if one core credential is held, 12 of the 36 CEUs due every two years may be from Core B. Please visit <http://www.aapc.com/medical-coding-education/help/index.aspx> and open the Requirements tab for further details.

Calculating CEUs

Quality of curriculum is the responsibility of the vendor. Only program content applicable to the coding profession with current year information is eligible for CEUs. AAPC reserves the right to reject content based on quality issues, and will disclose these issues to the vendor. Being awarded CEUs by AAPC, however, does not guarantee accuracy or quality of curriculum.

The principal focus of curriculum being considered for CEUs is its educational value and a time element. In keeping with the accepted standard for CEU determination, sixty minutes of live education (workshop, audio seminar, conference) is the equivalent of 1 CEU. Thirty minutes, or .5, is the smallest time increment awarded CEU. Further in this document we will discuss how this translates into written or online CEU opportunities.

Registrations, welcomes, introductions, and other non-educational activities such as breaks, lunches, and networking lunches are not eligible for CEUs. Time spent taking quizzes or post-tests are not eligible for CEUs.

In-Service Approvals

Applying for regularly scheduled recurring in-service? AAPC will give a “block” of approved index numbers with a single application. This was designed with the knowledge that a company does not always know the topic, the presenter, or sometimes even the date of the in-service 30 days in advance. In-services are meant to meet today’s need today. Please specify the dates of the trainings you would like CEU credit. Please provide a list of all possible presenters and their credentials.

Timed Sessions

Live or Recorded events including Seminars, Workshops, Audios, Teleconferences, Live Web-Based Trainings, Courses, and Post Secondary School Courses, are considered “Timed Sessions.”

Timed sessions are assigned CEUs based on instruction time. Timed sessions will receive one CEU per hour of training with a maximum of 40 hours.

If requested by AAPC, all live or recorded events requesting two or more CEUs must submit handouts and Power Point presentations. Please include a time-line with detailed agenda statements for each segment of time. Session titles are not sufficient. A detailed program goal is sufficient for 1.5 CEUs or less.

Guidelines for all Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

Live events do not require a post-test. Recorded products require a post- test. Both live and recorded products may opt for supplemental CEUs.

All required tests and those submitted for supplemental CEUs must follow AAPC guidelines for tests.

- Test content should be sufficiently challenging. Someone should not be able to pass the test without having read the content or listened and learned from a presentation.
- Ten questions are required for each requested CEU; fifteen questions are required for 1.5 CEUs etc.
- Up to two of every ten questions may be true/false or yes/no, all of the above, none of the above, etc; up to three of fifteen questions may be true/false or yes/no, all of the above, none of the above, etc;
- Multiple choice and fill in the blank questions are preferred.
- Tests must be submitted at the time the curriculum is submitted.
- All tests must be graded by the sponsoring organization.

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- The participant must pass with a score of 70 percent or higher to be awarded the CEU certificate of completion.

AAPC allows for limited CEUs for testing as a supplement to curriculum for live or recorded live products.

- Test questions submitted for supplemental CEUs must be followed with *information-rich rationale*.
- The maximum of 1 CEU for a post-test can be awarded as a supplement to a one hour live or recorded training, excluding post secondary school courses.
- The tests must be submitted at the time the curriculum is submitted and must follow AAPC guidelines for tests

Post-Tests

See above: Guidelines for all Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

Guidelines according to Media for Required Post-Tests/Tests for Supplemental CEUs

Educational publications: Ten questions for each requested CEU, with a maximum of 40 questions is required. The test is required for a participant to access the CEUs catalog number assigned to the publication, and do not require rationales.

Newsletters and Magazines: Ten questions for each requested CEU is required. The test is required for a participant to access the CEUs catalog number assigned to the publication, and do not require rationales.

Online education: Ten questions for each requested CEU, with a maximum of 40 questions are required.

Information-rich rationale included with test questions for online education may contribute to the curriculum word count. Determinations are made by content and word count for posttest supplemental CEU approval.

Live sessions: A post-test is not required. AAPC allows for limited CEUs for testing as a supplement to curriculum.

Recorded products: A post-test is required to verify attendance. The test is required for a participant to access the CEUs catalog number assigned to the recorded event, and does not require rationales. Each recorded event CEU requires a minimum of 10 questions. No additional questions are required beyond 30 to earn CEUs for recordings of duration beyond three hours.

A vendor can opt to include rationales with each question on its mandatory test for recorded curriculum to earn one supplemental CEU per hour of approved education. See above: Guidelines for all Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

Educational Publications

(Textbooks, Newsletters/Magazines, PDF or Online)

Qualifying curriculum within educational publications includes narrative, illustrations, and graphs or charts. Excluded from word/page count are indexes, reference material and educational exercises (puzzles, quizzes, or other work).

A copy of the publication and post-test are required for CEU assignment and to ensure the written curriculum has been completed; CEUs are not awarded for these tests and rationales are not required. The test must follow AAPC test guidelines.

