

# BUSINESS INFORMATION WORKER CROSS-DISCIPLINARY INFORMATION CERTIFICATES

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POWERED BY



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[www.ictdmsector.org](http://www.ictdmsector.org)

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# BUSINESS INFORMATION WORKER

CAREER PATHWAY

# BUSINESS INFORMATION WORKER PATHWAY

## Cross Disciplinary Information Certificates

The Business Information Worker is a conceptual pathway that endorses the use of Application Software to satisfy the demand of technical skills in the current business environment. There are three different stages recommended to provide a guide for certification. Each one of them builds from the prior one as shown below.

BUSINESS INFORMATION WORKER CONCEPTUAL PATHWAY		
	Course Name or Topic	Certifications
BIW I	Keyboarding	
	Microsoft Windows	
	Microsoft Word	MOS Word
	Microsoft Excel	MOS Excel
	Microsoft Outlook	MOS Outlook
	Information Systems	
	Business Communications	
	Human Relations/Customer Service	
BIW II	Microsoft PowerPoint	MOS PowerPoint
	Microsoft Excel, Intermediate	
	Microsoft Access or Intro to SharePoint	MOS Access
	QuickBooks	QuickBooks Certified User
	Electronic Records Management	
	Customer Relationship Management	
BIW Specialist	Presentation/Marketing	
	Communication Support	
	Project Management Concepts	CompTIA Project+
	Salesforce Certification Prep	Salesforce Certified Administrator

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The first two Business Information Worker or BIW certificates are the solution to the demand of a typical office environment. These career pathways provide a foundation of the technical skills necessary to appropriately operate within many businesses. The best part is that these certificates offer a stackable solution where the students may start at an entry level and later move to a position of more responsibility as they acquire additional skills.

Upon successful completion of **BIW Stage I**, students should be able to demonstrate computer literacy with respect to hardware and software applications and apply standard rules of business conduct and customer service. In the same manner, the student should develop specialized keyboarding skills, use word processing, spreadsheet, presentation graphics, and scheduling software to perform business and office tasks. Additionally, they will be able to apply written communication skills in various business and office environments, as well

as design modify, query and manipulate lists (database and information in workbooks using common formulas, data, and what-if scenario tools to organize and convey information).

**BIW Stage II** will provide the student an understanding of business-customer relationships. Students will know how to effectively and efficiently create presentations to market products and services. Furthermore, they will also understand the appropriate procedures to research and conduct business and communicate with customers. In the same way, students will understand the financial structure of different business models.

These foundational skills may improve their performance at work and increase their chances of being promoted. Most important, students will know how to create budgets, forecasts, schedules and effective graphical representations. Students will also be prepared to analyze and interpret data.



