

Questions Related to GSD Town Hall on October 30, 2020

General School-wide questions

Is there any chance that the 2021 Spring virtual term would be changed?

There is nothing we would like more, but indications are not looking like we could return to an in-person format safely; if anything, conditions are getting worse. We are continually reviewing conditions and possible options with safety, learning & equity as the priorities.

Will there be an expansion on library resources next semester? It is inconvenient to conduct research on an online platform with only one-chapter requests at a given time.

Yes, the library is working on expanding its services by increasing the digitization of its holdings for needs beyond the immediate needs of courses, as well as initiating a book-mailing program for materials that cannot be accessed in any other way. Library staff are working as hard and fast as they can to ensure materials are available.

Similar architecture programs across the country are successfully offering a hybrid programs during the fall and will continue to be hybrid during the spring. What special variables is the GSD working with that would not make it possible to offer some in-person instruction? How is GSD so different in its pedagogy or operation that it could not go hybrid?

With the current rising infection rate across the country, it is difficult to ascertain how each school will choose to operate this spring, and what specific parameters influence those decisions. This fall, many colleges and universities had to pivot away from in-person instruction mid-semester, after growing concern about campus safety. In many other cases, despite allowing students to return to campus in some capacity, most or all of the teaching remained online. As noted before, some of the reasons to continue remote in the Spring are linked to Gund's unique layout and the available space, the mode of instruction, and the challenge for international students. Additionally, in its position as a leading institution, Harvard is always the first one to be scrutinized, forcing us to follow a strict interpretation of the norms and rules in place. Safety, quality of education, and equitable access to opportunities have been our guiding principles when assessing all options for Spring.

In order to offer a hybrid format, all Harvard Schools must offer a minimum of 3 in-person courses that would be required for all students attending the hybrid programming. Consequently, we would need to have some studios for all programs offered in person (and without choice for students who would have to take them). Additionally, there would need to be at least three 4-unit courses that all students would need to attend in-person, for at least 50% of the class's meetings. This would apply to all new international students, as well as those international students who would be returning from leaves of absence. Without even considering the ongoing pandemic, it would not be feasible to hold three classes for each program and concentration, courses that would also need their in-person content available remotely for those students who could not be attending in person, or chose not to be. This is a challenge inherent to our having 17 programs across our school. Some schools, such as the Harvard Kennedy School, include programs that can require all, or certain students, to take the same three courses as part of the required curriculum. Since the GSD has 17 different tracks (HKS has 4), it is impossible to satisfy all of our students who would benefit from this option. Schools and programs that have unveiled a hybrid model will face challenges unique to their own programs and student bodies.

Did the GSD look into finding alternative spaces that can host a hybrid learning environment? Instead of limiting ourselves to Gund and the couple of other buildings on campus?

Renting additional space was indeed considered, but finding space that could accommodate our spatial needs proved to be impossible. The pedagogical aspects of providing a hybrid environment, in addition to the physical limitations, negated this as a viable solution. The challenges of providing a hybrid model are curricular more than spatial.

Is there any possibility to progressively shift into hybrid in the upcoming semester?

Please refer to the question above. We all hope that a vaccine will become widely available and soon. We do not believe that shifting to a hybrid model mid-term is feasible, but it is possible that some building access would be offered if an effective vaccine were to be widely available.

How long will the virtual semester last, after the spring semester?

We all hope, and plan to be back to in-person learning by the fall. Still, of course we cannot predict the future with certainty. Like today, decisions will depend on the state of the pandemic, our ability to ensure a safe learning environment, and the recommendations of health and government officials. We will continue to keep you informed of any decisions we make, and the reasoning for those decisions.

Has the GSD explored ways to at least make plotting available to students, either for local pick-up or mail service?

A few courses have attempted to send materials to students around the world, and what we've discovered is that this doesn't always work as planned. Mail service takes a very long time due to COVID restrictions and precautions and shipments do not always reliably reach the destination (especially international mail). With that said, we have not ruled anything out and are in discussions of options with faculty.

Will we get (limited) access to the GSD's Fabrication Lab (for example by signing up for time slots just like science labs at Harvard are doing)?

We do not intend to provide access to the Fabrication Lab at this time. The science labs at Harvard that reopened were labs for doctoral students and faculty members whose advanced research can only be accomplished in their labs.

