

## Senior Year: What to Expect

The second year in the IB/M program is a pivotal year, one in which Neag students focus on teaching and learning in their chosen certification area. At this point, students learn how to design lessons and units that help their pupils develop a comprehensive knowledge base. They apply content knowledge into activities and learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate for a given group of students.

In the fall of the second year, students continue with a coursework-clinic-seminar approach, but in the spring, students assemble all that they have learned and participate in student teaching, a full semester of practice in the classroom under the guidance of a Cooperating Teacher and a University Supervisor. Because the fall and spring semester are distinctly different in the second year, each semester will be discussed separately, next.

### Fall Semester Seminar

In the fall semester, second year students take the **EGEN 4100** *Methods of Teaching* seminar (or **EGEN 4200** for elementary education students). The seminar, designed to integrate with the methods course(s), help students to reflect on their clinic experiences through a lens of various approaches to teaching. The **4100/4200** seminars are taught by methods faculty who have a wealth of knowledge on principles and philosophies of teaching a specific subject area as well as their practical applications. Seminar sections are organized by certification area. So, for example, all secondary English majors participate in the same **EGEN 4100**. Certification-specific groupings allow students to reflect on and analyze each other's work in the content area and to share specific strategies and challenges associated with teaching their specific subject and grade level.

The seminar helps students work on curriculum, instructional strategies, unit and lesson planning, assessment strategies, differentiation of instruction for different learners, and many day-to-day issues of classroom and instructional management. Students work with their seminar leaders to continue to develop a reflective stance and practices that will support their growth as professional educators. Activities are specifically geared toward helping students construct and develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will require for a successful student teaching experience.

While specific clinic assignments for students will vary depending upon their seminar leader, some assignments that students have been expected to complete at this phase of the program in the context of their clinic placement include the following:

- Design and implement a lesson on a topic that is negotiated with the clinic teacher. Also, develop an assessment tool for discerning how well students learned or mastered the objectives of the lesson.
- Collect samples of assessment tools used in the school. Discuss the tools in terms of what they do and do not assess and what they revealed about student learning when employed.

- Videotape yourself teaching a lesson to a small group or the entire class. Review and reflect on the video and submit a detailed analysis of your teaching and your areas of improvement.
- Develop a unit of instruction plan, including rationale for implementation, a calendar of activities, daily lesson plans, handouts, overheads, assignment sheets, assessment tools, and other materials for each day of the unit, and an assessment plan.

### **Fall Semester Clinic Placement**

The purpose of the fall semester clinic placement in the second year is to provide the student with opportunities to focus on teaching in their chosen certification area, to work directly with a teacher who is TEAM trained and professionally licensed in the chosen certification area, to gather instructional ideas and materials, and to practice the development and delivery of instruction under the guidance of a certified teacher and a subject-specific specialist.

In the fall semester of the second year, students are assigned to clinic placements in their chosen area of certification and must spend **at least six hours per week** in the clinic site. How students meet the six-hour requirement varies depending upon their specialization area.

Generally speaking, **Secondary Education** students will remain in their fall placement for their student teaching semester. **Elementary education** students will rotate between clinic and methods courses during the fall semester. Because this clinic experience is the last one before the IB/M students' student teaching semester, the more teaching experience the students get during this clinic experience the better. The amount of actual instructional time for which the students take responsibility varies greatly and is negotiated between the clinic teacher, the student, the seminar leader, and often the student's advisor or methods instructor.

### **Spring Semester Seminar**

During the first week of the student teaching semester, students take **EPSY 4010** (Exception: Special Education students do not take this course). All students enroll in the EGEN 4110 seminar for the entire semester. Students are discouraged from taking any other courses during the student teaching semester so that they can devote their energies and attention to the challenges of daily student teaching.

Students enroll in **EGEN 4110: Analysis of Teaching** seminars by subject area. Seminars address issues related to the act of teaching, the teaching profession, and the role of professional educators within the community. Specific agendas vary depending upon the needs and interests of the students, Cooperating Teachers, and seminar leaders. Cooperating Teachers and administrators are invited and encouraged to attend the student teaching seminars to participate in collaborative reflection with teacher candidates.

