

TEACHER EDUCATION INTERNSHIPS: REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY for the Special Education and Teaching, Learning, and Technology Programs

This policy covers the requirements and eligibility for field-based “internship” placements for all teacher candidates in both the Special Education and the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Programs. For purposes of this policy, *teacher-education internships* (referred to as “internship” in the rest of this document) include the following:

- the student teaching placement for initial certification at all levels, and
- the intern placement (sometimes called “field experience”) for already-certified teachers seeking additional certification at all levels (both general and special education).

Internship Requirements

All teacher candidates seeking initial certification must complete a 14-week, full-time “student teaching” experience in a public school or Pennsylvania-approved, publicly funded private school. Teacher candidates who are seeking dual certification in general education and special education will be placed in two consecutive 7-week placements (one in general education and one in special education).

Teacher candidates seeking initial certification at the secondary level will also complete a pre-professional placement *prior* to student teaching. Already certified teachers seeking additional certification also complete an 8-week intern placement (also called “field experience”) in an appropriate setting. Although the pre-professional and additional certification placements are not described as “student teaching,” the procedures for teacher-education internships described below apply to such placements as well.

Application

Teacher candidates must complete an application for all internships. Applications for the student teaching and intern placements (see definitions at the beginning of this document) can be obtained from the Office of Teacher Certification. Completed and signed applications must be submitted to the Office of Teacher Certification by the deadlines listed, below:

Spring Placement: First Friday of previous September

Fall Placement: Last Friday of previous January

These deadlines are firm and applications must be complete. If your application is not received on time, you will not be considered for an internship placement.

Eligibility for Internship

Eligibility for internship requires (1) completion of, and adequate performance in, all required coursework; (2) demonstrated professionalism; and (3) formal approval by the appropriate program faculty. In order to be eligible for placement, a teacher candidate must attain all three.

Coursework. All coursework required for certification must be completed prior to internship. Interns are not permitted to take courses (either at Lehigh or elsewhere) during internship. In addition, teacher candidates must have a final course grade of B- or better in all coursework required for certification. Candidates who receive a final course grade below B- will be required to re-take that course before being eligible for internship. Teacher candidates are permitted to re-take a course only one time. If candidates do not receive a grade of B- or better the second time a course is taken, they will not be eligible for internship. In addition, some courses require that the teacher candidate complete a

culminating project. *Candidates must receive a B- or better on the project to be eligible for internship.* Students who do not receive a B- or better on the project may be asked to re-take the course.

Professionalism. In addition to coursework, internship eligibility requires demonstration of professionalism. The Pennsylvania Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Educators (<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter235/chap235toc.html>) describes professional conduct and practice for teachers. Throughout the program and prior to internship, potential interns must have demonstrated that they are able to exhibit professional behaviors aligned with the Code.

Clearances: All teacher education students are expected to submit current (no more than 1-year-old) clearances upon matriculation into coursework and keep them current throughout their program. Prior to internship placement, all teacher candidates must have updated clearances. If clearances are not current, internship placement will be delayed until updated documentation is on file with the Office of Teacher Certification. If anything other than "negative" or "no record exists" is reported on a student's documentation, the exact nature of the reported health or criminal record issue will be reviewed by the OTC Director in accordance with the *College of Education Policy on Clearances*. Depending on the outcome of that review, the student may not be placed in field or research experiences until all documentation is clear. If any action is needed in response to any clearance check, that action is solely the responsibility of the student, not the College of Education faculty or staff.

Faculty Approval. Assignment to a teaching internship is not automatic. The three conditions above are necessary, but not sufficient. Teacher candidates who make application for internship and meet the above conditions will be brought forward for consideration by the appropriate teacher education faculty (General Education faculty, Special Education faculty, or both Special Education and General Education faculties for dual certification). The program faculty will consider the candidate's request and vote on whether they believe the teacher candidate is ready for internship. A majority of the appropriate teacher education faculty must vote in favor of approval. If the faculty question the teacher candidate's academic skills—regardless of his or her course marks or the candidate's professionalism, or they are uncertain whether the candidate is ready temperamentally or emotionally for the demands of internship, the program faculty may vote to delay internship or to counsel the candidate to pursue paths other than professional certification. Regardless, approvals of placements for internship are based on the program faculty's perception of the preparedness and suitability of the candidate for teaching, since they must consider the well being of children who will be the candidate's students during internship and the faculty will be asked ultimately to recommend the candidate for teacher certification.

Teacher candidates who have previously been pulled from internship (see *Termination of Internship* below) are not eligible to repeat internship. Students who were unable to complete internship for reasons other than termination (see *Deferment of Internship* below) are eligible to be reconsidered for placement in internship, but must first be reapproved by the faculty following these same procedures in order to restart internship.

Internship Placement Decision Appeal Process

Teacher candidates who fail to receive program faculty approval for internship may appeal the program faculty decision using the *Course-related Non-Grade Grievance* process (see the *Grievances* sections of the Special Education/TLT Program Manuals or the Education and Human Services Department Manual).

