

## Who can apply?

- From the Harvard site: “GSAS welcomes applications for admission from individuals who have or will have by the time of matriculation a BA, BS, or equivalent undergraduate degree (for prospective international students, a three- or four-year undergraduate degree from an institution of recognized standing) and actively seeks applicants from groups historically [underrepresented in graduate schools](#). All degree candidates are admitted for full-time study beginning in the fall term.”
- Immigration status does not factor into decisions about admissions and financial aid. For more information, see [Undocumented at Harvard](#).  
<https://gsas.harvard.edu/admissions/apply>
- Students from different major backgrounds are welcome to apply.

## What are the application components?

Recommended timeline:

1. Reach out to a potential faculty advisor via email in September/October/November to introduce yourself and determine if they are accepting students.
2. Secure letter writers >3 weeks prior to the application deadline.
3. If accessible, have a mentor review your application materials.
4. Application deadline for Fall 2021 admissions: January 2nd, 2021

## GRE requirements

**EPS Policy:** GRE scores are accepted as part of the application but are not required.

**SEAS Policy:** The Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) will not be accepting General GRE scores nor Subject Test GRE scores for applicants to our Ph.D. programs or masters degree programs in Computational Science & Engineering and Data Science. Applicants to these programs should **not** submit official or unofficial GRE scores to us nor mention them anywhere in their application materials.

## Who can I talk to about the application process?

- Use this list of students and postdocs to contact someone in your research area/group of interest.
- Aimee Smith, Graduate Program Director, [aimee\\_smith@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:aimee_smith@fas.harvard.edu)
- To speak with a staff member from the [Office of Diversity and Minority Affairs](#), please contact [minrec@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:minrec@fas.harvard.edu) or 617- 495-5315.

## I'm looking for more readings on applying to graduate school...

External resources:

[https://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/CIC\\_GradSchoolGuide.pdf](https://www.pathwaystoscience.org/pdf/CIC_GradSchoolGuide.pdf)

## Should I apply for funding?

From the Harvard EPS website: “Once enrolled, all graduate students are provided generous financial support, including research and teaching assistantships, full tuition, and a research allowance. Prospective students are encouraged to apply for outside funding from agencies such as the National Science Foundation prior to gaining admission.” In other words, funding is guaranteed, and you might be expected to teach a class during the semesters to cover your stipend. There are outside fellowships you can apply to before or during your first year, which include (there is more information on the GSAS website regarding external fellowships, including a searchable database - CARAT):

- [NSF-GRFP](#)
- [Geological Society of America \(GSA\)](#)
- [NDSEG \(DoD\)](#)
- [SMART](#) (STEM fields in DoD)
- [NASA](#)
- [American Meteorological Society \(AMS\) Graduate Fellowship](#)
- DOE (e.g. [Computational Science Graduate Fellowship](#) - CSGF, [Graduate Fellowship Program](#))
- National Institutes of Health (NIH; e.g. [F31 Ruth L Kirschstein Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellowships](#))
- [Hertz Fellowship](#) (usually first year grad students, applied physical and biological sciences, mathematics, or engineering)
- [American Geosciences Institute: Harriet Evelyn Wallace Scholarship](#) (women in geosciences)
- [Graduate Fellowships for STEM Diversity \(GFSD\)](#)
- [Google fellowships](#)

**To help you find your fit, if a faculty member is interested in working with you, here is a list of questions you can ask advisors or current graduate students.** (Usually graduate students are more than willing to answer questions over email, just be respectful of their time and be specific about what you want from them in terms of advice/answers.)

*\*Note that different people (whether students or advisors) may respond differently to each question, or may not be able to answer each question depending on experience or comfort level.\**

### **For current graduate students & group members:**

#### Relationship with advisor:

- What is one aspect that has been really positive and one aspect that has been more difficult in your relationship with your advisor? (ask graduate students in different years of grad school, graduate students who are in other groups but may know the advisor through classes or anecdotes, and non-grad students like postdocs or staff)
- How hands on is your advisor?
- Does your advisor encourage or discourage outreach or service work to be a part of your work hours? Have you found it easy/straightforward or difficult to participate in these activities?
- What are advisor meetings typically like and how often?
- Does your advisor get along with other faculty in the department? Has your advisor ever encouraged or discouraged you from meeting with other faculty in the department?
- (if applicable) What is the co-advising (more than one primary advisor) experience like? Have you found it difficult or straightforward to navigate?

#### Work & social culture at EPS

- What does a typical work day look like for the students (how many hours, breaks, group meetings, seminars)? What does a “busy” day look like?
- What is the department atmosphere like? What are some examples of activities in the department or outside the department that you have participated in?
- How many hours does your advisor expect you to work (compare this to advisor’s answer for work-life balance)? How much vacation is typical in your group?
- Do you enjoy or feel included by the department social events? Why or why not?

#### Work & social culture specific to lab group

- Does your advisor expect responses to email outside of work hours or on weekends? How do you feel about this?
- How often does your group meet all together, and what is a typical group meeting like?
- How are the experiences of students in your group similar or different? Do students generally have experience in industry or other jobs? Do students come from similar backgrounds (eg. academic and personal)?
- Does your group have social outings, like lab lunches or dinners?

#### Committee

- What is the qualifying exam experience like in your department?
- Do you meet regularly with your committee? Why or why not?

### Academic and professional support

- What are you hoping to gain from grad school? Is this something you discuss with your advisor?
- What jobs or careers are you interested in, post-graduation? If you wanted, would you be able to pursue an internship during your time in grad school? Is your career path something you talk openly and regularly with your advisor about?
- Have you found it helpful to have mentors besides your advisor? Has there been any difficulty or encouragement to seek advice from other people? Do you have mentors or collaborators in other labs, departments, or schools?
- When you have an idea for a project or collaboration, do you feel supported to pursue it? Why or why not?
- Do you feel supported to take the classes that you're interested in? Has your advisor encouraged or discouraged you from taking certain courses?
  
- What is something that surprised you about grad school? What is something that fit your expectations?
- What is something you feel is important to ask or to consider about grad school?
- What have you found most stressful about your work life? Have you found ways to manage this stress?

### **For potential advisor:**

#### Lab culture

- What is the work-life balance like in your group? What work schedule do you expect from students while taking classes or teaching? What about when just doing research?
- How often do you hold group meetings? Who organizes group meetings? What is the format - paper discussion, group members present, group members give updates, or a mix?
- Do students work mostly independently or collaboratively?
- How often do students attend conferences? Do students work in internships?
- Have you had students go into non-academic careers?
- Do you typically collaborate with people outside of the university or outside of academia? Are your students typically the main point of contact in collaborations with other researchers or do you prefer to be the main point of contact with collaborators?

#### Mentoring style

- Is there flexibility in project topics throughout a student's PhD, or do students usually work on one continuous project? What happens if a student changes their interests during the PhD, could projects shift in focus to match interests?
- How frequently do you meet with students? If a student is unsure how to proceed when do you typically want them to ask for help?
- How long does it typically take students to graduate? What are your expectations for graduation?
- How are expectations communicated? Do you have an expectations document that you sign with your students?