

# **The Boston College Graduate Employees Union–UAW**

## **New Graduate Student Orientation Guide 2018–2019**



**Survival tips and tricks for your time at Boston College**

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# Who is BCGEU?



The Boston College Graduate Employee Union–United Auto Workers (BCGEU–UAW) is a democratically-elected union of graduate employees at Boston College. We represent nearly 1200 teaching assistants (TA), research assistants (RA), and graduate assistants who conduct research or instruction (GA). We began forming our union in the spring of 2015 when MA and PhD employees in the College of Arts and Sciences were threatened with the loss of healthcare—in totality for MAs and after the 6th year for PhDs. Grad workers began to talk with each other about forming a union, and by the end of the semester we invited the UAW to tell us about organizing higher ed. We were excited to join together, and over the course of the next two years, we broke down the isolation that many people experience in grad school and discovered that we faced many issues in common. This included the high cost of living, the lack of a dental plan, no parental leave policy, a lacking and opaque grievance procedure, among others.

We realized that by joining together our power was stronger, so we began signing union authorization cards to file with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to demonstrate that we wanted to hold an election to unionize. In March 2017, we filed cards signed by a majority of graduate workers with the NLRB and after a lengthy hearing in which Boston College denied our status as workers, and disagreed with the NLRB’s jurisdiction on religious grounds, the NLRB sided with our union and granted our election for Sept 12 and 13th, 2017. We won our election in the fall, and Boston College agreed that the results were accurate. Unfortunately, Boston College continued to deny our status and work, and maintained their position that we are not workers, and that they are exempt from NLRB jurisdiction on religious grounds. Recognizing that since our election, President Trump nominated two anti-labor board members to the national NLRB, making the Board a majority pro-Trump board, we made the difficult decision to revoke our petition with the NLRB, taking away the legal ground for Boston College to continue to challenge our rights. We knew that Boston College would use the partisan board to overturn not only our legal right to collective bargaining, but all graduate workers’ rights at private universities across the country.

Despite pulling our petition, we are still a union of graduate workers, and it is perfectly legal for Boston College to voluntarily recognize our union to begin collective bargaining. This happened at NYU in the past few years, and even more recently, Georgetown and Brown Universities have agreed to bargain with their graduate unions if they win their elections. We are hopeful Boston College will listen to their workers and join their peers at Georgetown, Brown, and Harvard—where their graduate employees won their election in the spring of 2018—and agree to join us at the bargaining table to make BC a better place for graduate workers.

## Why this orientation guide?

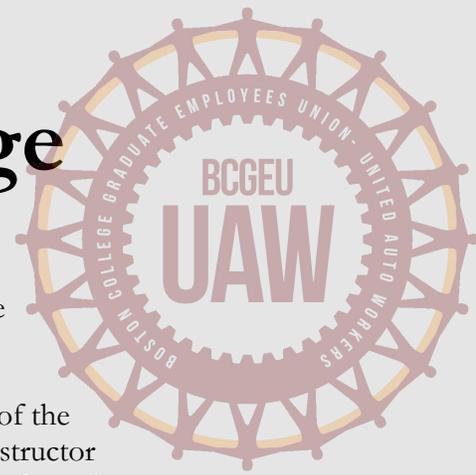
When we began organizing our union, one of the first things grad workers talked about was the lack of transparency and isolation we experience at Boston College. We wanted to remedy that for ourselves and for future grad workers and students. In these pages you will find advice about how to navigate your life at BC as both a worker and a student, a duality we are comfortable understanding (even if BC refuses to). This is not an official Boston College guide, as Boston College has not created one for new grad workers at Boston College.

While we are excited to bring together information that we hope will make a tangible difference in grads’ lives, ultimately we firmly believe that these tips and workarounds would be better solved through a **collectively bargained contract** with the Boston College administration. We fight every day for Boston College to recognize us, and will continue to do so. But in the meantime, we hope you find this guide helpful for your time at Boston College.

If you would like to get more involved with unionizing at Boston College, you can find us here:

[BCGradUnion.com](http://BCGradUnion.com), [Facebook.com/bcgradunion](https://Facebook.com/bcgradunion), [Twitter.com/BCBEU\\_UAW](https://Twitter.com/BCBEU_UAW), [bcgradunion@gmail.com](mailto:bcgradunion@gmail.com)

# Working at Boston College



Welcome to your new job at Boston College! In the course of earning a degree, many people work as Teaching Assistants (TAs), Teaching Fellows (TFs), Research Assistants (RAs), and/or Graduate Assistants (GAs). Sometimes these positions are offered to graduates as part of their enrollment package (most often these are PhD students), and sometimes you can be hired after you begin work on your degree. Teaching assistants work under a lecturer or a professor, and generally do the bulk of the grading, hold office hours, and lead discussion sections. Teaching fellows are the instructor of record, and give lectures, grade, and lead discussion sections. They are in charge of running their course. Research assistants work under a faculty member, or a principal investigator (PI) to assist with research. Graduate assistants work in many different roles across the university, sometimes in an instructional role, and sometimes in more of an administrative role.

If you're ready to sign your card to become a member of our union, you can do so here:  
<http://bcgradunion.com/join-the-democratic-majority-at-boston-college/>

## New-Hire Paperwork

Boston College's office of Human Resources is located at 129 Lake Street on the Brighton campus, and is a bit obnoxious to get to. When you are first hired by BC, you have to file new-hire paperwork and bring it to Lake Street on the Brighton Campus. Although this website is geared towards those in the Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences, it appears to be generally helpful for all new-hires:

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-students/new-hire-information.html>

Please check with your department and Human Resources to make sure you've done everything necessary in this process.

