SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY
College of Education and Human Services
1871 Old Main Drive
Shippensburg, PA 17257

Office of Field Experiences and Partnerships Handbook

Website
http://www.ship.edu/COEHS/Field_Services/Forms

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NOTE: Because of the nature of teacher certification, changes in program requirements may result from new regulations/mandates from the state’s legislative and/or executive branches, from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), or from changes in the University’s degree requirements.
FIELD EXPERIENCES AT A GLANCE

Mission: Our mission is to prepare knowledgeable, skilled professional educators who are able to analyze and apply research, best practices and ongoing assessment to make informed decisions and to instill a habit of collaborative and lifelong learning in themselves and all students.

Goal: To assist in the development of future teachers as they become Collaborative Decision-Makers. To achieve that goal, we collaborate with university and school district faculty and administrators to provide sites for field work, coordinate a wide variety of outreach projects, maintain student records regarding Professional Standing of education majors, and seek grant funding that will strengthen teacher preparation programs.

Objectives: Introduce pre-service teachers to Best Practices. Empower pre-service teachers to be prepared to provide successful learning experiences for diverse needs of students in classrooms. Increase level of professionalism for teaching profession. Expand teaching/learning perspectives by including opportunities for education majors to student teach in urban, rural, and suburban locations.

NOTE: No Shippensburg student is allowed to enter any public school building as part of a required field experience until copies of ALL clearances are on file with the appropriate office. Remember also that clearances must be updated as necessary so they remain valid for the entire academic year. Updated clearances are due by September 1 of each year.

Level One and Two Field Experiences: During sophomore year, all certification candidates must document, as directed, assigned hours of observation and exploration in a variety of classroom settings aligned with their area of certification. These hours are part of course requirements and occur in a variety of settings. These experiences may include tutoring, observing, team teaching, shadowing, interviewing and assessing students.

Level Three Field Experiences: During junior and senior years, certification candidates are assigned to school districts in different demographic settings. All certification candidates spend assigned hours working with small groups of students, teaching small groups of students and teaching some lessons to the entire class under the teacher’s supervision. These placements are part of required courses for which there may be additional specific assignments.

Level Four Field Experiences: The capstone experience is student teaching, a 16-week, semester-long clinical practice in which certification candidates demonstrate teaching and assessment skills in school district classroom settings. Candidates are assigned to and mentored by appropriately certified school district teachers. Candidates are supervised and evaluated by university faculty/supervisors. Evaluation instruments include the Pennsylvania Statewide Evaluation Form for Student Professional Knowledge and Practice.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE FIELD EXPERIENCES OFFICE

1. Do I need to purchase and use TK-20?
   - Yes, multiple assessments, surveys, and evaluations are completed by candidates, host teachers, and university personnel during the pre-service teacher education program. A TK-20 account must be purchased prior to the beginning of the first education class taken by any student.
   - Go to ship.tk20.com and log on with your Ship e-mail address and password. You will get an error message but on the left hand side will be a “create your student account” banner. Click it, follow the directions, pay the fee, and within about 12 hours your account will be activated. You access your TK-20 account following the same steps as above. Contact Dr. Steffy (hlsteffy@ship.edu) for additional information.

2. What types of clearances do I need to complete prior to field placements?
   - Clearances are required by state law for anyone working in school settings where students are present. They are not optional for the school district or for Shippensburg University.
   - NOTE: No Shippensburg student is allowed to enter any public school building as part of field experience until copies of ALL clearances are on file with the appropriate department office. Remember also that clearances must be updated as necessary so they remain valid for the entire semester. Updated clearances are due by September 1 of each calendar year.
   - An Act 34 Criminal record clearance is required. This application may be obtained online at https://epatch.state.pa.us. This clearance must be renewed each year as school districts will not permit a student to be placed in any field experience or in student teaching without this clearance.
   - An Act 151 Child Abuse Clearance is required. This application may be obtained online at http://www.dpw.state.pa.us. This clearance must be renewed each year as school districts will not permit a student to be placed in any field experience or in student teaching without this clearance.
   - A TB test is required as school districts will not permit a student to be placed in any field experience or in student teaching without this test. The test is generally good for two years and must be kept current. The Edger Health Center provides monthly clinic dates for this free test for any education major. Dates are posted in the education department office and on-line at www.ship.edu/COEHS/Field_Services/Clearance_Information/
• An FBI check is required as school districts will not permit a student to be placed in any field experience or in student teaching without this check. One FBI report is generally valid as long as a student stays continuously enrolled at Shippensburg. All information regarding process, policy, and fingerprinting locations may be found at www.pa.cogentid.com

