



Interview with HBS Admissions

Q: Can you share some details about the atmosphere in the school? Amongst the students? Between students and faculty? How do students spend their free time?

A: The Harvard Business School MBA program was the first ever MBA program and now is over 100 years old. The school has experienced a lot of growth and change over time but the underlying mission of the school has always been the same – “to educate leaders who make a difference in the world.” This mission permeates everything we do at HBS – not only is it the basis for how we structure our curriculum, or a guide for how we select applicants, it is also why many of our students and alumni have chosen to attend HBS- because they want to make an immediate impact in something greater than themselves.

The world desperately needs more leaders to address its most urgent and challenging problems, and virtually none of these problems can be addressed without business leaders playing a vital role. Our graduates are located all over the world and they are using their HBS MBA education to follow their passion and make impact in the areas that are of most importance to them. This includes our alumni who are creating or growing businesses, employing millions of people, leading government or nonprofit organizations, and serving on boards of or benefactors to non-profit organizations and philanthropies.

HBS is the only top business school in the United States with a residential, self-contained campus that forms its own vibrant community in the heart of one of the world's great cities. 65% of our students live on campus in either dorms or Harvard affiliated apartments. This environment offers students countless opportunities for interaction with one another and with faculty beyond the classroom, easy access to a range of on-campus activities and resources, socializing, and building lasting relationships. Community members are drawn together by a commitment to a set of core values, including integrity, honesty, respect for others, personal accountability, and dedication to excellence – qualities that play a key role in developing the teamwork and sound judgment that are central to our educational mission. At its core, HBS student life is built around an intense [section experience](#) that's invigorated with School-wide club events, [student organizations](#), guest speakers, seminars, sports, conferences, and more. In fact, many of our [student profiles](#) share a common theme: how MBAs have found not only a community of support, but a close-knit network of friendships that last a lifetime. Everything on the HBS campus—from our multimedia classrooms to our gourmet-quality dining facilities—is designed to encourage community collaboration for a richer learning experience.

Q: Can you share some details regarding job opportunities and summer internships for students in your school?



A: HBS is not a final destination, and the HBS MBA is not just a 2-year proposition. It is a community you are connected to for your life. Most students come to HBS with the purpose of furthering themselves in their career or switching careers. Every student's journey is different, which is why the Career & Professional Development Office provides personalized career resources to help you make an impact for years to come. Career & Professional Development works to provide [resources](#) tailored to each individual's need. With our help, you'll not only have the tools you need for both your internship and full-time search, but also an array of resources geared toward your professional development post-HBS.

Q: One most important piece of advice for an applicant based on your experience?

A: The biggest piece of advice is to be authentic. We are truly trying to get to know you and see how you would fit here in our program. There are no hidden tricks. We have people tell us what they think we want to hear and that is a big mistake. Be honest about who you are.

Q: Are later rounds worth considering?

A: There is no difference between applying in Round 1 or Round 2. You have an equal chance of getting in either round. Apply in whichever round you feel your application is strongest.

Q: Can you tell us more about funding – scholarship/fellowship options in your school?

A: Financial aid at HBS is [need-based](#). The application process is need-blind. We are not aware of your financial situation when reviewing your application. You apply for financial aid once you have been admitted to the program. Financial aid is available to both domestic and international students. 50% of students receive a need-based scholarship that averages at \$42,000 a year. We also have additional [complementary fellowships](#), which are available to students if they meet certain criteria laid out by the fellowship. This aid program requires an enormous commitment, and we are fortunate to have an alumni community that believes so strongly in HBS that they have made our exceptionally generous aid programs possible by donating \$43 million a year to support this program and other aid.

Q: For those applicants still considering applying for the fall, can you provide advice for pulling everything together in the coming weeks?

A: We do not anticipate changing the application process for the Class of 2023. The new application for the [Class of 2023 is now available](#). The Round 1 deadline is September 8th, 2020 at 12pm EDT and the Round 2 deadline is January 5th, 2021 at 12pm EDT.



Q: Both GMAT and GRE have recently made their tests available online. Will you be accepting these versions of the tests?

A: We are excited that the GMAT and GRE are now able to meet students where they are- which is online. A GMAT or GRE score is still a required part of the application process. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, HBS will accept the online versions of these exams (where available) even if they do not have a writing section (AWA). Scores from these tests will be accepted at HBS in any future admissions round as long as they are valid from the testing organization, which may be less than the customary five years. Please note: When submitting your application, you may report the unofficial GMAT or GRE score given on the day of the test, or your official score if you have received it. Please plan accordingly when you are considering your test date, as score reports for the online versions of the tests can require more time for processing. We do not have a minimum score requirement for either the GMAT or GRE.

Q: What are some of the common myths about admissions, and what's most important in the admissions process?

A: One of our most common questions is do we prefer the GMAT or GRE. Do we have a preference? No- we do not have a preference. We are truly indifferent to which test you submit to us. We want you to take the test you are the most comfortable with!