## Direct Deposit

Boston College uses direct deposit for your monthly stipend payment. If you receive a **non-service stipend**, this is available for **pickup only at accounts payable on the second floor of 129 Lake Street**.

## Taxes

If you have a monthly stipend, you can have BC withhold money for your taxes. If you receive a non-service stipend, you receive your money in two installments and BC does not withhold taxes from these amounts. It is your responsibility to account for your taxes accordingly.

## Payroll Deadlines

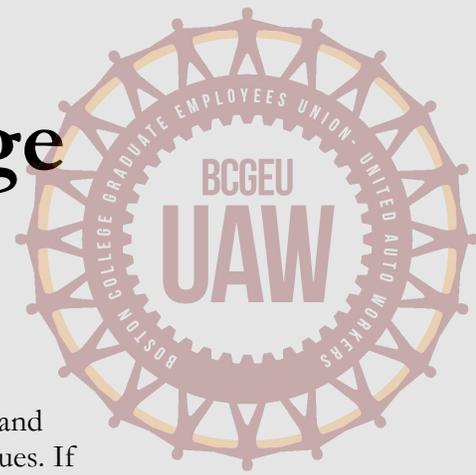
<http://www.bc.edu/offices/hr/resources/campusinfo/payrolldeadlines.html>

## Pay Gaps

Many monthly stipends are dispersed on the Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., Feb., Mar., Apr., and May 16th. **That means you will not receive stipends for January, June, July, or August.** This is quite difficult for many grads, so be sure to plan your finances accordingly. Some departments account for summer funding, so be sure to check with your department to ensure you receive all pay that is due to you.

Non-service stipends are distributed in two installments, September 15th and January 15. You must pick up these checks in person at 129 Lake Street, as they will not be distributed via direct deposit.

# Working at Boston College



## Tips and tricks to deal with late payment

Unfortunately, grad workers sometimes face late payment at Boston College. While we have no clear recourse for addressing late payment, with a contract, we would have several mechanisms in place to ensure any late pay is addressed efficiently.

- Don't wait! If you notice that you haven't been paid on time, take the initiative and contact someone. Ask others in your program if they're experiencing similar issues. If someone is, work together to get this resolved: two complaints are better than one. If no one else is having this problem, then it's probably something with your account specifically.
- Reach out to your program administrator. If that doesn't work, reach out to human resources at (617) 552-3330. At any point in time, feel free to also contact BCGEU via email or Facebook. While we obviously can't cut paychecks, we are here to support you as a worker at BC.
- If/when you get in contact with someone, make sure you have your pay information on hand. That means your Eagle ID number and your bank account number. This will help HR find your information and can help you correct mistakes in their direct deposit file.

## Other Jobs at Boston College

In addition to TA, TF, RA, and GA positions at BC, there are other jobs on campus that help folks make ends meet. Many of these jobs are listed on BC's website, here: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/financial/studemploy.html>



# Housing in Boston: The Rent is Too Damn High!



Boston is one of those [notorious cities for outrageous cost of living](#). It consistently makes it on the top 10 lists for most expensive rent in the nation. We have assembled some resources and drawn on our collective knowledge to help you make the most of your stipend.

## Neighborhoods and Surrounding Cities

### Allston/Brighton

Boston College is located on the line of Brighton and Newton. Allston and Brighton are where many of the city's students live. It can be fun with tons of bars, restaurants, and venues. But it can also be loud, especially if you're up until 2am grading blue books. BC grads in particular often live in Brighton along and off of Comm Ave, South Street, and Chestnut Hill Ave.

### Backbay

This is near downtown, and has many higher-end shops. It's a bit of a haul to campus, but a beautiful neighborhood.

### Brookline

Many BC grads also live in Brookline. The C and D branches of the Green Line are the main modes of public transportation. Brookline was never incorporated into Boston, so your municipal services and voting will be different than if you lived in Boston!

### Cambridge

Located across the Charles River, Cambridge is large and vibrant. Harvard and MIT are located there, and you can find tons of nightlife and great restaurants. It can be a little more expensive unless you luck out.

### Dorchester

Dorchester is located to the southeast of BC, and is in the process of gentrification. You can still find affordable apartments there, but it does take a while to commute to and from BC. It's near UMass Boston, which is convenient if your partner goes there.

### Jamaica Plain (JP)

JP has a ton of great restaurants and bars. Sam Adams Brewery is located there! Like Dorchester, JP is being rapidly gentrified, so it is becoming more expensive to live there as well. Also like Dorchester, it's to the southeast of BC, but not as far, and cross-city travel can be long and tiring.

### Newton

Newton is the other city in which BC is located. It is a wealthy suburb of Boston, but grads have been able to find affordable housing in Newton. The D Branch of the Green Line runs through Newton Center and Newton Highlands, making it a bit easier to commute to BC.

### Somerville

Like Cambridge, Somerville is located on the north side of the Charles River. It's a bit far from campus, but it includes Porter and Davis Squares--centers of good restaurants and entertainment. Also like most neighborhoods and cities around Boston, it has become increasingly more expensive over the past few years. Still, check out the annual Fluff Festival in Union Square!

# Housing in Boston: The Rent is Too Damn High!



## Moving to Boston: First, Last, Deposit, and Broker Fees

September 1st leases are the most common lease agreements, which makes moving day quite difficult for several reasons. First, Boston College begins classes before September 1st, so many have classes during the day of moving and have to find alternative accommodations prior to September 1st. There will also be a large volume of traffic and moving on the day.