### **Spring Semester Clinic Placement (Student Teaching)**

Student teaching is a continuation of the focus on learning to teach in their certification area, and perhaps, the most challenging experience in the teacher preparation program. The overriding purpose of the student teaching experience is for the teacher candidate to develop

and demonstrate competence as a classroom teacher under the guidance and mentoring of a TEAM trained, professional licensed Cooperating Teacher, a University Supervisor who is an experienced, often retired, educator, and a university seminar leader. The student teaching assignment lasts approximately 12 weeks, beginning officially during the second week of UConn's spring semester and ending on the last day of UConn's spring semester classes.

Specifics regarding the number of classes or subjects teacher candidates take over, how soon the teacher candidate takes over responsibility for the teaching of those classes or subjects, and how involved the Cooperating Teacher is in the planning and direction of the teacher candidates' efforts vary greatly. Overall, the goal is for teacher candidates to experience continuous, sustained, and extensive responsibility for planning and delivering instruction as well as managing all aspects of day-to-day life in the classroom. The teacher candidates will be supported through rich and varied experiences that are also challenging; this encourages the teacher candidates to build both resilience and self-efficacy.

### **Second Year Support Team**

The support team for the Student Teaching semester is composed of the teacher candidate, the Cooperating Teacher, the University Supervisor, the student's faculty advisor, and the EDCI/EPsy 4150/4250/4115 instructor-of-record. Teacher candidates may also consult with CLAS faculty with regard to content clarifications and resources. A key player in second year support services is the University Supervisor. For this reason, next we discuss the role and responsibilities of a University Supervisor.

### **University Supervisor**

The University Supervisor is a qualified professional hired by Neag to provide ongoing supervision – observation, feedback, evaluation, and coaching – to the teacher candidate. University Supervisors have a wide range of teaching and supervisory experiences in public schools that complement what the Cooperating Teacher offers to the teacher candidate. University Supervisors support the teacher candidate's planning by providing feedback regarding developmental appropriateness, content-rich focus, organization, time management, anticipated obstacles, etc.

- University Supervisors promote communication by providing guidance to the Cooperating Teacher and the teacher candidate regarding expectations for and procedures of the student teaching experience.
- University Supervisors initiate face-to-face contact with the teacher candidate as often as possible. This may take the form of informally stopping by the classroom to check in, or informally observing for a brief time. They may send weekly update emails regarding expectations and observation schedules.
- University Supervisors contact PDCs to communicate any issues with performance, attitude, attendance, evaluation, etc.

- University Supervisors support teacher candidates to write meaningful lesson plans. They provide regular and prescriptive feedback throughout this process.
- University Supervisors formally **observe** a lesson **four (4) times** during the semester using the **Pre-Service Teacher Observation Tool**. Observations may include small group lessons as well as whole class meetings or instructional times. Formal observations should be spaced throughout the semester and include at least one or two during the teacher candidate’s sustained teaching time.
- University Supervisors cultivate reflection by using the **Pre-Service Teacher Observation Tool\*** as a way to observe that professional standards are being met and to encourage the teacher candidate to reflect on those practices. The University Supervisors encourage teacher candidates to analyze and judge their own teaching performances in an effort to promote analytical and reflective thinking.
- The University Supervisor is expected to schedule and participate in “**three-way meetings**” with the student teacher and the Cooperating Teacher. The first meeting can be held during the first two weeks of February in order to set timelines and expectations. The second meeting can be held in mid-March for the midterm evaluation. The third meeting can be held at the end of April in order to complete the final evaluation.
- The University Supervisor is responsible for completing the **Midterm Student Teaching Evaluation\*** and the **Final Student Teaching Evaluation** of the teacher candidate using a three-point scale:

Score 1: Emerging (Awareness, articulation, identification)

Score 2: Target (Puts into practice, implements)

Score 3: Exemplary (Builds on reflection, makes changes to improve practice)

\*A letter grade is not issued on the midterm evaluation, and there will be a column added to indicate that the practice being evaluated may not yet have been observed. However, if a teacher candidate has more than five #1’s (“Emerging”), a **Professional Growth Plan** will be developed.

