

Learning at Harvard

Harvard College is a liberal arts college, the undergraduate program of Harvard University. Harvard offers nearly 3,500 courses and 49 fields of study called “concentrations,” which students choose after three semesters of academic exploration. Secondary fields (much like minors) provide an opportunity for focused study outside of a student’s concentration. Each student’s program is individualized. Many freshmen choose to take one of the 150+ freshmen seminars to explore an academic interest in depth, but there is no specific academic program in the first year. Students make their own decisions about the level and pace at which to begin their study.

Although many students work in conjunction with their academic and career advisors to enter professions such as business, law or medicine, the College is not vocational. There are no business, pre-law, pre-medical or other pre-professional fields. If you are interested in earning a degree in one of these fields at Harvard, please note that they are postgraduate programs that require a college degree for admission.

In addition to pursuing their academic interests, Harvard students engage with life outside the classroom. They have created more than 450 clubs and organizations to pursue non-academic interests, to gain real-world experience and skills, and simply to have fun. Harvard College is in Cambridge, Massachusetts—directly across the Charles River from Boston. Many students do research, volunteer, and participate in summer internships on campus, in the Boston area, and around the world.

Living at Harvard

Living and learning together are essential parts of the Harvard experience.

An institution of many firsts, Harvard was the first American university to create a housing system that provides an intimate residential experience for undergraduates and faculty. In their first year, students live in the heart of the College: Harvard Yard. Upperclassmen spend three years in one of twelve undergraduate houses. Harvard guarantees College housing to each student for four years, and almost all students choose to live on campus for four years.

Financial Aid

We want to bring the best people to Harvard, regardless of their ability to pay—and we do. Over 60 percent of our students receive grant aid. Two principles, which apply to all students regardless of citizenship, guide us:

- Harvard’s admissions process is need-blind, which means that whether or not a student has applied for financial aid is not taken into account when making the admissions decision.
- Financial aid at Harvard is entirely need-based. Harvard fully supports every student who qualifies for financial aid, based on the family’s ability to pay.

Parents of financial aid recipients in the Class of 2020 with incomes up to \$150,000 will be asked to contribute an average from zero to ten percent of their gross income, with no contribution for families with incomes under \$65,000. Those parents with annual incomes between \$120,000 and \$150,000 are asked to contribute an average of ten percent of their income, with a declining percentage – from ten to zero – for parents with annual incomes between \$120,000 and \$65,000. Applicants for the Class of 2020 and their parents are encouraged to use our Net Price Calculator (<http://npc.fas.harvard.edu>) to receive an individualized estimate of their financial aid eligibility and actual cost of attendance.

Applying to Harvard

There is no formula for gaining admission to Harvard. Academic accomplishment in high school is very important, but we also seek students with enthusiasm, creativity and strength of character.

Applicants can distinguish themselves for admission in many ways. Some show unusual academic promise through achievements in study or research. Many are “well rounded” and have contributed in various ways to the lives of their schools or communities while performing at a high level academically. Others are “well lopsided” with demonstrated excellence in a particular endeavor—academic, extracurricular or otherwise. Still others bring perspectives formed by unusual personal circumstances or experiences.

You may apply to Harvard under either our Early Action or our Regular Action program. All application material is due for Early Action on November 1 and for Regular Action on January 1. Both options allow students to wait until May 1 to reply with their final decision.

Standardized Tests

All applicants must take the SAT or the ACT with writing. While two SAT Subject Tests are normally required, students may apply without them if the cost of the tests represents a financial hardship or if you prefer to have your application considered without them. Students should not submit two Subject Tests in mathematics to meet this requirement. Candidates whose first language is not English should ordinarily not use a Subject Test in their first language to meet the two Subject Tests requirement. Students for whom English is not their first language are not required to take the TOEFL, but those who have done so are welcome to submit their scores. There are no score cutoffs, and we do not admit students “by the numbers.”

