

PIMS Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a state PIMS postsecondary advisory committee?

Yes, the Postsecondary Statewide Data Council (PSDC) is comprised of individuals knowledgeable about higher education data and data systems in a position of influence at their respective institution. The PSDC serves to advise PDE as it works to bring the postsecondary expansion of PIMS to fruition. Specifically, the PSDC helps insure that PIMS will serve the needs of institutions.

PDE welcomes additional participation in the PSDC. Please contact David Tandberg for more information.

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What is PAsecureID?

The PAsecureID is a ten digit number that is generated for each student, is unique to that student and will protect the confidentiality of the individual student record of each student. The PAsecureID database contains a selected set of data about individual students that will allow for the assignment of a unique student identifier. The PAsecureID is randomly generated and contains no embedded meaning. Once the number is created it is first checked for duplicates. If any duplicates are found, they will be reconciled using a set of information, such as the first name, last name, date of birth, gender, race/ethnicity, and the LEA identification number of the student. After being checked for duplicates, the number is made permanent.

PAsecureID is also used to identify the system that generates the above-described unique identifiers for students. The purpose of this system is to maintain one and only one secure identifier for each student within Pennsylvania. So if a student is enrolled in a K-12 school district and then moves to a different school district, or moves out-of-state and later returns to Pennsylvania, or later enrolls in a postsecondary institution in Pennsylvania they will keep the same state-assigned student identifier.

Students must have a PAsecureID assigned before any data concerning the student can be submitted to PIMS. In PIMS, the PAsecureID will allow the postsecondary records for a student to be connected to his or her K-12 records (if applicable). For this reason the PAsecureID must be stored within the institution's student information system (SIS) as an alternate identifier. Access to information in the SIS must be strictly controlled.

Note that "PAsecureID" refers to both the application and the actual generated state identifier.

What data will PIMS collect?

The PIMS data dictionary is comprehensive. The table below shows the major data categories included in the dictionary.

Data Category	Data Scope	Data Subcategories
Institutions and Campuses	N/A	Demographics, characteristics, summary statistics, etc.
Students	Limited to undergraduate students taking classes for credit	Demographics, high school educational background, enrollment, tests / licenses / certifications, transfers, financial aid, program participation, etc.
Faculty	Limited to instructional faculty (any faculty member teaching at least one for-credit undergraduate course)	Demographics and a link to the course section data
Courses	Limited to undergraduate for-credit courses	Courses offered, course sections and the faculty who teach them, students enrolled in classes

Please see the Data Dictionary for the detailed list of data elements that PDE expects to collect. When reviewing the Dictionary keep in mind the following:

- The data dictionary is just that, a catalog of data elements that PDE expects to collect. It does not include the specifications for the extract files to be produced. These won't be available until most likely late spring 2009.
- The data definitions, code sets, etc. in the data dictionary are subject to change prior to the statewide implementation.
- Not all institutions will need to submit all of the data. For example, several student-related elements are specific to programs (e.g., Act 101 or Perkins) that not all institutions participate in.
- The data dictionary serves as a starting point. PDE will work with individual sectors and institutions on what specific data elements they will submit to PIMS.
- The implementation of PIMS will be phased over the course of school year 2009-2010. Not all of the data will be collected at once.

Will PIMS be FERPA "compliant"?

Yes. Individual student data submitted through PIMS are managed by PDE in accordance with state and federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). For example, personally identifying and other confidential student information will not be accessible or be released by PDE except as allowed by law. For more information please see PDE's existing [Student Data Access and Use Policy](#). Note that PDE is in the process of reviewing and revising this policy to address any unique postsecondary student-level data issues.

Who will have access to my institution's data and how will the data be used?

PDE is currently working on a statewide policy regarding who will have access to PIMS data and those PIMS data elements to which access will be granted. This policy will be similar to, or an extension of, the [Student Data Access and Use Policy](#) already in effect for the student-level data currently stored in PIMS.