The following guideline is used to calculate CEUs for Educational Publications and Self Study Guides*:

- 50 pages of quality curriculum plus a post-test of 10 questions equals 1 CEU
- 100 pages of quality curriculum plus a post-test of 20 questions equals 2 CEUs
- 150 pages of quality curriculum plus a post-test of 30 questions equals 3 CEUs
- 200 + pages of quality curriculum plus a post-test of 40 questions equal 4 CEUs

Monthly publications use the following guidelines to calculate CEUs for monthly publications (i.e. newsletters, magazines, emailed PDF articles, etc.):*

- 8–24 pages of education with a 5 question post-test may receive 0.5 CEUs.
- 25 pages or greater of education with a 10 question post-test may receive 1 CEU.

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Each publication can receive 1 CEU per month, weekly newsletters will be considered at 0.5 CEUs and would be approved only twice monthly. The vendor is required to submit issue numbers or the dates of the issues per CEU request.

Online Education

To ensure that the appropriate CEU assignment is made for this type of curriculum, the guidelines for both printed publications and lecture-based education are applied. CEUs will be awarded for both aspects of the guidelines above. CEUs approved are based on written curriculum and “lecture-time” type education. CEUs are for the vendor’s own curriculum, not for links to source documents the coders can access on their own.

- Web-based curriculum requires a post-test to ensure materials were read and absorbed. The test should be based on the curriculum word count: 10 questions for each 7,000 words, with a maximum of 40 questions. Word count consideration may be given for any information-rich rationales that accompany the test questions or any quizzes along the way. These rationales must qualify as curriculum in order to be considered part of the word count. The post-test must follow AAPC guidelines for tests.

***Note: Font size and spacing will be taken into consideration in the page count. Online products may require word count calculation. See below “Word Count Consideration”.**

Word Count Consideration

Time considerations are translated into word count when AAPC awards CEUs for online print products. AAPC bases its print, both hardcopy and online, requirements on the number of words spoken in the average coding education session. Our research shows that an average of 7,000 words is spoken in a one-hour session. Therefore, our calculation for written CEUs is 7,000 words for 1 CEU. This information may help vendors in their CEU application calculations. Keep in mind, AAPC reserves the right to exclude any material from the word calculation (for example, lengthy operative notes or coding scenarios, while contributing to the curriculum, may not qualify as curriculum).

CEUs are based on education provided. Products containing exercises without curriculum are not eligible for CEUs (for example, a series of worksheets with scenarios or coding questions). Rationales provided with individual questions and answers may qualify as curriculum. See below for more information on rationales as curriculum.

If a *Self Study Guide* is composed of coding scenarios, as a practice tool, each scenario must have rationale provided. The rationale will be considered the educational component. A word count computation will be performed as a measurement of CEU value on the rationales. The coding scenarios must be checked and corrected if needed by the sponsoring organization, prior to the participant receiving a CEU certificate of completion. AAPC requires that the member pass with a 70 percent score or higher in order to be awarded the CEU.

Rationale as Curriculum

Questions must be followed by rationales. It does the student no good to simply be told that she chose the wrong answer; it’s important to understand how to find the right answer. Rationales should enrich the established curriculum. Proper rationales will be a detailed narrative telling the story of how to come to the correct answer. What follows are examples of acceptable rationales:

- Shortness of breath is documented. However, SOB is a common symptom associated with pneumothorax, and ICD-9-CM Official Coding Guidelines state, “Signs and symptoms that are integral to the disease process should not be assigned as additional codes, unless otherwise instructed by the classification.”
- When the cardiologist schedules an angioplasty, atherectomy, or stent procedure, it is usually based on a prior diagnostic cardiac catheterization. In these situations, it is not appropriate to code for a repeat diagnostic test. To be clear, it would not be appropriate to separately report catheter placement (93508 or 93510) or diagnostic coronary angiography (93545 and 93556) at the time of an elective coronary intervention.

Unacceptable Rationales:

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- B is the right answer.
- The patient received has sarcoidosis, reported with ICD-9-CM code 135.zz

Required Materials, if Requested, for Review

Please refer to the chart below for required documents.

Media of Presentation	Required Materials for Review
Live Face to Face Presentation	Agenda or Outline **
Recorded Live-CD/DVD On Demand Product	Agenda or Outline**
Web Based Training – Live or Self Study	Agenda or Outline or Access to web based training via a ID and Password**
Teleconference	Handouts
Publication	Entire Publication

****Full handouts and/or Power Point presentations maybe requested at anytime during the review process to verify level of content to be presented****

Approvals that address ICD-10 Implementation will be awarded Core B CEUs. ICD-10 Guidelines and Code Set Training will be awarded Core A CEUs. AAPC does not accept CEUs from other entities that offer, “AHIMA approved” CEUs. Organizations must apply separately for AAPC CEUs and receive an AAPC index number and CEU value. Any event, presentation, publication, etc...that pertains to ICD-10 has to be submitted in its entirety for review to the CEU Vendor Department. Any trainings provided by AHIMA certified ICD-10 trainers using materials from AHIMAs train the trainer program will not be accepted or approved.