### **Evaluation of Student Teaching**

University Supervisors use the items on the *Pre-Service Teacher Observation Tool* and the *Student Teaching Evaluation Forms* as a basis for feedback and three-way meetings with the student teacher and the Cooperating Teacher. Any questions or uncertainties about observation or evaluation criteria should be discussed and resolved early on in the student teaching experience to ensure clear and effective communication during the evaluation conferences.

During the last week of student teaching, the University Supervisor will lead a formal evaluation meeting involving the clinic teacher and the teacher candidate.\*

The *Student Teaching Evaluation Form* should be used to guide this evaluation conference and arrive at an agreed upon grade for the teacher candidate. The University Supervisor will also note the strengths and weaknesses they have observed, make additional comments on the form, and negotiate any disagreements in scores between the Cooperating Teacher and the teacher candidate. The official student teaching grade submitted to the instructor of record should reflect the combined judgment of the Cooperating Teacher and the University Supervisor. The University Supervisor electronically submits the form to the Assessment Office, so that the grade can be recorded with the university registrar. Once the form has been submitted, all stakeholders will receive a copy.

\*It is the responsibility of the teacher candidate and Cooperating Teacher to complete hard copies of the *Student Teaching Evaluation Form* prior to the “end of semester” meeting with the University Supervisor. The University Supervisor will discuss the teacher candidate’s progress by using the final student teaching evaluation instrument. The scores on the evaluation form should represent a consensus between the Cooperating Teacher and the teacher candidate. If there is a discrepancy, the University Supervisor can intervene and make the final decision.

### **Grading Scale for Student Teaching**

- **A** means that the teacher candidate has performed in a consistently superior manner during the student teaching experience and is an outstanding beginning teacher.
- **A-** means that the teacher candidate has met the “Target” standards during the student teaching experience and is in the process of becoming an excellent beginning teacher.
- **B+** means that the teacher candidate has met most of the “Target” standards during the student teaching experience and although s/he has some areas that continue to need work, the candidate is in the process of becoming a competent beginning teacher.
- **B** means that the teacher candidate has met many of the “Target” standards during the student teaching experience, but will require continued opportunities for growth and support.
- **B-** means that the teacher candidate has met many of the “Target” standards during the student teaching experience, but will require continued, and perhaps intensive, opportunities for growth and support.

*Students performing below a B- level on the final Student Teaching Evaluation may not transition to the Master’s Year of the IB/M program.*

### **Withdrawing from Student Teaching**

Students who are having serious difficulty as a teacher candidate may choose to withdraw from the experience. University Supervisors may also recommend such withdrawal to students. A

student withdrawing from student teaching may receive credits for Directed Observation and Participation. Often, a student may have enough total credits (120) and credits in professional education (12) to graduate with a Bachelor's degree from the Neag School of Education. The student would still need a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.2. The student earning a Bachelor's degree would be a graduate of the Neag School of Education, but he or she would not be eligible for a Connecticut teaching certificate.

### **Procedures for Withdrawing from Student Teaching**

Students who wish to withdraw from student teaching should meet with their University Supervisor. The University Supervisor will discuss the problem with the Cooperating Teacher, the student's Faculty Advisor, the Director of School-University Partnerships and the Director of Teacher Education Programs. The student is informed of any action by the University Supervisor. Arrangements for adding and dropping courses will be completed by the Assistant Dean & Certification Officer, Dr. Ann Traynor. Credit can be assigned commensurate with the time spent in the student teaching experience. When this action is taken, the student becomes ineligible for certification but retains the possibility of satisfying graduation requirements.

## Recommendations for Maximizing the Student Teaching Experience

### **Prior to student teaching:**

- Contact your Cooperating Teacher as soon as you have been instructed to do so by the clinical placement coordinator. Normally, this contact is made in April or May of the spring semester prior to the student teaching experience scheduled for the following spring.
- Visit the school and Cooperating Teacher to whom you have been assigned before leaving for summer break if at all possible. We suggest that you call and set up a specific meeting time before you visit to make sure that your Cooperating Teacher will be available to spend some time with you. When visiting, be sure to stop by at the school office and introduce yourself as a teacher candidate. At the introduction meeting, you will get books and other curricular materials you can use to prepare over the break.
- Present yourself as a professional. Be enthusiastic, inquisitive, and appropriately dressed.

