

Applying for Certification as an Educational Specialist Using the TIMS system

In order to practice as a school counselor in Pennsylvania, you must apply for and be certified as an **Educational Specialist** by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). You will apply for certification using the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS). **TIMS is the system that all applicants use to request certification in the state of Pennsylvania. You will need to learn how to use the online TIMS system.**

A. Most important things you need to know:

1. Please review all of the documents on the PDE website on how to use TIMS (see notes below in B).
2. You will also find the Lehigh's Office of Professional Certification's (OPC's) website to be useful as they have put together some tip sheets for use by students (see notes below in C).
3. Do NOT log into the system until the first of the month in which you will complete your program.
 - a. This would be **May 1** (if graduating in May), **August 1** (if graduating in August), or **December 1** (if graduating in December).
 - b. PDE is adamant about this rule. PDE may bump applications out of the system if they are started too early. If they are submitted before FINAL grades are posted by the Registrar's Office, the application's approval will be delayed.
4. **When to submit your application:**
 - a. Students who are going to be graduating must wait to apply (submit and pay) for certification through the TIMS system until the **Monday after grades are due at the end of the semester**.
 - b. If you complete your application on TIMS prior to this date, the GPA you submit may not match your final GPA and PDE requires the final GPA.
 - c. **Please wait until the Monday after grades are due to complete your TIMS application.**
5. Before you submit your application on TIMS, students must have the following:
 - a. Your FINAL GPA from Lehigh—**this means that you won't apply until after you get your final GPA**.
 - b. Your final undergraduate GPA and undergraduate degree
 - c. Because you are applying for certification as an Educational Specialist you may need other documentation to complete the application. The information you need will be in the "Other" document that shows up in the final submission. If the document does not indicate a specific document (i.e. transcript), then you do not need to send anything else in.
 - d. Be prepared to pay a fee (currently \$200) to submit the final application.
 - e. You need to have passed the required Praxis II test before PDE will review and approve the application. Check the PDE website and search for "Certification Tests" to find the most current test and score requirements.

6. Lisa Collins in the OPC will be very glad to meet with students to help them through the online application process. Student can email or call Lisa to set up appointments beginning the first day of the final month in the program (e.g., May 1 or December 1).
7. Overview and Timeline of the Certification Process
 - a. The certification process begins here with Lehigh.
 - b. You must complete all of the program requirements and the PDE requirements for certification.
 - i. This includes taking Praxis II
 - ii. **Note no longer required:** Health Certificate OR PAPA
 - c. You then need to apply through TIMS
 - d. When you complete the application let Lori know.
 - e. Lisa Collins will receive a notification from PDE that you applied and she will send paperwork to Lori (which comes to me).
 - f. Lori, your advisor/program director and I will verify that the program and requirements have been completed. Lori will then send Lisa Collins a check-off sheet to approve the TIMS application.
 - g. It then takes PDE about 4-10 weeks to complete their review and approval (after the application is fully complete and submitted). They have a timeline on their webpage that you can check for timelines.

B. You can access TIMS at the following website—it's a good idea to start getting familiar with TIMS—look at the site—don't set up your application until the first of the month in which you will graduate. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Certification/Pages/TIMS.aspx>

At this TIMS site you can access:

1. TIMS User guides, which will take you to a link where you can access the Applicant user guide
 - a. On that site you will find a pdf document entitled "Getting Started with TIMS" (which focuses on setting up a log-in to TIMS—but remember, you don't start your application for certification until the last month of your program)

C. Lehigh's Office of Professional Certification (OPC) can provide support to you and the OPC will serve as the Certifying Officer for Lehigh applicants. The OPC is always available to help students navigate the process, so please call with any questions you may have.

OPC website: <https://ed.lehigh.edu/insidecoe/office-professional-certification/overview>

The OPC website is very helpful. There you will find:

- Information about TIMS is linked from the above page
- TIMS Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ) for Educational Specialists—a great PDF you can download, also on the OPC page.

Additional information:

- Certification is not a requirement to graduate from the program
 - But graduation is required for certification
- If you fail to pass the test required for certification as an Educational Specialist (Praxis II), then you will continue to retake it until you pass (check the GPA scale at the top of the test Excel file for grades/scores. If you have a high GPA, you will qualify with a lower score.
 - But you will still be able to graduate from the program
 - You will just apply for certification once you pass all the exams required for certification
 - Note that our students typically do pass the Praxis II.
- You can begin applying for jobs as a school counselor before you are certified, with the understanding that you will complete the certification process before you actually begin the new job. You would just need to specify that it is in process with the state.
- Many students are not aware that there are two levels of certification in Pennsylvania: Level I and Level II. You will initially apply for the Level I certificate.
- You will use the resources of your employing district to complete the Level II application and certification process when the time comes.

Final Details on Applications for Certification through TIMS

- 1. You need to wait until final GPA's are calculated by the Registrar before you submit your applications on TIMS.**
- 2. Note: A student reported that the new certification for “Pre-K to 12 Specialist-Elementary & Secondary School Counselor” can be a little difficult to find on TIMS. However, it is there. You should not indicate you are applying for the separate certifications (i.e., secondary only plus elementary only), but rather indicate that you are applying for the single, unified certification (“Pre-K to 12 Specialist-Elementary & Secondary School Counselor”).** If you make a mistake and accidentally apply for the two certificates, you will need to call PDE to get your application reset to “Incomplete” so that you can change it.
- 3. Reminder: Lisa Collins is here to help you with your certification application process. You can go to her for help with any aspect of your application. She is willing to meet with you to work on it.**

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