



ELON
UNIVERSITY

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School of
Education



EARLY CLINICAL EXPERIENCES HANDBOOK TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Overview of the Teacher Education Program

The Teacher Education Program at Elon University carefully guides teacher candidates in their acquisition of knowledge (content and pedagogical), the processes of inquiry, and the importance and development of professionalism. Teacher education faculty members strongly believe that Elon's heavily clinical-based programs provide the appropriate settings in which these practices are developed and appropriately nurtured. Working in schools regularly and often provides both candidates and faculty with multiple opportunities to see theory transitioned into practice, to see theory affirmed or challenged by practice, and to reflect on how these are occurring in a variety of settings.

The Department of Education and Wellness is the administrative unit for all professional education courses and coordinates the undergraduate programs in elementary education, middle grades education, and special education. All other teacher licensure programs are offered in collaboration with Elon College, the College of Arts and Sciences, with candidates completing degrees in their specific content areas of teacher licensure.

The Teacher Education Committee is the coordinating and policy-making body for all licensure programs in the Teacher Education Program. The Dean of the School of Education chairs this committee, which meets monthly during the regular academic year and at other times as needs arise. Membership on the Teacher Education Committee includes the program coordinator from each licensure area, the coordinator of secondary/K-12 programs, directors of graduate programs, the chairperson of the Department of Education and Wellness, the Accreditation Director, the Director of Education Outreach, the Director of Teaching Fellows, the Coordinator of Technology for Teacher Education, at least two public school representatives, and at least two teacher candidates.

Elon University is accredited by the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Its Teacher Education Program is approved by the North Carolina State Board of Education and is nationally accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) with CAEP Accreditation eligibility.

Mission for Teacher Education at Elon University

Mission: Who is the Elon Teacher?

The Teacher Education Program at Elon University prepares teachers to be effective practitioners who are engaged learners, ethical leaders, globally aware citizens, and advocates for equity and excellence.

Coursework and Sequencing of Clinical Experiences

All teacher candidates experience a well-planned sequence of Elon Core Curriculum courses that build a broad liberal arts knowledge base in the humanities, the social and behavioral sciences, mathematics, technology, natural sciences, and physical education and health. By design, the general education curriculum at Elon helps to develop inquiry skills, promote domain-specific thinking, and encourage broad-based dispositions for effective scholarship. During this phase of candidates' education, they are also engaged in the first professional education course, either EDU 2110, EDU 2500, or SOC 2430, which serves as an introduction to education with a required clinical experience. At this level of preparation, potential candidates examine their motives for teaching as they both observe in classrooms and begin initial work with students and teachers in those school settings. At this point, students choose either to continue to pursue a degree and related teaching license in a given program, or they do not submit an application for acceptance into any program.

Once formally accepted into a licensure/degree program, candidates begin their professional studies, including orientation to, observation of, and reflection upon both theory and practice. Clinical experiences are designed to be spiraling in nature, and the specific assignments completed in assigned internships are germane to the area of licensure being pursued. These assignments include, for example, content and pedagogical issues relevant to instruction as well as choosing from multiple and appropriate instructional practices. Candidates also begin to

focus specifically upon the students whom they are serving, discerning how best to meet their array of diverse instructional needs. At this point, candidates are ready to demonstrate their knowledge of methodology and are prepared to incorporate and implement tools of technology into microteaching and simulation activities. Clinical experiences tied to methods courses require teacher candidates to demonstrate mastery of content and pedagogical knowledge as well as show positive performance in the area of professional dispositions.

Following successful mini-teaching experiences connected to the methods course/s, candidates apply for admission to the student teaching (clinical practice) phase of their preparation. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education, the student teaching internship shall be a minimum of sixteen (16) weeks, which may be held over the course of two semesters. Therefore, the senior year is considered the student teaching year, and includes the fall methods course and spring student teaching internship. This year-long experience requires candidates to demonstrate their competence as emerging teachers. This phase serves as the culminating clinical experience in which continual observations, self-reflective activities, and conferences allow and encourage evaluation of both theory and wisdom of practice. These elements of reflective practice demand that candidates clarify and synthesize their knowledge and skills as practicing teachers. During the student teaching year, the Elon University teacher education faculty, in partnership with the clinical teachers in the field, is able to fully assess how well candidates have developed into thoughtful practitioners who are engaged in a community of learners.

