

## TIMS FAQs for Instructional I Applications

If you are reading this document, it means that you are on the exciting path to becoming a certified teacher in Pennsylvania! In order to complete the certification process, you must learn how to use TIMS (Teacher Information Management System), the online teacher application program.

If you have completed your coursework in TLT and/or SpEd, you will use this system to complete your application. Once you have completed your program, your Program Director/Coordinator will review your student records and send confirmation of program completion to the Office of Professional Certification (OPC) for final approval in the TIMS system. Please read this document to learn how and when this process begins for you.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

*Please review the following guidelines:*

**Know what you are applying for.** What, exactly, have you been preparing for all of this time? If you're not sure, then check with your Program Coordinator. She can tell you the certificate type. In most cases, you will be applying for Instructional I, then the specific program you are completing (ex. PreK-4, Social Studies 7-12, SpEd PreK-8, etc.) But, if you are not sure, ask!

**Know what is required.** Have you checked that you have completed all of the requirements of your program, taken all tests, etc.? Ultimately, the question is, will Lehigh be able to approve your application?

**Complete your application after you receive your final GPA from the Registrar's Office.** You will need to check the Registrar's webpage to find out when grades are due and then check your Banner a few days after that date. In the mean time, *if you are already certified*, you can register with PDE, get your Professional Personnel I.D., or PPID, from the PDE website, check your citizenship status and establish your profile with PDE. You will be a little ahead of other folks who are applying for the first time.

**Read each screen carefully.** Sometimes we think that we can review items on a website quickly. Don't assume that with the TIMS system. Make sure you are reviewing everything on each screen. If you are unsure about something, click on the "Home" button at the top of the screen and log out. The system will save everything you have done until you get an answer.

**Check for messages and/or status changes periodically.** You should add a reminder on your calendar to check TIMS weekly for any updates. **Once approved, print your unofficial certification from the TIMS home page.** PDE does not mail certificates any more, so don't wait by the mailbox.

## FAQs & OTHER INFORMATIVE ITEMS

*What do I do when PDE requests a proof document (i.e. transcript)?*

You will be able to upload any additional items that PDE needs on the last screen of the application. If an individual PDE certification specialist emails you, please correspond directly with him/her.

*What is the cover sheet?* Sometimes, you need to send additional documents to the state. When you reach the end of the application, there will be a reminder to check and print the cover sheet. At this point, you can upload items requested (in one big document) or prepare to mail them. Review the cover sheet listing carefully; gather and send copies of the items needed to PDE.

*My cover sheet changed! Why?* As PDE receives information from you, the items are removed from the application file and cover sheet. This means that you are one step closer to being reviewed!

*How soon does Lehigh get my application to review?*

The application will appear on the "dashboard" for Lehigh's certification officer as soon as you complete it. You should understand that there is a process behind the scenes at Lehigh. The Program Coordinator will complete a checklist that is signed by your Program Director and perhaps your advisor. This is a list of the program requirements and items required by PDE, including an affirmation of your good moral character.

*How long does it take to process my application?*

After the OPC approves your application, it is up to you! If you have to send proof documents such as test scores that did not get sent automatically, you need to send them immediately. Upon receipt, the state sends them to be microfilmed and added to your file. When everything has been received, the file will go to the "ready for review" status and will be assigned to an evaluator. Unofficially, you could wait up to 12 weeks if your application is perfectly submitted. PDE's TIMS section lists the current wait times. Check on the right side of the page. If you have missed something or did not send a proof document in, it will take much longer.

*What if I am applying for a dual certification?* If both areas are the same type code (special ed #61 and general ed #61), then you only need one application.

*If my application is correct, is it completed faster?* Yes, if there is anything missing from your application, it will delay processing. If everything is there when the evaluator reviews it, s/he can approve it immediately.

*If my application is incorrect, what happens?* The evaluator will send you a message in TIMS and by email. Sometimes, s/he may call you to let you know what needs to be fixed. Check your TIMS and email messages at least once a week while you are waiting for approval.

*What if I realize I made a mistake, but I already hit the SUBMIT button?* You have to call PDE at 1-717-PA-TEACH during the week. PDE has a chat function, and we have found that it is the best option because you can get a transcript of your conversation emailed for your records. Understand that the phone and chat lines are answered by just a few people, so please be patient and understanding with the representatives. It is not unusual to be on “Perma-hold” for an hour or more, so be prepared to do something else while you are waiting for help. Once you get help on the phone, the representative can review your file and reset it to incomplete for you to fix.

*Do I need to send transcripts?* Maybe. We are a post-graduate program, so transcripts are not usually required. However, if you were in a 5-year program here, you may be asked to send transcripts. Keep a copy available to upload if requested.

*Is my GPA needed on the application?* You need to have your **final GPA** to complete the education section on the application. You cannot complete and submit your application until you have your final GPA.

*How do I make sure that Lehigh is able to review my application?* In the education section, you will be asked for your undergraduate degree information. Input your undergrad institution and major. The system will ask, “Did you complete the PDE-Approved Educator Preparation Program(s) for the subject area at this institution?” Answer NO.

You are applying for your certification through Lehigh, so you must then add Lehigh as your teacher-preparation program. After you enter Lehigh and your major, select YES to the question, “Did you complete the PDE-Approved Educator Preparation Program(s) for the subject area at this institution?” If you do not identify Lehigh as the institution that prepared you to teach, then we will never see your application. It will sit on the PDE website forever!

*How do I submit my application?* Once you think you have completed all aspects of the application, click the Home button and go back and review it. If you can upload any of the Proof Documents (test scores, etc.), upload them before you complete the application. Once everything is as complete as possible, go back and hit the Submit button. At that time, it will go into the queue for review once it is complete. **Always use the Home button to get back to the current application.**

*What is the date of graduation and how do I find it?*

If you're completing your program in the spring, use May 20.

If you're completing your program in the fall, use December 20.

If you're completing your program in the summer, use August 20.

*Are there any other sources that I can use before I begin my application?*

Yes. Contact Lisa Collins for a meeting and she will sit down with you to complete the application.

*What is Instructional II Certification?* Instructional II Certification is the permanent teaching certificate. You apply for it after three years of teaching service and 24 graduate credits. Your school district's human resources department will help you with this process.

*If you need help with the information above or with your TIMS application, please feel free to contact me at 610-758-2805 or lisacollins@lehigh.edu.*

*Lisa Collins, Director*

*Office of Professional Certification*