Academic Advising

Academic Advisor

Your academic advisor is a staff member who works closely with you and your team faculty. He or she is your “official advisor” for both semesters of the academic year. You should talk over important academic decisions and plans with your advisor. You will meet your academic advisor in the group advising meetings in the first weeks of the semester and through individual appointments. You can drop in during your advisor’s free hours or, preferably, schedule an appointment by coming into Room 211 or calling 353-2850. However you do it, make a point to meet with your advisor early and often.

A Definition of Academic Advising

A classic definition:
Advising is a developmental process that assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process which assists students in realizing their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multi-faceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and program progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus services as necessary.

David S. Crockett: Modes and Models for Designing and Implementing a Successful Advising Program

What is Academic Advising?

From the definition above, we can identify three strands of academic advising at CGS.

Prescriptive advising is concerned with conveying and interpreting information about rules, requirements, and policies of the University. This form of advising is important and necessary, but not sufficient.

Developmental advising focuses on the life/career goals and educational plans of the student. Boston University at CGS has emphasized the importance of developmental advising by providing a sufficient number of highly qualified professional advisors to work with all the students who choose to engage with them.

Integrative advising is the attempt to facilitate connections among the student’s courses, professors, mentors, life in and out of the classroom, ideas and aspirations and practical goals, and including especially the relationships the student has with people in the University. The concept of the team embodies this strategy, and the advisor encourages networking through the team, the College and throughout the schools and colleges of Boston University for life-long educational, social, and career purposes. This heavy emphasis on relational advising—cultivating personal networks—is and has been a hallmark of the College of General Studies.
Purpose of Academic Advising

The purpose of the advising program is:

- to provide guidance to students in interpreting the College literature, in making good decisions related to their academic programs and in following the guidelines and practices of CGS and BU;
- to assist students in making the transition to college, in having a rewarding college experience, and planning for life after graduation.
- To help students create social networks throughout the University as a base for optimum integration within all of BU and a model for action toward future life and career goals.

Working With Your Advisor

The relationship between advisor and advisee is one of shared responsibility.

Though you as a student are ultimately responsible for the choices you make in college, the University realizes that in order to make informed decisions, students need the mentoring and advice of academic advisors and others in the University community. Your academic advisor is your primary resource regarding academic issues, opportunities, and programs and could be thought of as the coordinator of your educational experiences.

Student Responsibilities

You must be proactive and responsible for your own education. Advisors can help you understand fully all of your options and avoid needless mistakes only if you take the initiative to seek their advice. Student responsibilities include:

- To keep yourself informed.
  - Read and refer to the Undergraduate Bulletin, Academic Conduct Code, and Student Life Book.
  - Your advisor will distribute important academic and co-curricular information in group meetings, individual appointments, on the bulletin boards, through your CGS mail box in your team suite, the College e-Newsletter, and the Current Students section of the CGS website. Your advisor presumes that you read the College e-Newsletter weekly.
  - Your advisor and professors will e-mail you directly, so please keep your BU e-mail account current and check it regularly. (If you use other accounts, link your BU e-mail to the one you do check daily.)

- To take the initiative to contact your advisor.
  - Prepare a list of questions or concerns before each meeting with your advisor. Be proactive.
  - Ask specific questions — If you don’t understand a policy, a procedure, or requirement, ask questions until you do understand.
  - Seek sources of information that will assist you in making academic/career decisions.
  - Keep your advisor informed about changes in your academic progress, course selection, and academic/career goals.

- To understand that students have the final responsibility to select and register for courses that meet the program plan requirements.
Be familiar with the requirements of the major(s) that you are pursuing, and schedule courses each semester in accordance with those requirements.

Be aware of the prerequisites for each course that you include in your semester schedule and discuss with your advisor how prerequisites will affect the sequencing of your courses.

Follow University procedures for registering courses and for making adjustments to your class schedule.

Don’t miss academic deadlines. Know when to register and when to drop or add classes.