Clinical and Clinical-Based Experiences Agreements with School Systems

The clinical-based component of the Elon University Teacher Education Program is designed in collaboration with several local school districts. School partners serve as members on advisory panels, on designated advisory boards for the various licensure programs, and on the Teacher Education Committee. These individuals, in addition to numerous clinical teachers who host both student teachers and candidates in pre-student teaching settings, work with Elon faculty to develop and continually revise clinical experiences whereby candidates gain meaningful experiences in school settings.

School district and Elon University parties sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for the purpose of preparing teacher candidates to teach in their specific specialty areas. After a successful national background check, candidates are placed jointly by the Director of Education Outreach and the partner schools into specific classroom settings where they may observe, actively participate in, and examine many areas relevant to instruction. Students become familiar with problems and decision-making specific to their specialty, best practices used in problem-solving and decision-making, instructional materials and strategies appropriate to their students' needs, and varied assessments and evaluations of their own impact upon student learning.

Schools and districts that maintain MOUs with Elon University are keenly aware of the goals and objectives related to clinical experiences. Together, both the university and schools help to guide candidates to clarify and synthesize their knowledge and skills as multiple opportunities are provided for structured, novice teaching settings. Such a cooperative effort begins with the earliest clinical experiences, which occur prior to candidates' admission into the Teacher Education Program. This collaboration continues through the culmination of the student teaching internship.

The joint agreements between Elon University and school districts specify goals and objectives as well as delineate roles and responsibilities for all parties involved to provide quality clinical and clinical-based experiences. To this end, school and university personnel are committed to developing prospective teachers who are thoughtful practitioners working effectively in a community of learners.

Beliefs and Guiding Principles of Clinical and Clinical-based Experiences

Clinical experiences are integrated throughout the professional education sequence and occur at intentional points within all licensure programs. Such experiences are completed in tandem with coursework to engage prospective teachers in systematic inquiry and reflection, to provide opportunities to accurately view the complexities of the school environment, to learn the many multi-faceted roles of teachers, and to facilitate

understanding of the roles of community members, parents, and other caregivers, both within and beyond the school setting. In short, teacher candidates must engage in first-hand teaching and learning situations in real classrooms with real teachers who work with real students and their parents/caregivers.

The following propositions help to shape the many pre-student teaching clinical experiences at Elon University:

1. Clinical experiences provide opportunities for the Teacher Education Program to create partnerships with host schools. As a result, multiple and carefully chosen classrooms and community settings are provided for teacher candidates to observe and work in with teachers in action. This facilitates the identification and analysis of theories, research, and effective teaching strategies. These experiences further provide for inquiry and investigation between the gap of theory and classroom practice.
2. Clinical experiences provide for systematic, structured, sequential, and experiential opportunities in a variety of school settings. Drawing from the University's commitment to highly interactive, engaged, and experiential education, this curricular approach provides a balanced blend of prerequisite knowledge, teaching experiences both on and off campus, and careful sequencing of such experiences.
3. Clinical experiences provide for meaningful reflection as a tool in the developmental process of teaching. Internships help to instill in prospective teachers the need to be reflective learners, ones who are intentional about their current and future work in classrooms. These experiences assist candidates in their development of self-analysis and assessment skills. Candidates begin to understand that teachers must make decisions and adjust what they are doing based upon student responses and performance as well as instructional goals. In this way, candidates learn that teaching is an ever-changing, inquiry-based, problem-solving process.
4. Clinical experiences provide an infusion of diversity throughout candidates' preparation programs. By providing intentional settings for candidates to observe and work in diverse classrooms, these prospective teachers develop a better understanding of student characteristics and the relationships these characteristics play in the development of preferences for learning. The teacher education curriculum makes a concerted effort to ensure that emerging teachers have experiences with students who are educationally-disadvantaged, at-risk of academic failure, have special learning needs, including various exceptionalities, and students of color. Likewise, opportunities to work with a diverse school faculty and to interact with multicultural communities remain a priority when assigning field placements to Elon University teacher candidates.

Mission, Goals, and Expectations of Early Clinical Experiences

Mission

The mission of pre-student teaching clinical experiences is to provide teacher candidates with real-world teaching settings in which they may work to accomplish the integration of theory and practice. The primary purpose of early experiences is to provide prospective teachers with various opportunities and settings to become acquainted with the classroom and the many roles of the teacher. Teacher candidates observe, perform non-instructional tasks, and eventually engage in some closely supervised delivery of instruction (micro-teaching) before being admitted to clinical practice/student teaching. A secondary purpose is to allow teacher candidates to reflect upon their own strengths and weaknesses, making informed judgments about their own readiness for teaching.

