Frequently Asked Questions for Incoming Students

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1. **What happens after I return my signed financial aid award letter?**

   Your award package is accepted via the HGSE Student Aid Portal. If you receive any new outside award you must notify the Financial Aid Office so the award can be added to your aid package. The Financial Aid Office will contact you if your aid package is not accepted or if there are any changes to your aid package. You must accept your aid before it can be disbursed to your student bill.
2. Do I need to complete any requirements to borrow Federal Direct Loans?

Yes, normally you will need to complete entrance counseling and promissory notes for the loans you accept. The requirements are completed online, and can be viewed on the HGSE Student Aid Portal. The Financial Aid Office will notify you via e-mail if you have outstanding loan requirements. This usually occurs in mid to late summer prior to the start of the fall term.

3. I am interested in applying for supplemental/private loans to help augment my financial aid package. How do I do this and when?

You should start by researching what type of loans you are interested in borrowing. There are many options, and students are encouraged to carefully compare each one. You can borrow through any supplemental loan program of your choice. Most students apply for their supplemental loan in early July. Supplemental loans are split half for fall and half for spring terms, so be sure to apply for the total amount you wish to borrow for the academic year. You can begin your research by reviewing the information available on our website, including the HGSE Supplemental Loan Comparison Guide.

4. When is my first bill due?

The Student Accounts Office (SAO) e-mails electronic student bills for the fall semester in early July. Payment is due in early August. After this first bill, you can view your live student bill on the Student Accounts website. The July bill will list tuition and health fees for the fall term.

5. How is financial aid listed on my bill?

Your financial aid for the fall term will be listed as “anticipated aid” on your bill. “Anticipated aid” will include the fall portion of your grants and the net proceeds of your fall loan disbursements. The amount you will owe for your August bill is calculated by subtracting the amount of your expected (“anticipated”) fall financial aid (including supplemental educational loans) from your total fall charges.

6. What if my Harvard Housing rent is charged to my bill?

If you are renting from Harvard University Housing your rent will be charged each month to your Harvard student account. You will need to check your account regularly to ensure that you are making monthly payments on a timely basis. Students with outstanding balances at the start of the term will not be permitted to register for classes.

Note that any refunds you receive will reflect only your current charges and will not account for future charges (such as rent, library charges, family health insurance, etc.). Remember that the financial aid student budget is for the nine-month academic year. Therefore, financial aid may not be awarded to cover a 12-month lease.

7. When will my financial aid become available to me?

Most forms of financial aid will disburse to your student bill on or near the first day of classes for the term, assuming you are registered and have completed all of your loan disbursement requirements.
REFUNDS (through direct deposit or by check): If the total of your aid disbursements and other payments exceeds your university charges, you may be eligible for a refund which you may use to help with living and other educational expenses such as books, supplies, etc. Note that future charges such as rent and family health insurance are not included in the calculation of your refund. See below regarding the timing of refunds.

STIPENDS (usually for Ed.D. and Ed.L.D. students): Stipends are paid directly to students, on a monthly basis, usually between September and May and on the first of each month. Note that if you incur charges on your student account such as HUH rent or family health insurance, you may need to use your stipend to help pay these charges throughout the year. (Students with outstanding balances will not be permitted to register for classes.)

FEDERAL WORK STUDY PAYMENTS: Note that FWSP awards are not applied to student accounts. Students receive paychecks for work, once they have been hired for a job and added to the FWSP payroll and have worked. Students are paid weekly for hours worked.

8. Who is eligible for a refund?

You are eligible for a refund if the total credits to your student account exceed your billed expenses (such as tuition, health fees, iPac fees, dorm or Harvard Housing rent, family health insurance, etc.). Refunds are issued after proceeds are credited to your student account from these sources:

- financial aid you have accepted (not including Federal Work Study or Stipends)
- and/or
- payments or credits from outside awards, sponsors, or individuals

9. When will refunds become available?

Refunds will be available approximately one week after the start of classes provided you have completed all necessary requirements (financial aid and school requirements such as inoculations). Refunds for late aid: You will need to contact the Financial Aid Office to request release of credit from your student bill after mid-September (examples include proceeds from late private loans, outside awards or late payments to your student bill). You must allow 8-10 business days for processing a refund request. We strongly encourage you to enroll in direct deposit to receive refunds in the fastest and most secure way possible.

You should come to campus with savings equivalent to 2 months of expenses (room & board, food, personal) in case there are delays in receiving financial aid disbursements and/or refunds.

10. I have been awarded Federal Work Study. How do I find a job and when can I start working?

Once issued, you can use your Harvard Key to access job listings on the Harvard Student Employment Office website. Both Federal Work Study (FWS) and non-work study jobs are posted on this site. Students contact employers directly about available positions. Hourly wages range from $13.50/hr up to $20.00/hr for graduate students and your gross earnings can not exceed the award amount listed on the HGSE Student Aid Portal. You and your employer are responsible for monitoring your earnings during the academic year.

Most students may begin FWS jobs as early as the first day of classes provided you have completed all necessary paperwork, and the last day of FWS work is on the last day of the spring term. You can learn more about the FWS Program for specific requirements, dates, and procedures.
11. I have an AmeriCorps award that I would like to use. How do I do this?

Submit a request for “current educational expenses” on the AmeriCorps website. Be sure to authorize the entire amount you want to receive for the academic year. This will allow for your award to be disbursed and credited to your bill. Half of the AmeriCorps award will be disbursed in the fall and half in the spring. Allow 5-6 weeks for processing.

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12. I might change my enrollment status. How is my financial aid affected if I change to part-time, drop to below half-time or decide to take a leave of absence?

If your registration lapses or you drop below half time (less than 8 credits) in a given semester for any reason (e.g., leave of absence, failure to register, withdrawal, registering for only one course) such a change will have an immediate impact on your financial aid package and the terms under which you must repay your student loans and/or when you enter repayment. Students must be registered for at least 8 credits to be eligible for financial aid in a given semester.

Please be sure to contact the Financial Aid Office ASAP if you are considering a change from full-time status. Your file must be reviewed to determine whether your financial aid award will be affected. It is possible that certain awards will be lost and not regained in a subsequent term or year.

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13. I have loans from a prior period of enrollment; can I have the payments deferred while I am enrolled at HGSE?

Normally yes, but it depends on the type of loan you are trying to defer. After the registration period ends, the University sends notification of your enrollment to an electronic database. Most educational lenders then automatically receive a record of your enrollment and place your eligible loans into deferment. You may still want to contact your lender to determine if they will require a paper deferment form. It is your responsibility to verify your loan status and you should do so by late October. Remember to continue making all loan payments until you verify they are no longer required!

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14. What should I do when my address changes?

You can update your contact information on MyHarvard or contact the HGSE Registration Office. The Financial Aid Office will use your HGSE e-mail address as your main contact after you matriculate, so be sure to check your school e-mail account often.

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15. What is my best source for more information about financial aid?

The HGSE Financial Aid Office! You can call us at 617-495-3416 or e-mail finaid@gse.harvard.edu with your questions. Our website is also a very important source of information where you can find publications, forms, and links to much more.

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