Elon University Dialogue Experience Guide

Selecting Candidates on Your Election Ballot

ELON UNIVERSITY

What is Dialogue?	What is Dialogue at Elon?
Dialogue is a process that brings people together to share their perspectives and lived experiences around meaningful and sometimes challenging social issues. Through open and respectful conversation, participants are invited to explore different viewpoints, deepen understanding, and strengthen their ability to live, learn, and work collaboratively across difference.	At Elon, dialogue reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive community where every voice is valued, and learning extends beyond the classroom. It helps dispel stereotypes, cultivate empathy, and inspire both personal growth and collective action for a more just and connected world. Dialogue encourages participants to engage thoughtfully, challenge ideas without dismissing others' beliefs, and build trust across diverse backgrounds.

What Will Participants Experience During a Dialogue?

Through participating in a dialogue opportunity, participants will:

- Listen and communicate with openness and respect
- Reflect critically on personal and social identities
- Collaborate effectively across difference
- Transform understanding into action

Dialogue Ground Rules

Dialogue participants are asked to consider utilizing these ground rules:

- Listen with curiosity to better understand
- Speak to each other and not just the moderator
- Treat participants in this dialogue as equal, regardless of position
- Learn from one another by asking questions
- Respect the views of others
- Speak from your own experiences
- Approach ideas through a lens of curiosity instead of hostility
- Critique ideas and not individuals
- Remember that stories stay and lessons leave
- Give permission to allow everyone to "speak in draft"

Dialogue Process

1. Each participant should introduce themselves to the group by sharing their first name.
2. Ask one participant to read the ***What is Dialogue?*** text aloud to the group.
3. Ask one participant to read the ***What is Dialogue at Elon?*** text aloud to the group.
4. Ask one or two participants to read the ***Dialogue Ground Rules*** text aloud to the group. Ask if there are any questions or recommended changes.
5. One participant should read this paragraph aloud to frame the conversation:

Elections provide an opportunity to select leaders who share our values and contribute to the direction of our communities, states, and nation. Before you vote, use the *Verify Your Registration* button on the Elon Votes! website to view your ballot. From there, use the following steps for evaluating candidates on your ballot that were adapted from the League of Women Voters - a nonpartisan and nonprofit political organization that has been in existence for over a century.

Step 1: Determine What Makes an Ideal Candidate

Consider the issues that are most important to you and the qualities you want to see in an elected official.

Step 2: Learn About the Candidates on Your Ballot

Read about candidate backgrounds on their campaign websites and social media sites, and research candidate speeches and debates. For incumbents, review their voting records.

Step 3: Focus on Leadership Abilities

Review the experience a candidate brings to the position and decide how prepared the person is for office.

Step 4: Learn How Others View the Candidates

Find out what others have to say. Research who has endorsed a candidate and determine who is providing campaign contributions for a candidate.

6. Work through the following questions as a group:

- Which issues do you most care about and would like addressed (issues can range from education to gun control)? Why?
- What leadership qualities do you deem important in an elected official (qualities can range from integrity to resilience)? Why?
- What kind of experiences do you believe can best prepare a candidate for office? Why?
- What can you learn from viewing campaign websites and social media sites, along with reading or watching candidate speeches?
- What can you learn from asking people of different backgrounds which candidates they are supporting and their reasoning?
- What else can help you determine which candidate to vote for?

7. Each participant should answer one of these concluding questions:

As a result of this dialogue, what is one insight that you are taking away or one action that you can commit to?

As a result of this dialogue, are you currently optimistic or pessimistic about the topic and why?