Goals

- provide prospective teachers with a variety of opportunities for both observing and actively participating in school settings
- provide experiences enabling prospective teachers to learn about the responsibilities and the work involved in being a teacher

- assist prospective teachers in developing insights and understandings about the relationship between theory and practice
- provide prospective teachers with information and preparation leading to the ability to make informed decisions about classroom policies and procedures, curriculum matters, and students' academic and social needs.

Expectations

- observe problems that teachers encounter in their classrooms and schools and how they solve them
- develop a desire for professional affiliation, ethical practice, lifelong learning and continued professional growth and development
- grasp the importance of positive classroom interactions, including those positive elements associated with families and caretakers of students
- develop and act upon a belief in the dignity, worth and learning potential of *all* children
- become familiar with the knowledge and skills needed for effective teaching
- observe and acquire pedagogical skills for designing and implementing instruction that incorporates a variety of teaching methodologies, resources, and organizational patterns
- develop and demonstrate appropriate dispositions appropriate in the real world of teaching

Policies and Procedures for Admitting and Monitoring the Progress of Teacher Candidates

Admission to Teacher Education

While taking EDU 2110—Education and Society, EDU 2500—Teaching Fellows First Year Seminar, or SOC 2430—Sociology of Education, students who plan to pursue teaching licensure may begin the process of [applying for admission to the Teacher Education Program](#).

Monitoring the Progress of Teacher Candidates

Our goal as teacher educators is to ensure that teacher candidates who graduate from the Elon University Teacher Education Program demonstrate the competencies outlined in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, and who are excellent beginning teachers. Teacher candidates' dispositions are assessed in selected courses throughout the program, including courses with early clinical experiences.

While serious concerns about the performance or growth of our candidates do not often occur, when a concern exists, it is best for the candidate and program to address it honestly and directly. For this purpose, the Professional Dispositions and Academic Performance (PDAP) process has been created.

- The PDAP process documents the interventions required for teacher candidates who demonstrate inadequate performance in areas of professional dispositions and/or academic coursework.
- Information provided during this process is designed to be of value to the candidate in planning for growth and to the Teacher Education Program and faculty in facilitating growth.
- The information may have important implications in decisions regarding Admission to Teacher Education, Continuance in the program, Admission to Student Teaching, and Recommendation for Licensure.

The PDAP process may be found online [here](#).

Field Placement Procedures and Associated Responsibilities for all Parties

Responsible Party

The Director of Education Outreach collaborates with school district representatives (e.g. central office designees, internship coordinators) to place candidates in appropriate clinical experiences throughout the course of their preparation. Among other responsibilities associated with the process, the Director of Education Outreach coordinates the following tasks:

Director of Education Outreach

- Reviews any and all prior placements of candidates (via candidate placement database) when selecting schools, grade levels, types of communities and classrooms, and/or specific clinical faculty for each successive placement to ensure placements in appropriate diverse settings.
- Communicates both verbally and in writing with all involved parties (candidates, professors, school liaisons, building-level administrators, clinical teachers) regarding specifics of placement (overall goals and objectives of experience, date of initial reporting, likely assignments to be completed, length of stay, and other requirements as may be appropriate to a given placement).
- Confers with school personnel regularly as liaison between Elon's Teacher Education Program and the schools.
- Provides orientation and training sessions for clinical teachers, teacher candidates, and University professors, reviewing procedures and expectations of candidates while in the field.
- Provides noteworthy information associated with schools, their stakeholders, academic performance, clinical teachers, and other relevant information prior to candidates' initial arrival in their assigned schools.

Teacher Candidates

- Research assigned school's characteristics, background, mission and goals.
- Arrange transportation to and from assigned school.
- Complete the required minimum number of hours/sessions required.
- Represent self, program, and university in exemplary manner.
- Communicate effectively and in a timely manner with Clinical Teacher/s.
- Complete any and all assignments required during the clinical experience.
- Dress professionally and in a manner that leaves a favorable impression.
- Abide by all school district and individual school policies.

Clinical Teachers

- Introduce teacher candidates to all classes, colleagues, and other school personnel.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to complete assignments and assume other duties/responsibilities as appropriate.
- Provide candidates many opportunities to observe and work in a variety of instructional settings and techniques.
- Guide and supervise instructional and non-instructional activities as appropriate.
- Provide candid assessments of candidates' performance and dispositions and return completed forms by assigned dates.
- Communicate effectively any concerns or issues with assigned teacher candidates and their respective professors.