• You need to sign an ACT 24 form each year. These are available on-line at http://www.ship.edu/assets/0/153/1142/1146/8599590e-b890-4bc6-aa29-beb4c9093afc.pdf or from the Field Experiences office - SPH 354

• Shippensburg University also requires that everyone working in schools be covered by a professional liability insurance policy. Inexpensive coverage can be obtained by joining either one of the following professional organizations as a STUDENT member.

2. What if my clearances come back with blemishes?
   • The university has a set of guidelines to help answer questions related to citations on clearance checks. Find the guidelines under Background Check Guide at http://www.ship.edu/COEHS/Field_Services/Clearance_Information/ and on p. 8 below. It is recommended that you consult your attorney for specific questions related to Section 111 (Background Checks of Prospective Employees) of the School Code of PA if you have additional concerns.

3. What are Level One/Two field experiences?
   • All certification candidates must document required hours of observation and exploration in a school settings. Specific assignments for these hours will be included in course syllabi.

4. Do I make my own Level One/Two placement in school districts?
   • You may NOT call any school without completing paperwork through the Office of Field Experiences and Partnerships or without a university professor connecting you with a specific school.

5. How do I document my field experiences?
   • Each department has different processes. All education majors need to document field hours in TK-20. Call department secretary, at 477-1688 if you have questions.
   • Secondary field hours are documented through academic advisors and are verified to the Office of Field Experiences and Partnerships. Please contact the education advisor in your department for specific guidelines for field hours for your discipline.
6. **What additional experiences during freshman/sophomore/junior years help prepare me for student teaching?**
   - Many hours of community service working with children
   - America Reads Tutors
   - Working in summer camps for children and youth
   - Day care centers

7. **What teacher certification tests do I need to pass to be certified by PDE?**
   - **All teacher certification candidates** must demonstrate competency in basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics) in one of the following three ways.
     - earn a composite SAT score above 1550 before enrolling in Shippensburg University with a minimum score of 500 on each sub-test
     - earn a passing score of 220 on each module of the Pre-Service Academic Performance Assessment (PAPA) which is part of the PA Educator Certification Test (PECT) testing program from Pearson. Information and registration instructions can be found at [http://www.pa.nesinc.com/](http://www.pa.nesinc.com/)
     - earn a passing score on each of the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (CAS) tests (5712, 5722, and 5732 or 5751 for all three) administered by ETS. Information and registration instructions can be found at [http://www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis)
   - **Early Childhood and Special Education** certification candidates do NOT take any Praxis tests. All certification tests for these two certification areas are tests from the PECT series. These tests are offered only on-line at designated sites. Information and registration instructions can be found at [http://www.pa.nesinc.com/](http://www.pa.nesinc.com/)
   - **Middle, Secondary, and K-12** certification candidates still take one or more Praxis II exams. All Praxis II tests are available on-line at designated testing centers. The most current information can be found through ETS at: [http://www.ets.org/praxis/pa/requirements](http://www.ets.org/praxis/pa/requirements)

8. **What about alternate test passing scores based on GPA?**
   - GPA has NO impact on the passing scores required for any of the Basic Skills Tests (SAT, PAPA, or CAS).
   - PDE does recognize a sliding scale for passing most of the content area tests, based on your final GPA at the time of your GRADUATION.
   - The current required tests and acceptable passing scores can be obtained by checking with Dr. Steffy or directly from PDE by clicking on the Certification Testing and Scores link at [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/testing_requirements/8638](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/testing_requirements/8638)
   - The score reports candidates receive from ETS/PRAXIS or from PECT reflect only the passing score required for a graduate with a 3.0 GPA. The published
PDE sliding scale scores document determines the pass/fail status of any score, not the testing company reports.

9. **SPECIAL TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**
   - If you have learning difficulties documented by a school psychologist and want assistance, you may apply for testing accommodations for the PECT and PRAXIS tests. This must be done through the Office of Disabilities Services in Horton Hall 120. Contact the office at 477-1364. Once paperwork is completed, you send the required information to the testing organization. More information is available at the alternative testing arrangements tab at [http://www.pa.nesinc.com](http://www.pa.nesinc.com) for the PECT tests or at [http://www.ets.org/praxis/register/disabilities](http://www.ets.org/praxis/register/disabilities) for the Praxis tests.
   