Many leases require you to pay the first and last month of rent upon signing your lease and will also require a security deposit (typically equivalent to a month of rent). Additionally, many listings include broker fees for finding the space and this could add another fee that usually equals a month of rent. Be prepared to drop several thousands of dollars to begin your lease.

You can apply for a parking permit if you're moving within Boston city limits to reserve a space near your new apartment here: <https://www.boston.gov/reserve-parking-spot-your-moving-truck>

## Finding Apartments

Boston College offers an off campus housing website that helps you locate housing. You have to log in with your Eagle ID and password to access the listings. They are comparable to much of what you might find on Craigslist.

<https://offcampushousing.bc.edu/>

<https://boston.craigslist.org/i/apartments>

<https://www.padmapper.com/>

(Queer Housing Boston FB group) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770251119807942/>

## You Have Renters' Rights!

<https://www.mass.gov/renting-in-massachusetts>

<http://www.mass.gov/ago/consumer-resources/consumer-information/home-and-housing/landlord-and-tenant-law/>

## Allston Christmas

Boston is a college town and not a real a city so a lot of leases begin and end on September 1st. This means that a lot of people move apartments all at the same time and a lot of people get rid of things they don't want to move. This also means that right around September 1st is a really good time to look for free stuff!!! And since we don't get paid until the 15th, free stuff is really nice, especially if you just paid First, Last, and Security. People leave all sorts of stuff on the curb for free, bigger apartment buildings may even have one of those big dumpsters sitting out front to gather all the free stuff in one convenient location for you. Anywhere with lots of apartments is a generally a good place to look, especially if college kids live there both because they are more likely to be September 1st leases and rich college kids throw out so much perfectly good stuff. If you want to look for stuff but aren't really sure where to go, most places on Commonwealth Ave are good spots to start. Along with more basic things like clothes and furniture, some examples of free stuff people have scored include bikes, a candle holder with turtles that look like they are summoning something, an assortment of spices, and planters.

One thing is bed bugs really suck and you definitely don't want to bring bed bugs into your apartment. So use your best judgement and keep that in mind for things like mattresses, sofas, and more generally anything upholstered.

# Health Care and Counseling Services



## Blue Cross Blue Shield Student Plan

For most PhD students, BC offers a healthcare plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield as part of your compensation. If you are a MA student, you can opt-in to the plan, but you have to pay for it out of pocket or with student loans. For coverage starting August 7, 2018–August 6, 2019, the plan costs \$3,095. However, you can pay for one semester or both and spring semester includes most of the summer. Fees may differ if you are an international student (see below). You can find information about the plan here, [https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/financial/medinsurance/medinsurance\\_current.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/financial/medinsurance/medinsurance_current.html)

## Waiver

You can opt out of the insurance plan by filling out a waiver.  
<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/forms.html#medical>

## International Students

Most international students must purchase the plan through Boston College, even if they have other health insurance options. According to BC's website,

“In order to ensure international students are covered by a plan that provides coverage which meets or exceeds the Student Health Insurance Plan, international students are not eligible to waive BC's Student Health Insurance Plan. If you are insured through 1) your own or a parent/guardian/spouse's health insurance plan offered through a U.S. employer, 2) a government sponsored program, (for example Government of Kuwait/UAE or Government of Saudi Arabia), or 3) MassHealth or a plan purchased through the MA Health Connector (except Health Safety Net, Children's Medical Security or MassHealth Limited), you might be eligible to waive coverage. The waiver form for international students is available at [www.bc.edu/ssforms](http://www.bc.edu/ssforms).”

(from: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/financial/medinsurance.html>)

## MassHealth

You may be eligible to apply for MassHealth—the plan for medium, low, and no-income people in Massachusetts. You can find out your eligibility here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eligibility-for-health-care-benefits-for-masshealth-the-health-safety-net-and>

## Gym Reimbursement

With the Blue Cross Blue Shield plan, you can request a reimbursement for a gym membership. You can find the form here:

[http://www.bluecrossma.com/common/en\\_US/pdfs/New\\_SOB/55-0763\\_Fitness\\_Reimbursement\\_Form.pdf](http://www.bluecrossma.com/common/en_US/pdfs/New_SOB/55-0763_Fitness_Reimbursement_Form.pdf)

## The Plex

The Flynn Recreation Complex (The Plex) is BC's student gym. Membership for grad students isn't included. Grads can purchase a membership monthly (\$40), per semester (\$155), or annually (\$340). They also offer different packages that include locker and towel service. The Plex isn't the best gym, as it doesn't have windows, and is often hot and overcrowded. This is the Plex's last year, however, as BC has spent millions on a new student gym which will open next year (2019). You can find more information about Plex memberships here: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/rec/membership/students.html>

# Health Care and Counseling Services



## Dental and Vision

Boston College does not include vision or dental in its Blue Cross Blue Shield plan. Through collective bargaining, BCGEU can fight for included vision and dental care in our health insurance plan. As it stands, we do not have easy access to these services, but we can include them in our bargaining priorities. Until then, here are the discounted plans that Boston College offers:



## Dental

<https://www.basixstudent.com/#/>

In addition to the above plan, Boston University School of Dental Medicine offers discounted dental care for students. You can get an examination and x-ray for free on your first visit! They also offer 10% off many services. You can find more information here: <https://www.bu.edu/dental/patients/sdp/>

## Vision

<http://enroll.eyemed.com/>

## University Counseling Services (UCS)

BC's counseling center is located in the basement level of Gasson, room 001. According to their website, "full-time students enrolled in degree programs are eligible for all UCS services. Part-time or non-matriculating students (including those on dissertation status, on leave of absence, or in special programs) are eligible only for consultation, evaluation, and referral." Grads have expressed mixed results with counseling services at BC, but it is worth reaching out to UCS if you feel you need it. Many folks in grad school report overwhelming feelings of anxiety, sadness, and depression. It is completely normal and encouraged to seek professional help when you experience any of these emotions.