University Professors

- Discuss specific goals and performance outcomes of the clinical experience, showing the relationship to the university course.
- Design and require field assignments which bridge course instruction with clinical-based applications.
- Communicate effectively with clinical teachers, disseminating evaluation forms, due dates, explanations of assignments, dispositions documents, and other pertinent information.
- Review any specific policies, procedures and expectations required of candidates while in the field.
- Assess field performance in a candid manner, noting candidates' strengths and weaknesses as well as providing plans for candidates' further improvement.
- Receive, act upon, and submit to the director any and all completed forms/evaluation instruments used as part of candidates' clinical experiences.

Procedures for Candidates Working in the Field

- Candidates should note their beginning and ending times in their assigned schools/classrooms and have clinical teachers to verify attendance and satisfactory performance via signature or initials. Professors provide candidates with official timesheets for this purpose.
- Candidates should always check in with their school office staff and follow any sign-in or sign-out policies established by the school. While candidates are assigned to schools for official university business/purposes, they must still follow any and all policies/regulations set forth for faculty/staff members and/or guests as may be required in their particular schools.
- Candidates should establish very early the various communication methods (cell phone, e-mail address, home phone number, etc.) by which clinical teachers can be contacted, especially if a change in original plans is necessary. Examples include, but are not limited to, sudden illness, transportation problems, emergencies, etc.
- Candidates must complete their observations and field work in the schools/classrooms to which they are assigned by the Director of Education Outreach. They may not use schools/classrooms at home during fall or spring breaks as part of clinical experience requirements. Candidates are encouraged, however, to use such settings, even in summer when possible, to enhance their experiences with students, faculty, and other school community stakeholders. In these ways, Elon University encourages its candidates to volunteer as tutors, day care workers, camp counselors, and in related volunteer or employment capacities to further their preparedness for working with students.
- Candidates who are unable to complete fieldwork assignments/placements for any reason must notify their assigned clinical teacher and university professor or supervisor immediately. The faculty member will contact the Director of Education Outreach, who, in turn, will work with the candidate and professor to resolve any matters related to the field placement.

Special Note: In all courses that require a clinical experience, candidates must be fully aware that they shall NOT receive a passing grade in the course if candidate performance in the clinical experience is rated to be unsatisfactory or if candidates fail to complete the required hours and/or assignments required in that clinical experience. No exceptions shall be made to this policy.

Guide to Field Placement Etiquette for Teacher Candidates

Teacher candidates are required to carry out their work in field placements in a very professional manner. They must be punctual and adhere to the agreed upon visitation schedules. Appropriate dress, language, and behavior are expected. Candidates are visitors to the school settings and must adhere to school policies and the guidelines that are presented through the Elon University Teacher Education Program concerning dress, acceptable technology use, and appropriate behaviors in school settings.

The culture of the assigned school may likely be different from candidates' own peer cultured environments. It is the job of all teacher candidates to observe and blend in with the professionals at the school. It is neither the role nor the job of teacher candidates to change the culture, the rules, or the philosophy of their assigned school/s.

PART II: SEQUENTIAL CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

Philosophy to Support Clinical Experiences for the Elon University Teacher Education Program

Providing high quality clinical experiences for teacher candidates has historically been and remains a critical part of the initial teacher preparation program at Elon University. The faculty believe that clinical experiences are an integral part of preparing highly qualified, effective teacher candidates in each program. These experiences provide candidates with multiple opportunities to see theory transitioned into practice, to see theory affirmed or challenged by practice, and to reflect on how these are occurring in a variety of settings. Undergraduate candidates begin clinical experiences with the first professional education course, EDU 2110—School and Society or EDU 2500 Teaching Fellows Seminar or SOC 2430—Sociology of Education. As candidates progress through their respective programs, various other clinical experiences are required and are linked to specific courses within each program. These experiences are designed in part to provide practical application of course concepts and theories and are accomplished in various cooperating schools with experienced teachers who work with teacher education faculty to provide optimal learning experiences for candidates. Given the development and implementation of a spiraling curriculum, one with a dual emphasis on content and pedagogy, the required pre-student teaching clinical experiences are also designed to be spiraling and thus uniquely provide Elon's teacher candidates with immersion experiences in diverse schools, classrooms, and communities.

