Learning at Harvard

Office of the Dean of Harvard College
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Harvard University
Academic Programs

Concentrations and Secondary Fields
handbook.fas.harvard.edu

A concentration is a student’s commitment to a specific field, discipline, or area of specialization in the context of the liberal arts degree. With more than 40 possible areas from which to choose, each with a range and sequence of courses specific to the discipline, Harvard offers students a variety of pathways to the undergraduate degree. All concentrations, however, will challenge students to think critically and to analyze and synthesize information. Students whose interests bridge the set concentration areas may in some instances combine fields through a joint concentration or devise a special concentration. Secondary fields provide further opportunity for focused study but outside of the primary area of concentration. A secondary field may complement the primary area of study in the concentration, or it may be entirely separate. Regardless of concentration area, the Harvard degree gives students a strong foundation to support any career path.

Program in General Education
generaleducation.fas.harvard.edu

The Program in General Education – along with concentration – is one of the two pillars of the Liberal Arts & Sciences curriculum, and thus lies at the heart of the intellectually transformative mission of Harvard College. General Education provides the opportunity to counter the narrowing effects of concentration by helping students to make intellectual connections, to look inward to themselves and outward to the world, and to understand the deep and sometimes surprising importance of scholarly work to some of the most central aspects of life. Concentrations ensure that our students know a lot about something; Gen Ed ensures that they understand how to take that knowledge with them into the world. Gen Ed, in other words, is the intellectual fuel for the personal transformation we hope to facilitate in our students. “Enter to grow in wisdom,” reads the text on Dexter Gate, “Depart to serve better thy country and thy kind.” Gen Ed provides the building blocks for students to grow in wisdom so that they can leave Harvard College able to serve in thoughtful, reflective, and humble ways.

Freshman Seminar Program
freshmanseminars.college.harvard.edu

The Freshman Seminar Program offers first-year students the opportunity to work closely with members of the faculty on topics of mutual interest. The Program’s set of offerings represents a wide variety of subjects, and their format emphasizes collegial and shared learning. As such, Freshman Seminars provide a unique setting to deepen understanding on existing interests but also the possibility to explore unfamiliar spheres of knowledge, all as part of a collaborative learning experience with dedicated faculty and like-minded peers.

Harvard’s philosophy has long been that an undergraduate education ought to have structure and coherence, while allowing for maximum flexibility and individual choice.
Faculty-Student Collaboration at Harvard College

uraf.harvard.edu

Harvard attracts faculty, scholars, and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge—and to teaching. Our faculty value the opportunity to work with undergraduates, and for many students who choose Harvard College, the chance to learn under the guidance of these professors is a major consideration. Research partnerships are an important part of our educational program, and extraordinary research opportunities are available to every student at the College. In fact, students participate in research projects in all fields from astronomy and computer science to the humanities and social sciences. Students can pursue research as part of their regular academic programs or as paid term-time or summer employment. Faculty-directed independent study, Freshman Seminars, and the renowned tutorial program enroll 2,500 undergraduates annually for academic credit.

Please consider attending the Research Symposium during Visitas, which is scheduled for April 16–18, 2016. (See the admitted student website for more details.) Current students conducting research will present their findings and discuss the impact their research experience has had on their undergraduate education. To learn more about undergraduate research, please visit uraf.harvard.edu. To learn more about term-time financial support for your independent research, visit seo.harvard.edu.

Study Abroad

oie.fas.harvard.edu

In this age of globalization, understanding cultural differences and learning how to function in different societies are crucial for success in all fields. Social scientists, humanists, and artists can study in classrooms abroad, take part in field-based cultural immersion programs, or take intensive language courses. Scientists can combine classroom experiences with field-study and work in laboratories. Studying in a foreign language enhances the benefits of spending a term or a year abroad. Summer also provides an opportunity to pursue a program of special interest such as art history, public health, or environmental science, to develop language skills, or to explore a region of the world.

Advising

apo.fas.harvard.edu

The purpose of advising is to assist students at every stage of their undergraduate experience—as they transition to college academics, as they prepare to choose their concentration, and as they delve deeply into their particular field of study, all the while attending to the whole student. Starting freshman year, academic advisors help students immerse themselves in the intellectual life of the university, develop plans of study that best cohere with their evolving interests, and take full advantage of the many academic and co-curricular opportunities available to them. Academic advisors are one of the essential components of a student’s larger advising network. The Advising Programs Office (APO) supports both students and advisors, from freshman year until graduation, in forming strong and effective mentoring relationships.
Libraries
library.harvard.edu

There are more than 70 libraries in the Harvard system, including 12 science libraries, a music library, a film archive, and the world’s largest anthropological library. Each residential House also has its own library. In all, the Harvard system holds 17 million volumes and 7.5 million photographs.

Harvard Library supports the research, teaching, and learning that takes place at the University every day – in buildings, online, and out in the community. Library staff are available to assist student with an ever-evolving set of services ranging from research to data management to access to digital collections.

Museums
harvardartmuseums.org

• Three art museums containing 250,000 treasures from nearly every region of the world and every major artistic period
• Three natural history museums housing fossils, a world-famous glass flowers exhibit, 5 million plant specimens, 50,000 mineral samples, and 1,500 meteorites
• A 265-acre urban arboretum with over 10,000 accessioned plants
• A 3,000-acre forest research station and museum
• Museums of archaeology and ethnology
• An anatomical museum with 13,000 pathological specimens
• A collection of 20,000 historical scientific instruments

Laboratories for Science, Engineering, and Innovation

• The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) and the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) are home to numerous research laboratories, dedicated undergraduate teaching laboratories, and space for design and innovation. The FAS (fas.harvard.edu) and SEAS (seas.harvard.edu) websites offer more information.
• Including the Medical School, Harvard University has more than 24 buildings used for science teaching and research.
• The Science Center houses classrooms, an observatory, a computing center, a café, and laboratory spaces for 800 researchers.
• Maxwell Dworkin contains the CS 50 lounge—a funky space where students can code and converse—and an electrical engineering design laboratory.
• Pierce Hall boasts teaching labs for areas ranging from bioengineering to environmental sciences, as well as a social space for students in applied mathematics.
• The Northwest Science Building contains 520,000 square feet of classrooms, lecture halls, and research laboratories—including two labs just for use in undergraduate courses.
• The Harvard Innovation Lab is dedicated to supporting startup ventures and entrepreneurship within the Harvard student body.
• In 2015, nearly $40 million in sponsored research took place in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.
• In Cambridge, the Harvard College Observatory and the Smithsonian Institution together operate an observatory as part of the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (cfa.harvard.edu/about).
• Harvard’s many interdisciplinary research centers include the FAS Center for Systems Biology (sysbio.harvard.edu/csb), the Center for Brain Science (cbs.fas.harvard.edu), and the Harvard Stem Cell Institute (hsci.harvard.edu).