If you don't want to or can't use UCS, you can use your Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance to access counseling off campus. A new change to the 2018–2019 plan should mean there is no co-pay for these services, but double check with the provider to ensure that's the case.

# Transportation to and from BC: T, Car, Bike, Shuttle, Walk?



## MBTA

Boston College is located at the end of the MBTA's "B branch" off of the green line. Most people just call public transit in Boston "the T." You can purchase a discounted Charlie Card from BC's website, which is the typical 11% discount that the MBTA offers to all college students in Boston. Each pass is for roughly the length of a semester, and must be purchased in advance. However, the fall pass begins September 1st, typically after the first day of school, and the spring pass begins February 1st, usually a week or two after the beginning of the semester. If you're planning on using the discounted Charlie Card, please make plans for paying for the periods that aren't covered under the discount. Information for the discounted pass can be found here: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/mbta.html>

## Parking at BC

Parking at BC can be expensive and you're not guaranteed a spot at either the Beacon Street or Commonwealth Ave garages. Between noon and 3pm, it is very difficult to find a parking spot, especially in the winter.

For the 18–19 academic year, graduate student parking costs \$334 per semester, and grads can park in the following locations:

"Mods, Shea, and along Campanella Way (in front of Plex only), Beacon Garage (levels 1-3 white lined spaces only), Commonwealth Garage (levels 2-6 white lined spaces only), St. Ignatius Church white lined spaces Monday-Friday only Brighton Campus: STM Library Lot Newton Campus: White line spaces only."

Grad students can also purchase an evening pass if they are only on campus after 3pm. This pass costs \$156 per semester, and grads can park in the following locations:

"After 3PM only, Mods, Shea, and along Campanella Way (in front of Plex only), Beacon Garage (levels 1-3 white lined spaces only), Commonwealth Garage (levels 2-6 white lined spaces only), St. Ignatius Church: White lined spaces Monday-Friday only Brighton Campus: After 3PM only, STM Library Lot Newton Campus: After 3PM only, White line spaces only."

## Parking at Home

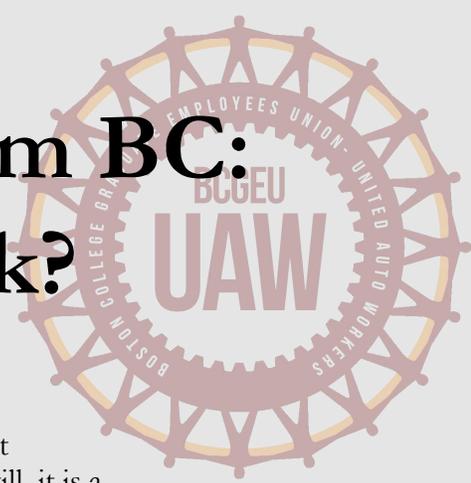
If you live near Boston College, parking can be quite tricky at home too. In order to park on residential only streets in Boston, you'll have to apply with the city for a parking permit. According to the city's website,

1. "Your registration must show the car is registered and principally garaged in your name at your current Boston address."
2. "You also need to bring valid proof of your Boston residency. New college students face the same requirements as new residents." This can be a utility bill, bank statement, etc.

You can apply online, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parking-clerk/how-get-resident-parking-permit> or visit city hall downtown to apply for your permit.

Once you have your permit, depending on your neighborhood, it can be difficult to find a spot. Some people pay for off-street parking (often found on Craigslist) to guarantee them a spot at home. This can cost upwards of \$200/month, but many find spots for \$150/month.

# Transportation to and from BC: T, Car, Bike, Shuttle, Walk?



## Biking

Many people also bike to campus, and can generally find bike parking located throughout campus. Biking and Boston can be nerve-wracking for folks who are not experienced urban cyclists, and bike lanes only exist on some of the larger streets. Still, it is a more cost effective and environmentally friendly option. Do note, however, that you cannot take bikes on the green line, unless they are foldable. You can take them on the other lines, but not during peak commuting hours.

Some helpful biking resources can be found at the following addresses:

<http://bikesafeboston.com/post/53399820952/10commandments>

<http://bikesafeboston.com/laws>

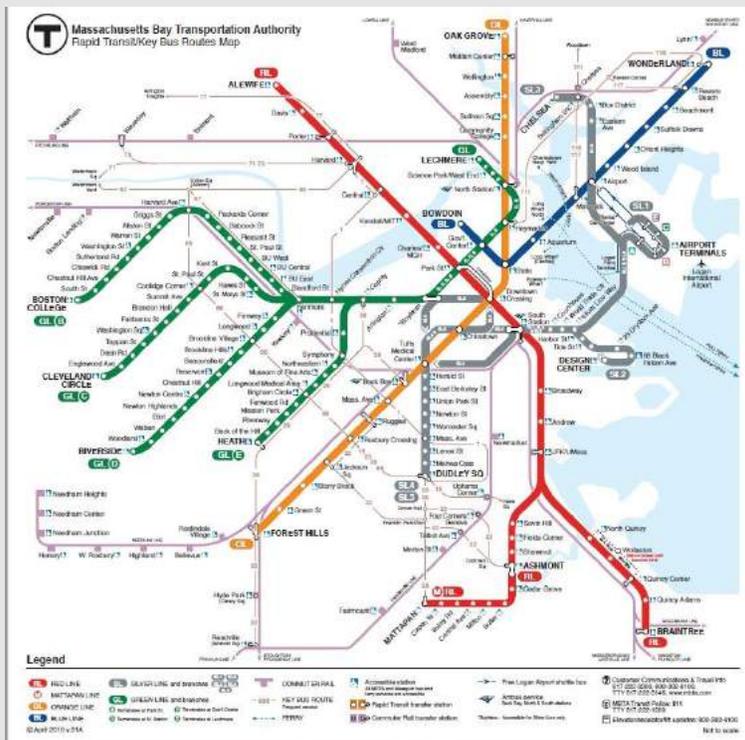
<http://bicyclesafe.com/>

## BC Shuttle Service

Boston College offers a free shuttle service to and from the university. The main shuttle lines are the Comm Ave express and the Newton Campus service. During the academic year, the bus runs fairly frequently, but much less so over holidays and the summer. Grads who live near shuttle stops frequently use the service, but it can get packed during peak class hours with grads and undergrads commuting to campus. The BC shuttle stops at the Reservoir T-Stop making it easier to get to campus off the “C” or “D” Green MBTA lines. Several years ago, grad students attempted to get BC to expand the service more broadly in Brighton and Allston, but after extensive work on surveys by grads, the university ultimately did nothing. With a grad union, we can have a seat at the table with Boston College to hold them accountable to making the policy changes they promise to work on.

You can track the BC shuttle using the TransLoc App, for both Apple and Android. Information about routes, schedules, and how to download TransLoc can be found here:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/transportation/bus.html>



# So You're Going to be a Teaching Assistant?



Many grad workers at Boston College work as Teaching Assistants (TAs) or Teaching Fellows (TFs) at some point in their time at BC. Boston College does not offer a general orientation or guidance for all TAs and TFs at BC, rather, this is up to each department to train TAs and TFs. While many of us love our departments and faculty with whom we work, oftentimes we find that we acquire little to no training prior to beginning our jobs in the classroom. With a contract, many graduate unions have been able to secure job training as part of their condition of employment. This is crucial because there are many laws and best practices that TAs and TFs must follow, but are never made aware of. We will outline that information here.

## The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)

The CTE is a great resource for new and returning TAs and TFs. Their Apprenticeship in College Teaching (ACT) program helps hone your teaching skills: <http://www.bc.edu/offices/cte/programs-and-events/apprenticeship-in-college-teaching.html>

## FERPA

TAs and TFs are required by law to follow the Family Education and Rights Act, or FERPA. You can find information about FERPA here:

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/ferpa\\_faculty.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/ferpa_faculty.html)

## Resources to give undergrads

Sometimes as TAs and TFs we are the first ones that undergrads confide sensitive information to. Here is a list of resources for undergrads who may be struggling:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/counseling/external.html>

## Mandated reporting

TAs and TFs are mandated reporters. This means we must report certain information students inform us of. However, Boston College has not been clear about what this entails, meaning we have received varying information from our departments about our legal responsibilities. The following is not legal advice, but is instead the best information we have been able to glean from our respective departments. When in doubt, consult your department chair for more information.

If you are concerned about the well-being of your student, inform the instructor of record for the course. If you are the instructor of record, inform your chair. However, we have been told that TA/TF intervention must happen in certain circumstances:

- A student tells you about suicidal thoughts. If this happens, immediately do your best to take the student to university counselling services, Gasson 001. If this is not possible, immediately inform your instructor of record or chair.
- A student tells you about sexual assault. If this happens, you must tell the student that you are a mandated reporter and must report what the student has described to a Title IX representative. BC's representative is Melinda Stoops, [stoopsme@bc.edu](mailto:stoopsme@bc.edu); (617) 552-3482. You should also inform the instructor of record/chair.

**Please see the below link for more information:**

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/sexual-violence-policy-website/introduction/Reporting\\_Sexual\\_Misconduct.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/sexual-violence-policy-website/introduction/Reporting_Sexual_Misconduct.html)