# BIW SPECIALTIES

## Business Information Spans Multiple Disciplines

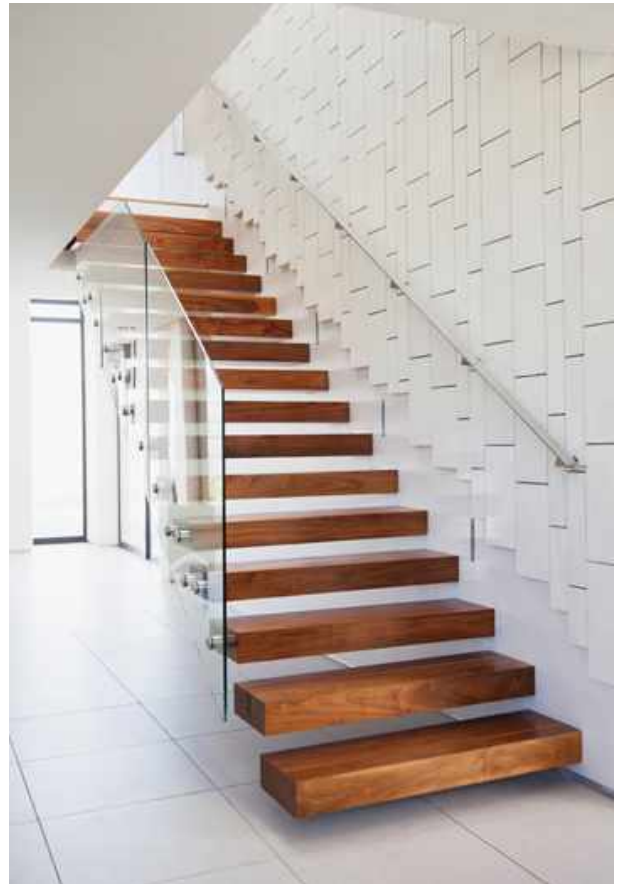


The BIW (Business Information Worker) Specialties provide students with the skills required to perform accurately and efficiently to industry demands within the local area or even cyberspace. The idea is to prepare students with practical, career-oriented skills for specific professional industry office environments, such as: medical offices and hospitals, legal offices and courts, hospitality industry, real estate management, etc. The technologies in these office environments are a lot more specialized than other business offices and require additional knowledge. Students need to be prepared to use industry specialized technologies and terminology to be competitive.

**Two Goals:**  
**Fulfill the need of the community and maximize the use of available resources**

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In addition to information systems and general applications skills, students need to receive hands-on experience in the fundamentals of business communications, proprietary software, industry regulations and best practices. Also, it is important for these students to understand the business model of the industry in which they are trying to break in. Therefore, they need to be guided through the business and accounting basics for such industries. Providing the appropriate curriculum will provide skills specific to the entry-level positions in each of these environments, giving the opportunity to move up and possibly further their careers within their chosen specialization industries.



Upon successful completion of one of the BIW-Specialist Certificates of Achievement, students should be able to, within their chosen industry, demonstrate computer literacy with respect to computer hardware and software applications, apply standard rules of business conduct and customer service, develop basic applicable knowledge, use specialized billing software to perform billing tasks, apply written communication skills in business and office environments, as well as design modify, query and manipulate lists (database and information in workbooks using common formulas, data, and what-if scenario tools to organize and convey information).

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**“Nowhere has specialization penetrated so deeply into building professions as North America.”**

-Arthur Erickson

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# THE FRAMEWORK

## Which Specialties Do We Need?

It all depends to whom you want to serve, and what your community needs.

### Identify virtual and geographical demand

Researching employer demand is not a new concept to CTE faculty members. We consistently hold advisory committee meetings to learn what our local businesses are looking for. However, we need to ask ourselves if we are asking the correct questions.

It is very easy to get side-tracked by the demand of specific professional needs within a work environment. As a result, **we may overlook inquiries about the need of professional specialized support staff to assist these industry professionals.**

For example: during an advisory committee meeting a hiring agent or Human Resources Manager for a medical office might emphasize the fact that nursing personnel is scarce. They might even go further to list the skill requirements for such personnel. However, we seldom recognize the

need of an office professional prepared to manage and process medical information.

A support professional like this will be required to understand how to do proper billing and medical insurance procedures. These employees will require understanding of coding, medical software, proper terminology and pharma definitions.

These are skills that employers believe their office professional will learn on the job. **However, employers may benefit from advisory committee discussions about education solutions which will minimize the learning curve by preparing students to be competent from their first day on the job.** Ask them if this will translate into a “dollar savings” for their business (It is important to speak their language).



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## Listen to Your Students

Let's face it, most of the time our attitude in the classroom is quite totalitarian. We are there to do a job and it is to educate. Time constraints, large classrooms, and many other issues divert our focus to delivering content as efficiently and effectively as plausible.

However, **have you ever listened to what they have to say about job opportunities and their personal searches?**

Many of our students are actively seeking employment. Many others are already employed but are currently taking classes trying to improve their skill set to advance at their current job perhaps even apply for a more desirable position. **These students are constantly making comments about employment issues, necessary skills, or new job opportunities.**

At the end of the day, we are trying to serve both the community and the student. Try to take notice of the cues from both populations.

Sometimes, it is beneficial to just ask students about their goals. Inciting

conversation about what they need and expect from their education will provide answers to many of your questions. It will help you realize what kind of specializations will be beneficial to serve your current student population.

Also, the introduction of new technologies has opened the doors to many new service fields, jobs and specializations. Many of them are even web-based.