   - If English is not your first language, you may apply for special testing accommodations. More information is available at the alternative testing arrangements tab at [http://www.pa.nesinc.com](http://www.pa.nesinc.com) for the PECT tests or at [http://www.ets.org/praxis/register/accommodations/plne](http://www.ets.org/praxis/register/accommodations/plne) for the Praxis tests.

10. **SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY’S CERTIFICATION TEST PASS RATES**
    - PRAXIS test passage rates for all program completers
      
      | Year         | Shippensburg University | All Pennsylvania Institutions |
      |--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
      | 2009-2010    | 98%                      | 97%                           |
      | 2010-2011    | 95%                      | 94%                           |
      | 2011-2012    | 95%                      | 94%                           |
      | 2012-2013    | 89%                      | 88%                           |
    
    - PECT test passage rates for all PK-4 test takers
      
      | Year         | Shippensburg University | All Pennsylvania Institutions |
      |--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
      | 2012-2013    |                          |                               |
      | Module 1     | 100%                     | 92%                           |
      | Module 2     | 99%                      | 89%                           |
      | Module 3     | 98%                      | 86%                           |

11. **What are the Professional “Gates”?**
    - Gates are check points that list the requirements a candidate must meet before moving to the next level within the teacher preparation program.
    
    - Since teacher education candidates must meet educational criteria specified the PA Department of Education (PDE) before being certified to teach, Shippensburg University requires candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet these PDE standards at various points in the preparation program.
    
    - The specific gates for each certification type are available from your advisor or department but in general these are the requirements.
    
    - Keep all clearances up to date (refer to #2 on p. 3 above for specific information)
    
    - Meet the PDE Basic Skills requirement by the end of your sophomore year.
    
    - Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 for all coursework at Shippensburg University.
• Pass the PDE required certification tests before the student teaching semester begins.
• Successfully complete all field experience requirements prior to student teaching.

12. Where can I student teach?
• School districts in Adams, Bedford, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Perry, and York Counties accept student teachers. Additional sites may be available in specific situations through the other State System Universities.
• You may not student teach in the district from which you graduated or in a district where you have any relative working in any capacity in the school system.

13. What happens if, during student teaching, I decide I do not want to be a teacher?
• Candidates who decide during student teaching that they do not have the skills necessary to be a teacher or decide they do not want to be a teacher have several options.
• As with any other course, a candidate may withdraw from student teaching before the tenth week of the semester. There will be no tuition refund but the “W” on the transcript has NO impact on a student’s GPA. If 120 hours have not been earned, additional coursework, approved by the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services, would be required to earn the BS degree.
• A candidate may also request to “drop out” of student teaching after the tenth week. Candidates choosing this option can generally earn a “D” grade in student teaching. This allows the candidate to graduate with a BS degree but precludes being certified to teach since student teaching was not completed.
• A candidate may also finish student teaching as planned but then NOT apply for a teaching certificate. Teaching certificates are issued by PDE and are therefore not directly connected to your BS degree. You can earn a degree without becoming certified to teach (even with a major in education) but you cannot become certified to teach without earning a degree.

14. What happens if I am unsuccessful as a student teacher?
• Very rarely, a candidate is not successful in his/her student teaching experience. With the written support of the appropriate academic department, an unsuccessful candidate may request permission to enroll in and complete student teaching a second time.
• The process would include completion of a “refresher” course or series of courses approved by the Office of Field Experiences and Partnerships. This additional course work, developed in conjunction with the candidate’s academic department, would be designed to correct the specific weaknesses and deficiencies that led to the failure during the initial student teaching experience.
• Permission to repeat student teaching will be granted only after the “refresher” course work has been completed satisfactorily (grade of “B” or higher) and at least one academic year has passed since the unsuccessful attempt. Under no circumstances may the student teaching course be repeated more than one time.
15. How do I obtain a teaching certificate?

- Applications for PA teaching certificates are now handled exclusively on-line through a PDE developed and maintained system. You will receive specific instructions related to the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) during your student teaching semester. You may not begin the application process until the first day of the month of your graduation from Shippensburg University.
- The University must sponsor you for your initial teacher certification. However, adding addition areas to your certificate and/or obtaining an Instructional II certificate is handled directly through PDE, not through the University.