# So You're Going to be a Teaching Assistant?

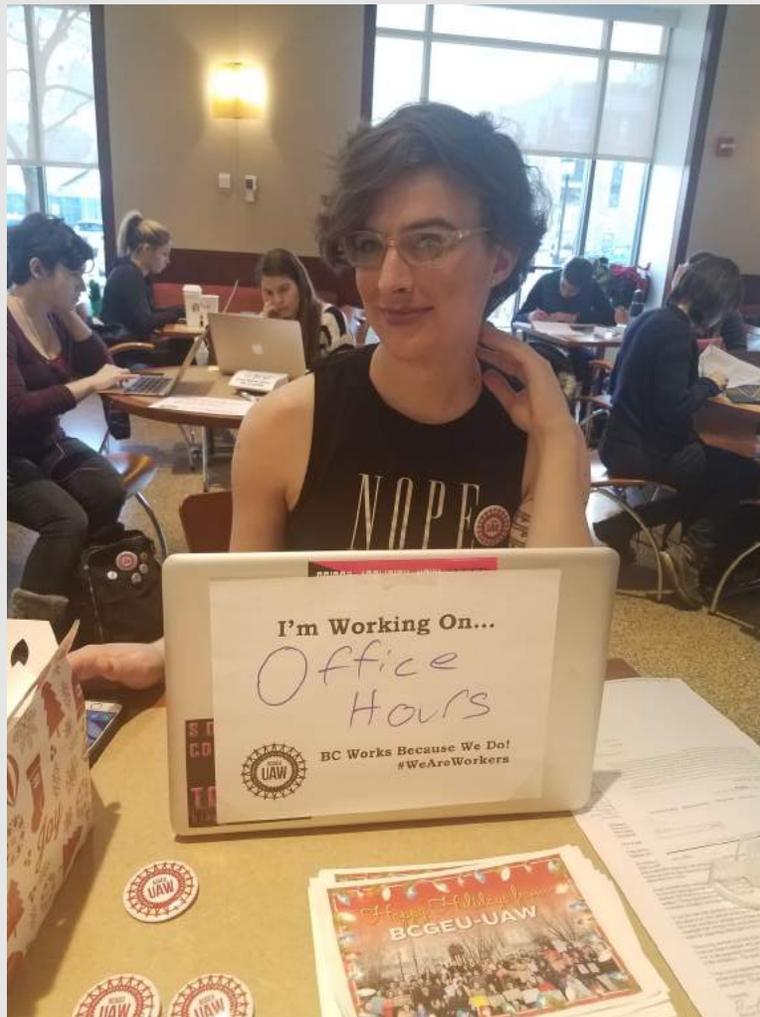


## Working under faculty as a TA

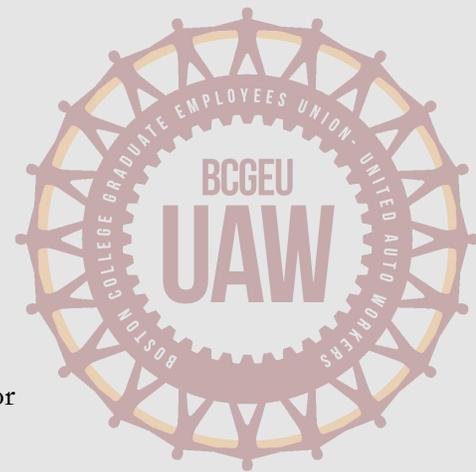
Many grads at Boston College experience satisfying working relationships with faculty in their departments. However, grievances between faculty and grads do occur. Boston College's academic grievance procedure covers academic grievances between grad students and the faculty with whom they work. This is not a neutral third-party procedure, rather, the university puts much of the onus on the graduate student to resolve the grievance. See the following section titled, "[When There Isn't a Grievance Policy](#)" for more information.

## Workload management

Keep track of your hours. Even though departments don't generally require it, this practice will help give you a concrete record of work in cases of overwork. Grad workers at BC typically are not allowed to work more than 20 hours, however we know that this frequently happens and hours are not enforced. For teaching, this includes things like leading discussion, preparation for discussion, teaching training that you do with your department or at the CTE, office hours, grading, answering student emails, and meetings with the course professor. While we do not currently have a contract that can enforce work hours, keeping your own records will at least give you some leverage if you approach your professor or chair with a grievance.



# So You're Going to be a Research Assistant?



Many students in both the humanities and the sciences are employed as Research Assistants. This can look very different, but the main purpose is to aid in research or perform research under the direction of a faculty member or PI.

## Workload management

Many RAs in STEM fields and who work in labs can expect to work over 20 hours a week, sometimes reaching upwards of 60 hours. The work you do in labs can be part of your own academic research, your work, or both. Many labs continue work over breaks and holidays. Boston College does not have policies surrounding guaranteed sick days or vacation days. If you are feeling sick or are looking to go on vacation, you should meet with your PI or faculty supervisor. With a contract, we could bargain for provide workload protections, vacation, and sick days.

In many labs, you will likely be expected to present regularly on your progress to your lab, to the department as a whole, and sometimes to external sources depending on your funding.

## Workplace safety

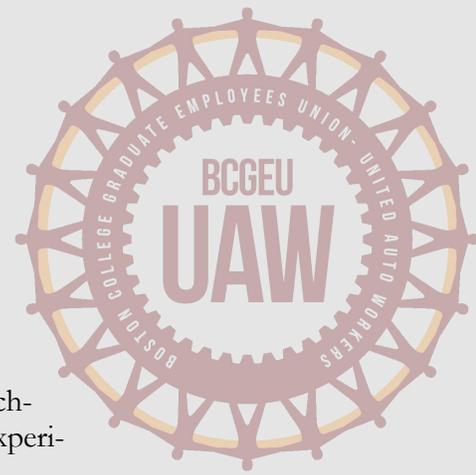
All labs provide some level of safety training, but this differs between labs and departments. You may also need additional training to ensure safe working spaces, depending on the material you are working with.

If you are in unsafe working conditions, please take notes and report it to your PI and our union. You may also need to speak with the director of your program. A union contract can provide more enforceable safety protocol.

## Working with your PI

Many grads experience productive working relationships with their principal investigators (PI). However, sometimes grads experience difficulties with their PIs. Boston College's academic grievance procedure covers academic grievances between grad students and the faculty with whom they work. This is not a neutral third-party procedure, rather, the university puts much of the onus on the graduate student to resolve the grievance. Further, this doesn't cover grads **as workers**. See the following section titled, "[When There Isn't a Grievance Policy](#)" for more information.

# So You're Going to be a Research Assistant?



## Working with undergrads

Many RAs are responsible for the training and supervision of undergraduate researchers. This provides undergrads with hands-on experience, as well as giving the RA experience training researchers and an extra set of hands for side projects.