The modern student has the opportunity to build a career and work from home. Web technologies allow for data processing, remote accessing and even video conferencing. Many employers are seeking to reduce their overhead costs by allowing their employees to maintain their workstations at home.

Even for those entrepreneurial students who have identified a product or service that they can provide, there are technologies that can aid them in the development of such business' models from home.

Recruiting websites are also a great resource to research the latest employer demands.



## Support from Local Businesses

The effort to enhance our community and its economy is not proprietary to the local community colleges. As a matter of fact, if the community thrives there is a benefit to everyone. This concept is not foreign to employers. Corporations and local businesses look to participate in ways to give back.

Many employers are willing to provide opportunities to enhance your specialization program. Some of them may be willing to do specialized training and testing. However, **if you decide to organize your students in cohorts, employers may be willing to offer internships that can be added as work experience/co-op units to your student's certifications.** The reason is simple. They do not want to miss the opportunity to benefit from these new information specialists. At the same time, they would prefer to have first choice on those students who excelled in their work which gives them an edge over the competition. Do not hesitate to network with them.



# CURRICULUM

## No Need to Reinvent the Wheel

We have already identified the demand and have narrowed our focus to a few specialties that will serve our students and our communities. Now it's time to prepare appropriate curriculum for corresponding certifications. Our goal is to maximize our resources to produce the most efficient pathways. After all, the idea is for our students to find or improve their employment within a short period of time. Many of them can benefit from higher wages even while they are trying to reach their educational goal.

**The first step is to find out what resources we already have available at our institutions.**

Think about this scenario: Have you ever tried to prepare a meal and go to buy every ingredient, just to find out days later that many of the ingredients were already in your pantry? It was a waste of time and money. In the same

manner, trying to create all new curriculum for these certifications would not be the most productive idea.

**Most of the courses you need might already be available at your institution. However, they are probably being used for industry professional programs offered by other departments.**

The industry demand has to be similar to your findings during the research stage. After all, those other schools and departments share the same community as you do. They most likely have already done research of their own and are educating professionals in those fields that satisfy a community demand. So, let's piggyback from their efforts by creating business information support



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training for professionals in those targeted industries. **Do not step on your colleagues' toes and facilitate a collaborative effort. They are experts in their particular fields, in the same way you are an expert in business information.**

As a matter of fact, there is a big chance that your colleagues from other departments will appreciate being included or consulted. They will probably have good insight on what content should be included on these business information certifications.

As an example, let's revisit the case of a professional prepared to work with medical information. Meet with faculty from the Health and Science or Nursing departments at your institution and ask them to point you in the direction of which courses they might consider important and necessary, such as pharmacology, health informatics, etc. They are also the experts on what is already available in your institution or even maybe coming soon.

### Fill in the gaps

During the planning stage, you will find there are some courses that will be needed that are not currently being offered. Another good point about

collaborative effort is that your colleagues might have already identified the need for these business information support courses. However, they might not be interested in developing content that is not specific to the professional curriculum. For example, if we continue considering a medical information professional, they will most likely benefit from a medical billing or medical coding course. Maybe even both.

Even though this is true, there is a chance that a Health Science or Nursing department will not have a course like this but will recognize the importance of it. Because it is a more of a clerical task it might not be precisely what they had in mind to include, when they created the programs to prepare their own professionals.

Here is where we come in. Now, we can work on developing content for a course that will satisfy these gaps. One other thing that we should consider, is that **if we need to create a course, then we might consider one with industry certification if available.**

For example, a medical billing or coding course can prepare students to seek industry certifications like CPB (Certified Professional Biller) or CMRS (Certified Medical Reimbursement Specialist). In the

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same way, a Real Estate course can focus on content that may help students apply for a Real Estate License in the future.

**We know these industry certifications are key ingredients to increase the employability of our students.**

Therefore, planning strategically might be the answer to boost our students' marketability and earning potential. In addition, it will help with the promotion of the certificates later on. After all, the students are looking to earn the greatest amount of credit in the least possible time.

### Stackability

Once you have recognized which existing courses you will be using and which courses you need to create, the next step is to plan for efficiency and maximum student benefit.

**Remember that by the time you create specialty certifications you should already have BIW Stages I and II in your catalog, or at least in progress.**

Also, it is very important to consider that for students to declare a major, they are required to be under the umbrella of an Associate's degree, if they want to take advantage of the available resources.