PDE welcomes input from institutions as it develops this policy and will obtain the input of the PSDC. In developing this policy PDE is being guided by the following considerations:

- The data needs to be used in such a way that it helps create better institutional policy and programming and also state policy
- Institutional differences must be respected
- Differences that exist between sectors must also be respected
- Reports must address critical issues
- Reports must provide useful information to the proper audiences
- The policy must allow as broad access as possible while ensuring student privacy
- The policy must be in keeping with FERPA regulations

PIMS can be used to answer a host of research questions that can promote improved policy, student learning and success. This could include research questions such as:

- What factors help students move successfully through key transition points in the education career, such as enrolling in college, transferring from two to four-year colleges, or entering the workforce?
- What curricular or environmental factors affect student progress through the education career?
- What is the relationship between student's ability to complete college and their high school grades, and test scores?
- What role does geographic mobility play in students' educational attainment?
- What percent of PA high school graduates go on to postsecondary education?

How will institutions submit data to PIMS?

To submit data to PIMS, institutions will need to extract data out of their student information system (SIS). The data will need to be formatted into specific "templates" or flat files. These files can be in delimited (comma, tab, pipe) format. Specifications describing these files will be available in late spring 2009. These specifications will include the following for each template file:

- Data element number
- Data element name
- Data element definition
- Maximum length of element
- Whether data element is required, optional or conditionally required
- Data element business rules, if applicable
- Valid code set, if applicable

- Sample value

Once the data has been extracted in the appropriate format it must be processed into PIMS. This will occur through the use of eScholar Data Manager (eDM). After uploading template files to eDM, resolving any errors and loading the data into the PIMS Data Warehouse, users will confirm that the data has been loaded properly by logging into the PIMS Cognos reporting tool and reviewing various reports. Training on eDM and the Cognos reports will be provided shortly before the statewide implementation.

What is the timeline for this implementation?

The table below shows the high-level implementation timeline for institutions that are currently participating in PIMS.

Approximate Time Frame	Major Activities
September 2008 – April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine data definitions, business rules, collection timing, etc. • eScholar (PIMS software vendor) develops postsecondary enhancements to PIMS • PDE prepares for pilot implementation
May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDE conducts pilot implementation with a small cross-section of institutions
June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDE documents pilot lessons learned and finalizes statewide implementation planning • PDE publishes the PIMS Data Submission Manual to institutions and provides training on how to create the template files
June 2009 – September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions (perhaps with support from their SIS vendor) develop the necessary programs to extract data from their SIS in the appropriate PIMS template format • PDE provides regular communication and support
October 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDE provides hands-on PIMS data submission and report training to institutions
October 2009 – August 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIMS data submission is phased in over the course of the school year • PDE provides continued support

How much work will PIMS be for institutions?

Participation in PIMS will require significant effort on the part of institutions. Some of the required effort will be one-time activities while others will be ongoing. Specifically, institutions will need to:

- Potentially begin to collect data on students and faculty not previously collected. This may mean changes to existing business processes and technical changes to the student information system (SIS).
- Review existing data for data quality anomalies. Resolve issues as necessary.
- Develop the programs to extract data out of the SIS and place it in the appropriate template format. This includes mapping local institution code sets to PIMS code sets. For

example, the code set that an institution uses to store race/ethnicity is likely different than what PIMS requires.

- Submit data to PIMS periodically starting in school year 2009-2010. Data errors found during the data submission process will need to be resolved. Reports will need to be reviewed to confirm the data has been loaded properly.

The specific level of effort required of each institution will depend on a number of factors. This includes the level of technical proficiency at the institution, size of the student enrollment, state of the existing data, and whether or not the institution is receiving support from their SIS vendor (if applicable).

What support resources will be available to institutions?

PDE will provide institutions with support to assist them in preparing for PIMS. This includes the following:

- **PAsecureID training and documentation** – As indicated above, PAsecureID's are required so that institutions can submit student-level data to PIMS. PDE will provide institutions with training and documentation regarding how to submit data and generate ID's using this application.
- **PIMS data submission manual** – PDE will provide a PIMS data submission manual. This will include the specifications for the required templates or extract files.
- **PIMS template file training** – Training (via a webinar) will be provided to educate institutions on the template files and to answer questions.
- **Regular communication** – Through conference calls and webinars, PDE will regularly communicate with institutions and their student information system (SIS) vendors.
- **Data submission and reporting training** – PDE will provide hands-on data submission and reporting training to institutions right before implementation of PIMS for postsecondary.
- **PIMS Template Editor** – For any small institutions without a commercial SIS, PDE will provide a "PIMS Template Editor". This MS Access database can be used to format the data in the appropriate template format. It does not provide SIS-type functionality.

