

## **Teaching Visits**

### **Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning**

#### **Classroom observation**

- The Center coordinates “Teaching Visit” classroom observations to encourage conversations about teaching and learning at Elon. These observations are *not* intended as critiques of teachers, nor are they meant to be a way for teachers to gather feedback about their performance. Instead, these classroom observations provide an opportunity for concrete discussions about the pedagogical choices we make as teachers. Teaching, rather than class content, should be the focus of the observation and post-class conversation.
- Observers should be as unobtrusive as possible while visiting the classroom (unless you are invited to participate in the class). As someone new in the classroom, students might be observing *you* as you observe the class.
- Many teachers choose to explain briefly the observers’ presence, but this is not required.

#### **Different ways to observe**

- Observe the classroom environment
  - What is the mood before class begins? During class? The end of class?
  - How is the classroom arranged and how does this influence teaching and learning in this space/time?
  - How would you describe the rhythm of the class period?
- Observe the teacher’s techniques
  - How does the teacher communicate verbally and non-verbally?
  - How is the class organized and paced?
  - What types of questions does the teacher ask, and when?
  - How does the teacher use in-class exercises/activities? How are media used?
  - How does the teacher motivate students, and how do they respond?
- Observe the students (either a few individuals or the students as a group)
  - What are they doing?
  - Map the conversation patterns (who holds the “conversational ball”?):
    - Student to student?
    - Same students participating again and again?
    - Student to teacher?
  - Does student behavior change throughout the class period?
  - What sorts of concerns do the students seem to have, and how—if at all—do they express them?

#### **Sample questions to ask during the discussion after class**

- How do you prepare to teach a course? How do you prepare before each session?
- What are some of the choices you made as you prepared for today's class? What are some of the choices you made while teaching today?
- What went as well (or better) than you expected in today’s class? What didn’t go as you anticipated today? Why, or why not?
- How do you try to motivate students during the class period and over the semester?
- What kinds of technologies do you find most effective with your students?