Please refer to the Requirements tab <http://www.aapc.com/medical-coding-education/help/index.aspx>

Promoting Your Approved Program

You may not state that CEU approval has been submitted to, or is pending from AAPC.

AAPC will allow the vendor the ability to use the AAPC CEU Approved Logo for purposes of promoting approved coding products. The vendor can use the AAPC credential(s) in the body of marketing materials but are not permitted to use the AAPC credential(s) in the title or headline of marketing materials.

The CEU Approved vendor logos are for approved CEU Vendors only and have been removed from the general Web site. Please contact the CEU Vendor department at 1-800-626-2633 x 115 for the “NEW” prepared logo and text to be displayed when marketing your CEU approved status. Guidelines for promoting your educational programs both online and offline will also be given. These guidelines ensure your customers, and potential customers, are educated as to the continuing education you have been approved by AAPC to offer.

As part of the approval process, AAPC randomly and routinely audits CEU approvals. Feel free to contact the CEU Vendor Department if you have any questions regarding marketing of your product within AAPC guidelines.

Local Chapters and Vendors

Solicitation of local chapters and the local chapter officers is not allowed. AAPC Local Chapters do not become affiliates with any other organizations, they do not resell products for vendors, and they do not need to be contacted about your products.

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Approved vendors are allowed to present at AAPC Local Chapter meetings at the discretion of the chapter officers. Do not solicit chapter officers to promote your events or products; they are not obligated to allow you into their meetings even for 'a minute of their time'. If an AAPC Local Chapter has requested that you present at a meeting, your CEU Index number is not valid for their meetings. The Chapter officers will request approval from AAPC's Local Chapter Department.

You can leave your business card and flyers near the entry of the meeting place but not inside the meeting room itself. Members can then pick them up at their discretion.

It is not allowed to use your vendor status as a tool to infiltrate AAPC Local Chapters. We approve educational content not a company or organization.

Reasons to Revoke Vendor Status

If an application has received prior approval and any of the following are found to be true, AAPC vendor status will be revoked without refund of any fees for violation of these policies.

- Misrepresentation by the sponsoring organization or presenter of programs, credentials, or intent.
- False or misleading information by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- False claims of AAPC endorsement or unauthorized logo use by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- Editing/Modifying certificates and/or code cards from the original PDF documents provided after approval
 - This includes the addition of a company logo, address, and/or signatures not on the original document.
- Discrimination by the sponsoring organization or presenter against race, creed, religion and/or gender.
- Representation by the sponsoring organization or presenter of AAPC and/or members in a negative manner.
- Negative or adversarial remarks against payers or providers by the sponsoring organization or presenter.
- Foul or vulgar language will not be tolerated and visual aids shall be free of inappropriate content or pictures per subject matter.
- Sharing or transferring an approved CEU for distribution by or through another entity.
- Findings that a credential and or an exam offering the credential are attached to approved curriculum.
- Using the approved time to promote products, services, or software for commercial or financial gain.
- AAPC reserves the right to revoke CEUs for any vendor for any reason

Guideline Changes for 2011

- AAPC does not approve CEUs for auditors for the audits they perform or for exit education provided to physicians and their faculty.
- AAPC does not approve CEUs for a coder's day to-day coding/billing responsibilities including providing education when it is a main responsibility of a job position such as "New Physician Training."
 - This includes any education that would be considered "mandatory" to employment beyond the retention of a member's credential.
 - Example of mandatory training: annual compliance training (this includes anything that is employer specific regarding their compliance plan that is broad in its information covered and not specific to coding or documentation guidelines. This also includes New Hire Training, regardless if the education comes from internal or contracted sources.
- An instructor at a post secondary school may receive up to 16 CEUs per core credential during a two-year renewal period, for teaching a face-to-face course specific to the credential. This does require prior approval.
- Presenters that teach the same course to different audiences will receive CEUs for their **first presentation only**. They will use the same certificate and index number and receive the same CEUs for presenting as the attendees do for attending. AAPC will accept up to 16 CEUs for first time presentations per core credential, per two-year renewal period, for presentations specific to the credential. An index number can be submitted only one time. AAPC does not award CEUs for time spent in preparation.

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Archived CEU Guidelines

Guidelines for the previous year are outlined below. CEUs earned under previous CEU guidelines will be honored for CEUs earned in that year.

2010

- Recorded products require a post-test to verify attendance. See above: Guidelines for All Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs
- AAPC allows for limited CEUs for testing as a supplement to curriculum for live or recorded live products. See above: Guidelines for All Required Tests and Tests for Supplemental CEUs

2009

- For the year 2009, AAPC will not be awarding CEUs for publications or software considered a tool that a coder would or could use at their desk to perform daily responsibilities. Examples would be CPT®, ICD-9-CM, HCPCS Level II, desk reference books, and software containing reference material.
- Training on the benefits of particular software or how to use the software may be eligible for Core B CEUs. Portions of the training may be considered Coding/Billing knowledge, the CEU analyst will reflect back on the “*purpose*” of the training to make a decision.
- Approved publications will provide a post-test and CEU certificate for those successfully completing the *publisher’s test*.