School Placement

In order for Lehigh personnel to provide adequate supervision, interns are placed in area schools within a 30-mile radius of Lehigh University. Teacher candidates may request a specific site or type of site, which we will do our best to accommodate; however, the Office of Teacher Certification and Lehigh faculty make the final decision on internship site, based on a number of factors. In particular, the site must meet Lehigh University qualifications with respect to type of placement and credentials/experience of supervising teachers.

Expectations During Internship

Given that student teaching internships (and field experiences leading to additional certification) require the full-time efforts, interns should consider the internship the equivalent of full-time employment.

Under the direction of their mentor teacher and Lehigh supervisor, interns assume varying levels of full-time teaching responsibility. For those doing the student teaching internship, full-time teaching responsibilities include planning and preparation, maintaining a positive classroom environment, delivering sound instruction, and attending to all required out-of-class functions of teachers in the school setting. They also include attending Back-to-School Night, parent-teacher conferences, and other school activities. Interns are expected to acclimate themselves to the total school program and exhibit characteristics of professional educators as outlined in the Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators (<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter235/chap235toc.html>). Specifically, all interns should exhibit professional behavior, including wearing attire appropriate for a school setting; arriving and leaving promptly at designated times; interacting with school personnel in a productive, and collegial and appropriate manner; completing competencies as designated; responding appropriately to feedback; and engaging in ethical practices as outlined in the Code.

Absences/Missed Days

Interns are expected to spend all day in the school during their internship. If serious illness or family emergencies cause interns to miss days, they must notify their mentor teachers and supervisors immediately and will be expected to make up these days. The intent is to complete an intensive internship similar to what real teachers experience on a daily basis. Interns must follow the school district's calendar, not Lehigh's academic calendar (this includes Spring Break and other holiday breaks).

Assessment of Performance

Interns will be evaluated on their instructional skill, classroom/behavior management and professionalism during their internship placement, based on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's PDE 430 evaluation. Interns will be assessed by university supervisors and those in student teaching internships will be directly observed by university supervisors a minimum of three times during internship. Prior to those observations, interns will be asked to provide lesson plans and other materials for supervisor use during observations. In addition, university supervisors will obtain feedback from mentor (cooperating) teachers on the intern's instructional skill, classroom/behavior management, and professionalism, as well as obtaining any other information related to the intern's performance as a teacher and suitability for teacher certification. These data will be used as a basis for deciding (1) whether the intern's performance is satisfactory and, if not, what action should be taken; (2) what final mark to assign for the course associated with the internship; and (3) whether to recommend the candidate for teacher certification.

Performance Problems during Internship

If an intern's performance during internship is not satisfactory, there are two possible courses of action: (1) If, in the judgment of the university supervisor and mentor teacher, the intern is capable of remediating his/her performance deficits, they will develop and implement a remediation plan; (2) If, however, in the judgment of the university supervisor and mentor teacher, the intern is incapable of remediating his/her performance deficits or there is reason to believe that having the intern continue in internship would have a substantially negative effect on students, faculty or staff in the school, that intern shall be pulled from internship (termination). Each of these courses of action is addressed below.

Remediation Plan. The university supervisor and mentor teacher will collaborate to design and implement a suitable remediation plan, with clearly stated actions and deadlines for improved intern performance. If the intern's performance does not improve, he or she will be withdrawn from internship (termination) and assigned a W, WP, WF, or F, as appropriate.

Termination of Internship. Interns who are pulled from student teaching before completing it will not be recommended for certification, regardless of their grades in other courses and they may not re-take internship.

Termination/Subsequent Ineligibility Appeal Process

Interns whose student teaching internship was terminated and/or who have been ruled ineligible for a subsequent student teaching internship have the right to appeal this decision. To do so, they should follow the *Course-related Non-Grade Grievance* process (see the *Grievances* section of this handbook or the Education and Human Services department manual).

A majority of the appropriate program faculty members must vote to approve placing the teacher candidate in a subsequent student teaching placement. The comments of the program director(s) on the grievance form shall reflect what occurred in that meeting and the program faculty's decision. If a subsequent student teaching placement is authorized, the teacher candidate will most likely be required to complete a formal remediation plan with clearly stated actions and deadlines. If the candidate fails to complete this plan adequately and on time, he or she will be deemed ineligible for student teaching.

Deferment of Internship

Teacher candidates are not typically allowed to withdraw from student teaching or to suspend their completion of student teaching. If, however, an intern who is otherwise performing well in student teaching finds himself or herself unable to complete student teaching due to some force outside his or her control, that intern may request a deferment. Outside forces might include such things as family emergencies, illness and accident or other non-academic forces that would prevent the intern from complete student teaching within the prescribed time. Deferments will not be granted automatically; the appropriate faculty will be informed of the situation and must vote to approve the deferment.

Deferment Denial Appeal Process

Interns whose requests to suspend student teaching placement were denied have the right to appeal this decision. To do so, they follow the *Course-related Non-Grade Grievance* process (see the *Grievances* section of this handbook or the Education and Human Services department manual). As part of that process, the meeting with the program director will be preceded by a meeting with the appropriate program faculty in which the teacher candidate presents his/her case for deferring internship.

A majority of the appropriate program faculty members must vote in favor of placing the teacher candidate in a subsequent student teaching placement. The comments of the program director(s) on the grievance form shall reflect what occurred in that meeting and the program faculty's decision.