With all this in mind, the idea would be to **organize stackable certificates that lead to an Associate's program.**

However, if necessary, each certificate should be able to stand on its own.

Students can start by working on either BIW Stage I or II or both, since they are stacked one on top of the other. Then they can look for a specialty that would interest them and allow them to find a new job opportunity or career advancement.

The student can work toward completion of the specialization by simply taking a few additional classes after every step. They might even realize that having multiple certifications will increase their chances of securing a business information position. Even after completion they might

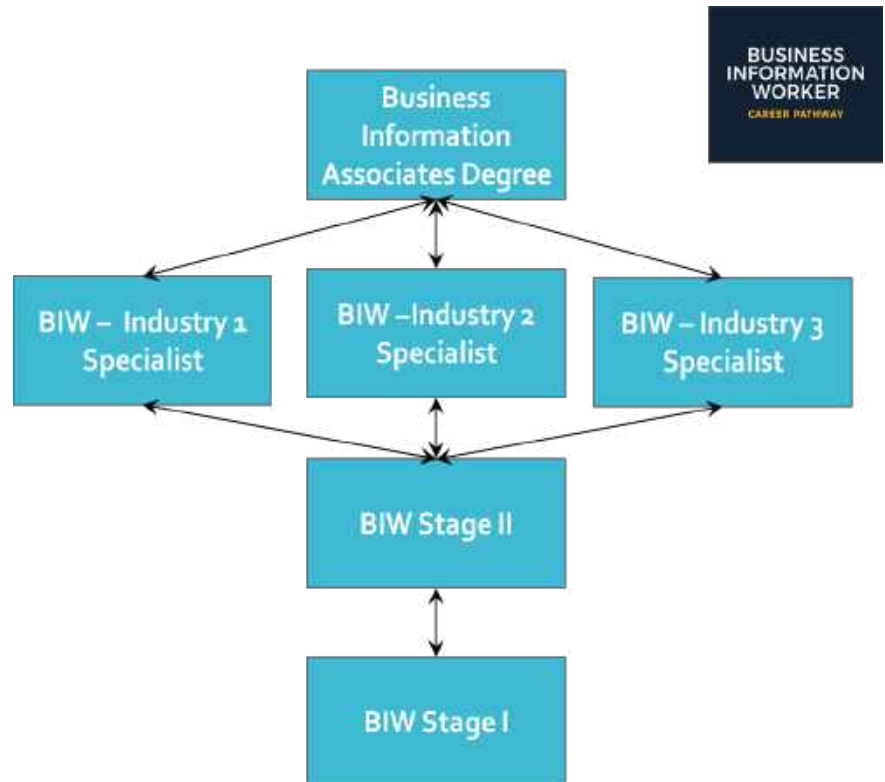


realize that they are very close to completing an Associate's degree in Business Information. If planned correctly maybe only the general courses will be remaining.

### The Associate's Degree

As community colleges, we always offer our students the option to complete an Associate's degree. One of the conveniences of planning appropriately is that it will allow us to still meet this goal. Many of our students might start with a certification in mind and change their mind later on. They can just continue with the program until they earn their Associate's degree. If we create a new or update our current Associate's degree to act as the culminating objective, then we will allow students to work towards that goal while they earn BIW and BIW specialty certifications. They could end up graduating with the Associate's plus one or several certifications at the same time, assuming we give them a sensible path to follow.

The complete pathway needs to be organized in a stackable way. Following



the template provided by the Information Communication Technologies & Digital Media (ICT-DM) sector team will allow you to easily build the curriculum for BIW stages I and II.

The idea now is to build the specialization certificates from there, using the appropriate courses from the core plus additional courses specific to the industry.

The Associate's degree should require the core information courses and all of the specialization courses used in the

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certifications stated as electives.

The student will have the opportunity to earn one or multiple BIW and Specialty certifications even if their main goal was to earn just an Associate's degree. Also, in the event students change their goals, this format allows them to switch from one certification to another without hurting their overall graduation timeline. At the end of the day, we are looking to strategically make the process efficient and maximize their chances to jumpstart their careers.