### **During student teaching:**

- Be enthusiastic and energized in the classroom, showing genuine pleasure in being a teacher.
- Plan teaching assignments in advance with your Cooperating Teacher, using informal lesson plans each day. Check in with your Cooperating Teacher regarding their preference for the lesson plan format they would like you to use.
- Act in an ethical manner in all situations, especially with respect to student confidentiality and confidentiality with fellow educators.
- You will be expected to provide formal, typed lesson plans to the observer at least 24 hours in advance of your scheduled formal observations with your Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor.
- Confer regularly with your Cooperating Teacher about your performance to date and what you need to do to improve.
- Leave a small legacy of your talents and efforts with the class, by developing and sharing a particular interest (e.g., places traveled, a hobby or craft, a video, a sport interest or musical talent, storytelling, something concerning UConn, etc.).
- Become a positive influence in the life of your school by communicating and collaborating with your Cooperating Teacher, other teachers, administrators, staff, students, parents, and other members of the school community.
- Participate not only in your assigned classroom, but in the school community overall.

**Additional expectations for student teaching:**

- Abide by your Cooperating Teacher's daily schedule, including arrival and departure times. Plan to arrive at school early and plan to stay late. The instructional day – the times that classes are conducted – and the teacher's day often differ significantly in length. Plan to take work home with you every night and every weekend.
- Observe your assigned school's calendar and vacation times; teacher candidates do not take UConn's spring break.
- Notify your Cooperating Teacher of any absences as soon as possible, as well as your University Supervisor, your seminar leader, and your building principal. Know and follow your school's procedures for calling in sick. Set up a notification with your Cooperating Teacher at the beginning of the student teaching assignment.
- Keep in mind that your student teaching hours are monitored by UConn and a certain number of hours are required by the state of Connecticut. Extensive absences may require an extension of your student teaching placement.
- Have lesson plans available for the Cooperating Teacher or substitute to follow whenever you are absent.
- Attend professional development activities, school-wide events, and parent meetings during and after school hours.



## Seniors: A Suggested Timeline for the Student Teaching Semester

In a **co-teaching** environment, the ideal would be a gradual release of responsibility so that during the three-four weeks of sustained student teaching, the teacher candidate would become the primary instructor, while the Cooperating Teacher would become an observer and supporter.

**Teacher candidates** should come to the spring placement already having observed in the classroom and having become familiar with school, students, staff and parents. They should have had opportunities in the fall semester to *assist* students as appropriate, grade papers, attend meetings (PPT's, faculty meetings, etc.); *review* school policies/procedures, classroom curriculum, grading procedures set by Cooperating Teacher (CT), IEP's of students w/ disabilities, attendance procedures; and *establish* standard meeting time w/ CT.

**Week 1:** Participate in routines, have complete take-over of one class period, meet regularly with CT to review lesson planning, etc. *Begin taking over a second period by the end of week 1.*

**Week 2 and 3:** Discuss and review calendar of state-level tests w/ CT to determine the student teaching experience. Determine an action plan for how testing hours could be best spent. Participate in the evaluation process to the extent CT feels comfortable. *Prepare to take over another period or subject during this time.*

**Week 4:** Take over classroom routines such as attendance and grading, continue to participate in routines and have *complete 'takeover' of three class periods.*

**Week 5-6:** Continue to experience a gradual release of overall teaching responsibilities from the Cooperating Teacher. Teacher candidates who are confident and ready to take over the class, should do so. Those who need a bit more time should be encouraged to use the next two weeks to transition.

**Week 7- 12:** At this point the whole day from student arrival to departure should be run by the teacher candidate. The co-teaching roles reverse and the Cooperating Teacher becomes the observer and supporter, while the teacher candidate becomes the primary instructor, in charge of all planning, teaching, assessing, managing and assuming any duties that the Cooperating Teacher is assigned.

**Week 13:** The school day should be fully transitioned back to your CT at this point. Negotiate the transfer with your Cooperating Teacher – it may be that you still need more teaching time and want to continue to teach some class periods. Your role may look like it did during the first week of student teaching where you served as an assistant and/or observer. This is also a good time to step out of your classroom and spend some time observing in some other classrooms, perhaps at different grade levels.