In addition to the above it should be noted that PDE will be conducting a pilot implementation of PIMS with a small cross-section of institutions in spring 2009. This pilot will be used to assist PDE in developing policies and procedures for the ultimate PIMS postsecondary implementation, as well as refining the data element definitions, business rules and code sets. This will lead to a smoother state-wide implementation during school year 2009-2010. Once PIMS is implemented, PDE will continue to communicate and support institutions and their SIS vendors as template files are phased in over the course of the year.

Is PIMS one application or several?

"PIMS" refers to a suite of commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) applications that have been purchased from software vendors with deep experience in education and integrated to work together. PIMS includes the following applications:

- **eScholar Uniq-ID for Students (aka PAsecureID)** – The software that maintains one and only one identifier for all students in Pennsylvania
- **eScholar Data Manager (eDM)** – The software that institutions will use to load their data into PIMS
- **eScholar Complete Data Warehouse (aka PIMS Data Warehouse)** – The database or data warehouse that stores the data in a format optimized for reporting and analysis
- **Cognos Business Intelligence Suite** – The reporting and analysis tool

All PIMS user applications are web-based and therefore do not require any software to be installed on the user's computer.

Can PAsecureID administrators at other institutions see information on my students?

Yes, but only for the purpose of resolving near matches can administrators at one institution review data on students that may not be enrolled at their institution within the PAsecureID system. The data elements an administrator may view in order to resolve a near match are limited to the data elements used for the assignment of the PAsecureID and are generally considered directory information which can be made publicly available under FERPA.

It is important to point out that only the designated administrator at each institution has the ability to resolve near matches and that the information viewed can in no way be connected to a student's educational record or any information maintained within PIMS.

There are several different types of searches that can be used by PAsecureID administrators within the PAsecureID system in order to resolve near matches. Each of these have been used by PAsecureID administrators at the k-12 level for the last 2 ½ years. They are listed below.

Summary of the search functionality in the PAsecureID system (searches are used to resolve near matches)

Individual Student Search:

- Requires part of first and last name, can also enter part middle name, suffix, and DOB
- Returns all students that are a potential match
- Can view all assignment fields except SSN, which is not shown regardless of whether it was submitted or not, including the date the record was created, updated, and the last batch number associated with the student
- Can view history of changes to the record

Advanced Individual Student Search:

- Requires part of first and last name, can also enter middle name, suffix, DOB, gender, ethnicity, school code, resident district, local student ID, grade, and district
- Returns all students that are a potential match
- Can view all assignment fields except SSN, which is not shown regardless of whether it was submitted or not, including the date the record was created, updated, and the last batch number associated with the student
- Can view history of changes to the record

State ID Search:

- Requires a PAsecureID
- Returns the student with the given PAsecureID
- Can view all fields except SSN, which is not shown regardless of whether it was submitted or not, including the date the record was created, updated, and the last batch number associated with the student
- Can view history of changes to the record

Batch Search:

- Requires part of first or last name, allows all other fields to be entered as well
- Submitted in a batch file like the file used to submit students for ID assignment
- Allows for multiple students in a batch
- Returns the data entered in the batch for each student plus their PAsecureID if it finds only one match for that student, does not return additional data about the student that was not entered in the search

Do students need to consent to have their data submitted into PIMS or to have PAsecureIDs assigned?

No, under FERPA students do not need to consent for their data to be collected by state education agencies and when the data is being used for evaluation or audit of federal or State supported educational programs, such as analysis of K-12 institutional performance in preparing students for postsecondary education.

I have additional questions, who do I direct these to?

PDE welcomes your questions on the PIMS postsecondary implementation. These should be directed to:

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