Required Clinical Experiences by Program

Required Clinical Experiences in Elementary Education

Course	Credits	Clinical experience Requirement
1. EDU 2110—Education and Society or EDU 2500—Teaching Fellows First Year Seminar	4 s.h.	30 hours
2. PSY 3820—Educational Psychology Note: Hours are only required if taking a service-learning section	4 s.h.	20 hours
3. EDU 3420 – Foundations of Special Education	4 s.h.	20 hours
4. EDU 3040 — Professional Experiences I This course corresponds with EDU 4230, 4200, 4260 and 4300.	2 s.h.	80 hours minimum
5. EDU 4040 —Professional Experiences II This course corresponds with EDU 4230, 4200, 4260 and 4300.	2 s.h.	80 hours minimum
6. EDU 4970—Student Teaching Student teachers are also required to take/attend a 2 s.h. seminar/capstone course while student teaching; this class typically meets once per week during the semester.	10 s.h.	16 weeks minimum over the course of 2 semesters

Required Clinical Experiences in Special Education – General Curriculum (K-12)

Course	Credits	Clinical experience Requirement
1. EDU 2110—Education and Society, EDU 2500—Teaching Fellows First Year Seminar or SOC 2430—Sociology of Education	4 s.h.	30 hours
2. PSY 3820—Educational Psychology Note: Hours are only required if taking a service-learning section	4 s.h.	20 hours
3. EDU 3040 — Professional Experiences I This course corresponds with EDU 4230, 4200, 4260 and 4300.	2 s.h.	80 hours minimum
4. EDU 4040 — Professional Experiences II This course corresponds with EDU 4230, 4200, 4260 and 4300.	2 s.h.	80 hours minimum
5. EDU 4040 – Professional Experiences II This course corresponds with EDU 4440 and 4450.	2 s.h.	80 hours minimum
6. EDU 3420—Foundations of Special Education	4 s.h.	20 hours minimum
7. EDU 3450 – Planning and Managing the Environment for Special Educators and EDU 4350 – Assessment Methods and Interpretation in Special Education	4 s.h.	20 hours minimum (combined)
8. EDU 4970—Student Teaching Student teachers are also required to take/attend a 2 s.h. seminar/capstone course while student teaching; this class typically meets once per week during the semester.	10 s.h.	16 weeks minimum over the course of 2 semesters

*Special education candidates who choose Elementary Education as the dual licensure area will take the **two (2)** Professional Experiences courses prescribed for Elementary Education. Those candidates who choose middle grades as the dual licensure will take the appropriate middle grades methods course.

Required Clinical Experiences in Middle Grades Education (concentrations in one or two content areas)

Course	Credits	Clinical experience Requirement
1. EDU 2110—Education and Society, EDU 2500—Teaching Fellows First Year Seminar or SOC 2430—Sociology of Education	4 s.h.	30 hours
2. One methods course in content area Fall of senior year	4 s.h.	60 hours minimum
3. EDU 4500—Teaching Diverse Learners in Middle and Secondary Schools	4 s.h.	30 hours minimum
4. EDU 3250—Middle Grades Literacy	4 s.h.	30 hours minimum
5. EDU 4410—Teaching Adolescents	4 s.h.	30 hours minimum
6. EDU 4970—Student Teaching Student teachers are also required to take/attend a 2 s.h. seminar/ capstone course while student teaching; this class typically meets once per week during the semester.	10 s.h.	16 weeks minimum over the course of 2 semesters

Required Clinical Experiences in Secondary Education and K-12 Licensure Areas (candidates typically concentrate in one content area/single major)

Course	Credits	Clinical experience Requirement
1. EDU 2110—Education and Society, EDU 2500—Teaching Fellows First Year Seminar or SOC 2430—Sociology of Education	4 s.h.	30 hours minimum
2. EDU 3550—Teaching in 21 st Century Classrooms	4 s.h.	25 hours minimum
3. EDU 4500 – Teaching Diverse Learners in Middle and Secondary Classrooms	4 s.h.	30 hours minimum
4. Methods course* (chosen by intended major/concentration area) Fall of the senior year (English, mathematics, comprehensive science, biology, chemistry, physics, history, foreign language, and music education)	4 s.h.	60 hours minimum
5. EDU 4970 —Student Teaching Student teachers are also required to take/attend a 2 s.h. seminar/capstone course while student teaching; this class typically meets once per week during the semester.	10 s.h.	16 weeks minimum over the course of 2 semesters

Contact Information

[Contact information for teacher education faculty, staff, and program coordinators](#)