## FERPA

Like TAs and TFs, RAs are required by law to follow the Family Education and Rights Act, or FERPA. You can find information about FERPA here:

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/ferpa\\_faculty.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/ferpa_faculty.html)

## Resources to give undergrads

Sometimes as RAs we are the first ones that undergrads confide sensitive information to. Here is a list of resources for undergrads who may be struggling:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/counseling/external.html>

## Mandated reporting

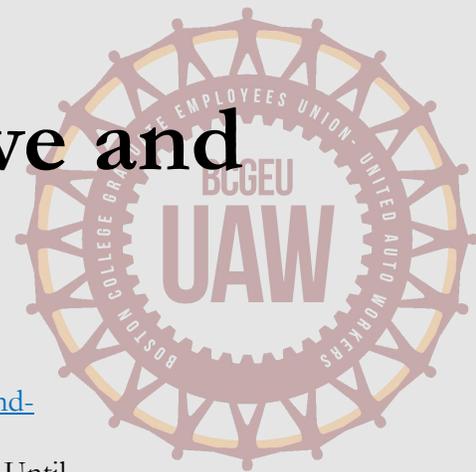
Like TAs and TFs, RAs are mandated reporters. This means we must report certain information students inform us of. However, Boston College has not been clear about what this entails, meaning we have received varying information from our departments about our legal responsibilities. The following is not legal advice, but is instead the best information we have been able to glean from our respective departments. When in doubt, consult your department chair for more information.

If you are concerned about the well-being of your student, inform the instructor of record for the course. If you are the instructor of record, inform your chair. However, we have been told that TA/TF/RA intervention must happen in certain circumstances:

- A student tells you about suicidal thoughts. If this happens, immediately do your best to take the student to university counselling services, Gasson 001. If this is not possible, immediately inform your instructor of record or chair.
- A student tells you about sexual assault. If this happens, you must tell the student that you are a mandated reporter and must report what the student has described to a Title IX representative. BC's representative is Melinda Stoops, [stoopsme@bc.edu](mailto:stoopsme@bc.edu); (617) 552-3482. You should also inform the instructor of record/chair.

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/sexual-violence-policy-website/introduction/Reporting\\_Sexual\\_Misconduct.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/sexual-violence-policy-website/introduction/Reporting_Sexual_Misconduct.html)

# What about Parental Leave and Child Care?



## Parental Leave

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-students/policies-and-procedures.html>

Parental Leave has been an issue many grads at BC have found particularly lacking. Until summer 2018, Boston College did not have a transparent policy for grads. Recently in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, BC has finally articulated a new policy which can be found at the above URL. While we are thrilled that years of organizing from several groups on campus have resulted in Boston College articulating a policy, the policy they've offered is lacking in several ways. As with all policies outside of a contract, Boston College has the right to change or revoke any policy without notice or approval. Currently, this policy only covers graduate students in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, meaning grads in the Law School, School of Social Work, School of Nursing, and the Lynch School of Education are all subject to the policies or lack thereof within their own schools.

## How new parents manage: tips for surviving grad school and parenthood

“My main workaround when it came to family was not hesitating to play the "baby card," so to speak. To make up for the institution's lack of resources for parents, I made clear to my bosses, whether they were in the department or elsewhere as part of my graduate assistant positions, that there were certain things (such as TA-discussion section or lecture times) that were non-negotiable if they conflicted with our daycare schedule, or if I needed to take time off if my child was sick.”

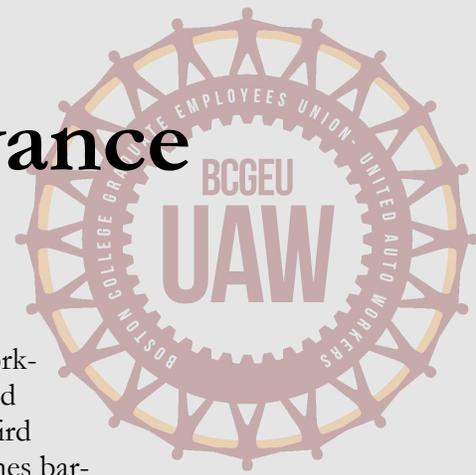
There are limited spaces on campus that have changing stations. Unfortunately, grads have reported having to use bathroom floor space to change their children, and regular garbage bins to dispose of diapers.

## Child care in a contract?

As with many things, child care in Boston is quite expensive and can cost as much or more as monthly rent costs. One crucial thing grad unions have been able to bargain for in their contracts is subsidized child care. For example GSOC, the graduate union at NYU was able to bargain for a childcare fund for all eligible bargaining unit employees. In 2018, this fund was \$80,000, “for reimbursement of eligible child care expenses for children under the age of 6, in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service requirements.” Currently, Boston College has no similar policy.



# When There Isn't a Grievance Policy



Boston College does not have a third-party grievance procedure for its graduate workers. There are several policies in place that attempt to cover academic grievances and harassment, but none do so in the context of us as workers and none are neutral third parties. Why does that matter? First of all, a third-party grievance procedure, like ones bargained for in contracts with other graduate unions, create a more equitable process for grad workers to address myriad concerns and issues. Rather than being at the whim of your employer, advisors, and department, a third-party policy gives grad workers and their supervisors/employers equal footing.

## Tips and Tricks

However, until we have negotiated such a policy, here are some tips and advice from current and former grad workers for how to deal with problems such as harassment and assault at Boston College. This is not legal advice, but instead a place where current and former grad workers share their experiences about what has worked for them.

“Always bring a witness and document everything in real time. Even when a phone conversation occurs, type up notes and send to the officials and your advisor/witnesses involved so everything is documented because they are incentivized to do the opposite. If you're advising an undergraduate going through this, encourage them to document it and all that while also letting them know, 'here's what you should expect and here's my personal advice but please consult a faculty or guardian who you trust as well.'”