Set up appointments with your advisor well in advance of these deadlines.

To monitor your progress towards your degree.

Organize official University documents (Undergraduate Bulletin, Academic Conduct Code, official letters, notes on meetings and phone conversations with University staff, etc.) in a way that enables you to access them when needed.

Understand academic performance standards (GPA and required courses) for continuation to and graduation from majors in other Boston University schools and colleges.

To keep in touch.

Some of the material in this fact sheet is adapted from the NACADA, College of New Jersey, Concordia, Berry College, and other academic advising websites.

Advisor Responsibilities

Your advisor can help you talk through issues and provide information and advice.

Your advisor will often refer you to appropriate contacts within Boston University. Especially as you are anticipating continuation to a major in another BU school, your CGS advisor will refer you to advisors and faculty in your future program. They are not putting you off – they are connecting you up.

Your advisor meets regularly with the faculty on your team and is a good intermediary. Your advisor can be your advocate and give you support and a reality check when you need one.

Responsibilities include:

To help you become more independent and self-directed and to assume responsibility for your decisions and your actions through a mentoring relationship.

To inform students of department or program policies, procedures, and requirements. Your advisor will distribute important academic and co-curricular information via:

- group meetings
- individual appointments
- your CGS team suite mail box
- the College e-Newsletter
- e-mails to your BU account
- the Current Students section of the CGS website
- the bulletin boards in your team suite and near Room 211
- phone - make sure your advisor has your cell number
Faculty Advising

You should think of the four professors on your team as your advisors also. They are interesting people with varied professional interests and extensive knowledge of University life. They are very happy to advise you about intellectual dilemmas and interests, courses, majors, professional fields, getting into law or medical school, professional careers, etc. You can talk with them about what it is like to do scientific research or write a book or publish a poem or manage a project. Get to know them. Start building your network. Develop a mentoring relationship. One of the most important features of CGS is the availability of professors to first and second year students. You should appreciate and take advantage of this opportunity.

Student Services (Room 211)

In Room 211 you will schedule appointments with your advisor and obtain informational documents and forms. A quick stop in 211 gets a question answered. Periodically, check the College e-Newsletter, the bulletin board in front of 211 and the Current Students section of the CGS website for official academic information, including important dates and deadlines. The College e-Newsletter is published from Room 211. Sent on Fridays weekly to all CGS students (to reduce spam and clutter), the e-Newsletter is a succinct condensation of important College news and advising information. You should get in the habit of reading the e-Newsletter every week.

Summer Student Advisors (SAs)

Your SAs led the orientation groups this summer. However, they may not be at CGS this fall, since most have continued into their junior or senior years in the other schools and colleges on campus. Though they have limited official responsibilities after the summer, they would be happy to talk with you. PS: you may have to take the initiative and remind them of your name, but definitely say hello.

Dean’s Hosts

Dean’s Hosts are sophomore students who have been selected in a competitive process to play a leadership role in the College. Dean’s Hosts help prospective students learn about our College,
help orient freshman students in the fall, and act as a resource throughout the year. Get to know a Dean’s Host for your team as they invite you to social activities and one-to-one meetings. Dean’s Hosts have successfully mastered the academic and social challenges of the first year and are more than happy to share their knowledge and experience.

**Dean’s Hosts Writing Center & Peer Academic Mentors**

The staff members of our writing center (Room 329) along with professors from all divisions will work with you at all stages of the writing process. They also can advise you on how to study more effectively through their workshops and seminars. They can help you improve your reading, writing, time-management, and study skills. You can also schedule helpful sessions with a peer academic mentor. Of course, tutoring is available directly through your own professors’ scheduled tutorial and office hours.

**Career Advisors**

We have arranged for you to have a career advisor as a primary contact at Center for Career Development. You should plan to meet with him or her at the beginning of your freshman year and then again at the beginning of your sophomore year, at the very least. Your CGS academic advisor has career contact information for you. The career advising office can help you with your choice of major and internships as well as your career after Boston University.