Do you need an HBS alum to be your recommender- No! The Admissions Board suggests that one recommendation should come from a current or recent supervisor, if possible. Recommenders should be individuals who know the candidate well and can provide specific examples in the recommendation. We care much more about what they have to say rather than their title.

Do I need to come from a business background to be a competitive applicant- No! We want people from all backgrounds to apply. We need as many different and unique voices in the classroom as possible. The case method is only successful due to the vast array of diverse voices in the classroom.

It is important to remember that our process is a holistic one. We take everything into account when reviewing your application. Each application received is reviewed in depth by the Admissions Board. When selecting students we put an emphasis on a habit of leadership, an analytical aptitude, and appetite, and community engagement. In each class, we create a dynamic environment that mirrors the breadth and depth of our world economy. We want you to be authentic with the admissions board in what you are bringing to the classroom. We want leaders who want to make a difference in the world and we want to see that desire in your application.

Q: Can you describe some of the changes you see in the candidate as they develop from admit to graduate?

A: The combination of the general management curriculum based on real-world challenges, the opportunity to learn through the case method where students become a better decision makers and



leaders, and the HBS brand together will give our graduates the knowledge, experience and credibility to have a seat at the table to address some of the world's most pressing problems. The general management perspective is important because no business decision is ever made in a silo, instead it is important for a leader to have a broad understanding of all elements of an organization to make it run successfully. At HBS, students have the opportunity to be in the shoes of a leader making a decision as they prepare 500 cases, consider 500 problems and discuss 500 relevant business topics. Through this experience students broaden their perspective on the world. Students develop technical business skills as well as softer leadership skills including business instinct, judgment, listening and taking a stand, as they refine their general manager's toolkit.

Q: What are the skill sets that your program emphasizes to respond to an evolving global business landscape?

A: The HBS experience is inherently international. More than half of all HBS cases have an international focus, and a wide variety of MBA courses and cases directly address global business issues. 28% of the cases taught in the first-year Required Curriculum and 38% of cases in the second-year Elective Curriculum are globally focused. Last year, over half the new cases and 40% of all faculty research had a global focus and setting. Students build a global experience, drawing from global cases and protagonists, a diverse international student body, international project-based field experiences and immersive field courses. Students leave HBS not only with increased knowledge but more importantly, with grounding and practice in how to make difficult decisions and what it means to assume leadership with people different than themselves. To develop a truly global mindset, first-year students are required to travel abroad—the global component of the Field Immersion Experiences for Leadership Development (FIELD) course—to work on a product or service idea in global markets. FIELD is meant provide a cycle of learning that involves learning by thinking, doing, and reflecting. It allows student to translate their ideas into practice.

Q: How do you view international experience for both the MBA candidate?

A: We love to see a diverse background of experiences in our candidates as that helps prepare students for the case method. Their unique perspective will be able to shed light on how they would address a particular business problem. The more diverse the set of experiences in the classroom, the better prepared we can make our students for when they encounter that same problem once they graduate. Students need to be surrounded with people who have had experiences from all over the world so they can learn from those different than themselves.

Q: During this period of transition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are considering how to best position themselves to recover after the disruption. Why is graduate business school a viable option for people who were certain about applying to business school before the coronavirus spread, but question it now, or those who may have lost their jobs recently, or those seeking career shifts while many businesses are shut down?



A: The HBS MBA provides students with career flexibility and optionality both in the near and far term. While the economy is unstable/uncertain, these two years provide time for introspection and the opportunity to explore various careers including their own business ideas. HBS has vast entrepreneurial resources including the [Rock Center for Entrepreneurship](#) and the [Harvard Innovation Lab](#), passion for various careers as well as two years to test out business ideas through the many entrepreneurial resources available to them.

Currently, nearly 65% of students change their career path as a result of the MBA degree. HBS has made a strong commitment to career exploration. For example, the HBS Summer Fellows Program enables students to apply their classroom training as they explore career opportunities in roles or regions where compensation is generally lower than the traditional MBA level. Students are given the freedom to realize their unique career visions without being limited by compensation levels, regardless of industry or location.

In the current economic climate, HBS CPD reached out to the alumni network and within a week over 100 new jobs being posted from alumni.

Additionally, MBA graduates receive lifelong career support from HBS to help pivot throughout their career including when facing economic challenges like we do today.

Q: How should international students who are impacted by visa restrictions position themselves to be competitive with other applicants? Do domestic students have an advantage when applying to your programs?

A: The mission of Harvard Business School is to educate leaders who make a difference in the world. In order to fulfill that mission, HBS has a deep commitment to engaging globally, including by admitting students from all over the world into our MBA program. We want to reaffirm that HBS MBA Admissions will continue to admit the most talented international and domestic applicants, irrespective of citizenship, as we strive to build a class of leaders who will make a difference in the world. We hope that the global situation around COVID-19 improves and that the suspension of visa services passes quickly. The Harvard International Office and we in MBA Admissions and Financial Aid will do all that we can to support students through the visa process.