**Shippensburg University**

**All Teacher Certification Programs**

**Criminal Background Check Information**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the impact of state and federal criminal background check statutes on field experiences, student teaching, teacher certification and future professional educator employment. Shippensburg University (SU) teacher certification programs prepare teachers for PK-12 classrooms of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other states by providing programs of preparation that include, among other activities, field experience activities and student teaching. SU maintains partnerships with local public and approved private school programs for the purpose of providing opportunities for the program specific requirements.

Recent amendments to the Public School Code of 1949 mandate student teacher candidates to provide the following background check information in a manner prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) prior to the start of their student teaching experience:

1. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal History Record (Act 34)
2. Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151)
3. Federal Criminal History Record Information (Act 114)

Shippensburg University requires background checks for students in all field experiences prior to and including student teaching. Any student whose background checks are not completely clear will be required to meet with the Director of Field Experiences and Partnerships before being allowed to continue in any teacher certification programs.

Students enrolling in teacher certification programs and student teacher candidates should also be aware that some school districts have stringent policies that preclude students from being in the building for field experiences or as student teachers if any criminal citation is noted on a criminal background check. SU will abide by those district policies when making field experience and student teaching placements.

The University highly recommends that all students enrolling in teacher certification programs and student teacher candidates review the criminal background requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education as they are subject to change. The requirements and the procedures to
follow in order to secure criminal background information are set forth at the following PDE webpage:

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/background_checks_%28act_114%29/7493

If a student has further questions or concerns about how these policies and requirements impact his/her future in the field of teacher education, the University highly recommends that additional legal counsel be obtained.

Frequently Asked Questions About Clearance Documents

1. What are summary alcohol offenses?

Summary offenses are the least serious of criminal offenses. The most common among college students are alcohol summary offenses. Examples include:
   - Purchase, consumption, possession, or transportation of alcohol by a minor (also known as an Underage Drinking (UAD) offense)
   - Misrepresentation of age (first offense)
   - Public drunkenness

2. How does a UAD offense impact my plans related to teaching?

Neither a summary offense nor an expungement can be used in consideration of acceptance or denial of a state teaching certificate. Therefore, you will still be eligible for teacher certification. However, a school district may deny employment to an applicant based on any kind of past citation. Even though a UAD citation may not appear on a background check, it does remain on record with the police and can be accessed by any school district that chooses to search for the information.

3. What is a misdemeanor?

A misdemeanor is a more serious offense than a summary offense, but a lessor crime than a felony. Misdemeanor offenses appear on a criminal background check. Alcohol misdemeanors include but are not limited to the following:
   - Driving under the influence
   - Purchasing and/or furnishing alcohol to minors
   - Misrepresentation of your age to buy alcohol
   - Carrying or manufacturing a false ID

4. How does a misdemeanor impact my future as a teacher?

Individuals convicted of misdemeanors of the first degree are eligible to enroll as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of five years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the misdemeanor offense.
Individuals convicted more than once for an offense under 75 Pa. C.S. §3802(a), (b), (c) or (d) (relating to driving under the influence of alcohol or controlled substance) and the offense is graded as a misdemeanor of the first degree under 75 Pa. C.S. §3803 (relating to grading) are eligible to enroll as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of three years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the most recent misdemeanor offense.

5. What is a felony offense?

A felony offense is the most serious type of criminal offense. Individuals convicted of a felony offense of the first, second or third degree other than those listed below are eligible to be enrolled as a student teacher candidate or be employed in a public or private school only if a period of ten years has elapsed from the expiration of the sentence for the felony offense.

6. What felony offenses prohibit student teaching and my future employment?

Students planning to enroll in a teacher certification program are advised that certain criminal convictions preclude them from ever enrolling as a student teacher candidate or being employed as a teacher in the Commonwealth. Specifically, Section 111(e) of the Public School Code of 1949 precludes individuals convicted of a specific list of crimes from being a student teacher candidate or being employed in a public or private school. That list of crimes can be found at the following URL: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/background_checks_(act_114)/7493/act_114_of_2006._24_ps_1-111._background_checks/601417

QUESTIONS
Contact Dr. Herbert L. Steffy at hlsteffy@ship.edu