“Expect to be guilt tripped into doing the work yourself. That includes ‘advising’ and ‘counseling’ superiors/advisors for doing messed up things. If it involves the police department, there will be an ‘investigation’ that is (in effect) sealed and thus they will likely not allow you to take it or make a copy or anything like that. Once you try and declare a complaint about the process itself, expect to no longer hear from them.”

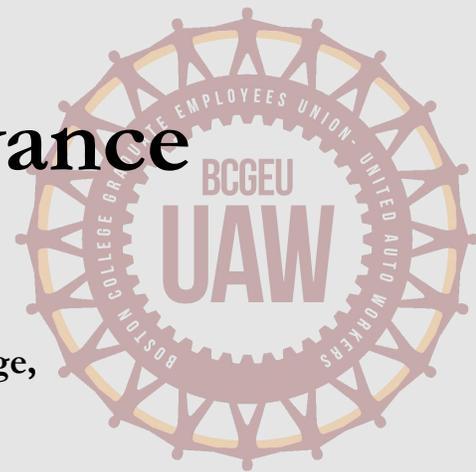
## How the current policy works

According to Boston College's current academic grievance policy, the aggrieved party must “communicate with the faculty member(s) immediately involved as soon as possible after the action being grieved, but by no later than the close of the fall or spring semester immediately following the term in which the action giving rise to the complaint occurred.” That means if you have a grievance, you must address the faculty member in question on your own. If you're unsatisfied with the result, you then must reach out to your chair with a written statement. If that is unsuccessful, you must then reach out to a dean, who's ultimate decision is final. You can find this procedure on MCAS's website here: <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-students/policies-and-procedures.html>.

If your grievance is not of an academic matter, but is instead considered harassment, then the matter is taken up with the Office for Institutional Diversity. If you experience sexual assault or harassment at Boston College, the university has provided this website. <https://www.bc.edu/offices/diversity/compliance/harassment.html>

Tragically, we know that sexual assault and harassment is a widespread problem in academia. Often times universities seek to protect themselves rather than victims. This is why a third-party grievance procedure is one of the best ways to secure justice for victims. Because Boston College is our workplace, we can bargain a third-party procedure into our contract. **If you experience sexual harassment or assault and if you feel comfortable, reach out to our union. We can provide assistance and support.**

# When There Isn't a Grievance Policy



If you would like to address a complaint outside of Boston College, you can do so with the following agencies:

## Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108 617-994-6000

## For faculty, staff, or applicants for employment:

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
John F. Kennedy Building 475 Government Center  
Boston, MA 02203  
1-800-669-4000

## For students, applicants for admission, faculty, staff, or applicants for employment:

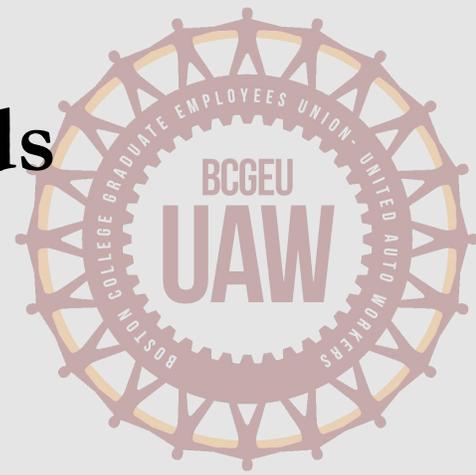
Office for Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education  
5 Post Office Square  
Boston, MA 02110 617-289-011

## We Need a Neutral Third-Party Policy as Grad Workers

If your grievance has to do with your employment at Boston College, for example your workload or unsafe working conditions, there is no clear policy that covers this. You are encouraged to address any of these issues with your advisor, PI, chairperson, or director of graduate studies. If you encounter any grievance as a worker, try to immediately write down any details about the grievance, and find a witness if possible. The more information you have, the better chance for a positive outcome. With a contract, grad workers at other universities have been able to create neutral third-party procedures that are more equitable and enforceable than one voluntarily provided by the employer. **Even though BCGEU doesn't have a contract yet, we are always here to listen to any concerns and advocate on behalf of all workers.**



# Other Resources for Grads



## Graduate Groups on Campus

### Grad International Students Association (GISA)

<https://www.facebook.com/BostonCollegeGISA/>

### Grad Students of Color Association (GSCA)

<https://www.facebook.com/BostonCollegeGSCA/>

### Grad Pride Alliance (GPA)

<https://www.facebook.com/BCGradPride/>

bcgradpride@gmail.com

### Women's Center

<https://www.bc.edu/offices/wc.html>

women@bc.edu

### Graduate Student Association (GSA) and Student Senate

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/gsc/graduate\\_student\\_association.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/gsc/graduate_student_association.html)

## Other Resources

You can download the Microsoft Office suite for free!

<http://www.bc.edu/software/applications/office.html>

If you live anywhere in Massachusetts, you can get a Boston Public Library Card!

<https://www.bpl.org/get-a-library-card/>

Student discounts! Boston College has a list of student discounts on everything from technology to entertainment, found here:

[https://www.bc.edu/offices/gsc/boston/Student\\_Discounts.html](https://www.bc.edu/offices/gsc/boston/Student_Discounts.html)

**Didn't find what you were looking for? We are here to help you transition into your time at Boston College. Please contact us with any questions or comments you might have!**

**This is the first issue of our orientation guide—you can help us improve it by reaching out to us online: [bcgradunion@gmail.com](mailto:bcgradunion@gmail.com), [facebook.com/BCgrademployees/](https://www.facebook.com/BCgrademployees/), [twitter.com/BCGEU\\_UAW](https://twitter.com/BCGEU_UAW).**