

The Educational Resource Center:  
A Guide for Teaching Fellows

Website: [www.bu.edu/erc](http://www.bu.edu/erc)

Email: [erc@bu.edu](mailto:erc@bu.edu)

Phone: 617-353-7077

Address: 100 Bay State Road, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Boston MA 02215

## What is the Educational Resource Center?

The Educational Resource Center, known across campus as the ERC, is devoted to helping students develop the academic skills that Boston University's rigorous curriculum requires. Through our individual advising sessions, peer tutors, workshops, and our writing assistance programs, the ERC aims to promote a disciplined approach to study while also advocating the strategic use of resources available throughout the University. The center serves as an academic referral, training, and information resource for the entire University community, and this includes teaching fellows. Whether you've been assisting courses for years or this is your very first time, each group of students comes with a new set of challenges and you should never feel alone in your efforts to guide your students. The following is meant to serve as an introduction to what we do here at the ERC and how you, as a teaching fellow, can benefit from referring your students here when necessary and inviting us into your discussion sections.

## How Can We Help?

The ERC offers a large variety of programming and services that might be beneficial both to your students and to you as a teaching fellow. Below is an outline of the programs offered at the ERC and how these programs might be of help to your students:

### Individual Advising Sessions

Individual advising gives students the opportunity to meet with an ERC staff member so that they can learn more about their academic skills. Sometimes you might have a student come to your office hours only to realize that she is grappling with issues that are more fundamental than just not understanding the course material. Perhaps she's frazzled and disorganized, or maybe she doesn't seem to understand how to study. This kind of student is a perfect candidate for an individual advising session at the ERC, because our sessions focus on everything from time management and test preparation to goal-setting and decision-making. What these kinds of meetings can do is put your students on the right track so that they're in the best position to absorb the material that you're teaching. If the problem turns out not to be within our jurisdiction, we can make a referral to another resource of which either you or the student might not have been aware. Sending an overwhelmed student our way can be the first step in helping your student get the attention and direction that he needs to succeed in your class. This way, your attention can be focused on discussing the course material in your office hours.

The best way to open up a discussion with a student about the individual advising sessions that we offer is to direct them to the ERC's website ([www.bu.edu/erc](http://www.bu.edu/erc)). On the website, students can learn about our staff members and can also fill out a detailed form so that they can make an advising appointment with us.

## Workshops

The ERC staff and its student ambassadors offer a variety of academic skills workshops covering everything from note-taking to syllabus management to effective time management. Many of the topics that we address in individual advising sessions are available in workshop form, and this option might be a suitable for students who are just more comfortable participating in groups. In order to request a workshop, just use the “request a workshop” option on our website in order to have a professional staff member conduct a custom workshop for your discussion section. We just ask that you secure the room for the workshop (if you’re running a discussion section, the room that you use should suffice) and that you have a minimum of fifteen participants. The ERC also offers a program called “Don’t Cancel Your Class” wherein we’ll conduct a workshop during your discussion section if you know ahead of time that you’re going to have to cancel due to another obligation. (You should, of course, run this by the professor of the course before contacting us).

You are in the distinct position of knowing the individual needs of your students, so you’re also in a position to address those needs—we can help! In addition to the “request a workshop option” on the website and “Don’t Cancel Your Class”, we’ve also successfully performed Learning Styles Discovery workshops that are specifically designed for your discussion sections. These workshops use the VARK, an inventory designed by Neil Fleming, to offer students individual profiles of their learning preferences. For more information or to request a Learning Styles Discovery workshop for one of your discussion sections, please contact Cecilia Lalama, Assistant Director for Mentoring and Outreach at [Clalama@bu.edu](mailto:Clalama@bu.edu) or at 617-353-7077.

In the coming year, the ERC is also planning to hold workshops designed specifically for the international student population. Potential topics include Navigating the American Classroom, Being a Member of a Scholarly Community, and Reading/Writing. International students may need extra attention in orienting themselves to the kinds of assignments given and the etiquette that’s expected of them at BU, so one way to help a student who seems to be struggling would be to suggest that they contact the ERC and ask about one of our international student workshops.

## Peer Tutoring

Most teaching fellows hold office hours for a maximum of two hours a week. If you’re responsible for fifty students, it can be very difficult to help students who are really struggling with the class and might need more attention than your office hours allow. When a student is really struggling beyond the limits of the assistance you’re offering, referring the student to our Peer Tutoring services is a viable option. Peer Tutoring at the ERC is free for all BU students and is offered for most 100 and 200 level courses offered in the College of Arts and Sciences. Our peer tutors are undergrads recruited from across Boston University, recommended by BU

faculty, who undergo extensive training prior to working with us. Students can sign up for an individual one time appointment or a weekly group appointment.

The way to start is to refer the student to our website. Under the “Peer Tutoring” tab, students can find all of the information that they need regarding which kind of appointment is right for them, what to expect from a tutoring appointment, how to prepare, and how to make an appointment. This can be an excellent way to complement the work that you and the professor running the course are already doing in the classroom.

### Writing Assistance

As a teaching fellow, you’re the one who is usually going to be reading and scoring any written assignments for your course. Offering writing assistance is something that you should be prepared to do, but, as mentioned previously, you’re often only going to be able to do this in a limited capacity. You have content that you’re tasked with teaching, and a student who needs intensive writing assistance might present you with a challenge. Even if a student doesn’t need intensive writing assistance but just needs help brainstorming, having access to a variety of resources can be very helpful during the writing process. The Writing Assistance program at the ERC can act as a complement to the work that you’re doing in office hours and discussion section. The Writing Fellows at the ERC are BU Doctoral students who have a wide range of specialties, and they can help your students through every phase of the writing process. You should remind your students, as you surely do regarding your own office hours, that a Writing Assistance appointment is not a proof reading session, but rather a place to work on clarity, argumentation, and organization of ideas. For students struggling with very basic difficulties in writing at the college level, we offer ESL writing skills appointments as well.

As with advising and Peer Tutoring, the best way to get your student involved with our Writing Assistance program is to direct them to the Writing Assistance tab on our website. Here they can find detailed information about the different types of appointments, how to prepare, our policies, and how to sign up for an appointment.

### Language Link

Language Link conversation groups are led by native speakers, and offer students, staff, and faculty an opportunity to improve their conversational skills in 12 languages. Participants meet with their group throughout the semester, and sometimes participate in activities planned by the leader such as films or trips off campus. Language Link leaders facilitate conversations that help students with their coursework, prepare for study abroad, or brush up on basic conversation skills. This is a program that can be a helpful resource to your students but it’s also something

that you might want to check out yourself! To get signed up and gather more information, visit the Language Link tab on our website.

### **Additional Information:**

The ERC is located at 100 Bay State Road in the Center for Student Services on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor. You can reach us by phone at 617-353-7077 and by email at [erc@bu.edu](mailto:erc@bu.edu). The most important piece of information to remember in referring students to our office is our website: [www.bu.edu/erc](http://www.bu.edu/erc). It's here that students can find everything that they need to know about the services that you're recommending for them. Always try to remember that your students often view you as somebody who is easier to access and perhaps less intimidating than a faculty member. This puts you in a privileged position to help, but you shouldn't feel that you have to do it all on your own. The Educational Resource Center is here to complement the hard work that you do in a variety of ways, and we hope that you'll avail yourself of our programs!