What new opportunities will there be for students to connect with one another and faculty while we're operating remotely? How does the school anticipate making up for all of the lost networking opportunities experienced by final year students looking for jobs post-grad? What initiatives are going on to connect GSD students with students at other schools and allow them to network? [Regarding Social Health . . . When will the 24-hour Zoom Room and other initiatives be implemented?]

Fostering connections and relationships is a priority for us, and Student Services continues to work with program staff and student organizations to increase community. In addition to the events hosted by GSD student organizations and the Student Forum, there are some other social opportunities that have just gone live:

Student Services has set up 60+ regional Teams groups which allow students to make 1:1 connections through the platform so students can be in quick contact with others in their geographic area. Students have been added to their appropriate group. The groups are not monitored once set up, and students can opt-out if they prefer.

There is the new online [GSD Student Lounge](#) which is open 24/7! It's a virtual space where you can hang out at tables, meet new people across programs, or just sit and study with a little low-pressure company. The lounge is a joint project of Student Forum and Student Services, and we're excited to see how our community uses it. The lounge is browser-based, using a Harvard-affiliated service called [Congregate](#). Congregate works best in the Chrome browser.

In addition to the [GSD's Engage site](#), students can also access public-facing events and information about student organizations from other Harvard Schools such as [GSAS Engage](#) and [Chan School's Engage](#). GSD's student organizations also have relationships with their counterparts at other Harvard schools and MIT and are a good resource to connect with other students. The [Harvard Graduate Council](#) brings students together across all 12 graduate programs at Harvard. Harvard's [Next Gen initiative](#) also promotes community building for all Harvard students who are the first in their families to pursue a degree in the U.S. and/or are from under-resourced or underserved backgrounds.

We are also working with alumni to schedule socially distanced small gatherings of our students and alumni across the globe.

If students have ideas or would like to be involved in ways to improve these efforts, please contact [Laura Snowden](#).

A big part of the GSD experience is the opportunity to travel with option studios and see design projects around the world. This is something students consider when choosing to attend the GSD, and something they especially look forward to as they struggle through the Core studios. How will the school make up for the loss of this experience?

Currently the GSD is piloting a project on virtual site visits through Urban Design's core studio and Charlotte Malterre-Barthes and Rahul Mehrotra's current studio on Ishkashim, Afghanistan. We will return to offering traveling studios once the travel restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

Will the administration train all faculty and TAs on skillful uses of technology so that they know the appropriate situations in which to implement Zoom features, asynchronous opportunities, etc.?

Training is indeed ongoing, and the ITF, who recently posted a virtual handbook online for faculty, staff, and students, continues to work on ways to improve faculty use of Zoom.

Can there please be efforts across the board to integrate opportunities for small group discussions and student engagement in classes? Most classes on Zoom revert to all lecture with student participation limited to questions in the chat. We are losing the conversations, experiential learning and peer learning that we would get in the classroom.

We have been gathering feedback on experiences that have worked well this fall semester so we can further expand guidance for other instructors to adapt their courses to the virtual environment. Please send specific suggestions to ITF@gsd.harvard.edu.

What steps are being taken to synchronize/simplify platforms for content delivery across different courses?

The School is constantly trying to balance offering platforms that are desired, while not overwhelming faculty and students alike. We are gathering feedback on fine-tuning options and advice, and appreciate all specific suggestions.

[Regarding] the consistency of the rules for asynchronous classes . . . there are some classes that record the lectures but do not record the Q&A parts of the lecture. Is there an actual rule that pertains to this?

We have been **recommending** that faculty turn off the recording function during the Q&A portion of the lecture, to allow students to feel more free in asking questions as some may not feel comfortable being recorded. Guidance for recording is published [here](#), and may be done at the discretion of each faculty. However, according to official University policy, students do not technically need to give consent to course recordings, so long as it's been announced that the session is, indeed, being recorded. Please find more information on that [here](#). It should also be noted that no one apart from the faculty (or TA) is allowed to record a class session in any form.

Will there be a formal school-wide policy regarding the scheduling of breaks in remote classes, and standards for zoom etiquette and behavior (not cold-calling students who have cameras off)?

We have shared student concerns about issues such as the above with faculty, as well as other factors that have been stressors related to remote learning. We ask that students continue to let us know when there are specific issues with a course so they can be addressed directly.

Could there be the possibility to more casually audit classes both within the GSD and at other Harvard schools in the Spring since we don't have to worry about limitations of physical space? Is there a way to allow non-participatory zoom links to watch classes without having to negotiate with professors?

All auditing requests continue to require faculty approval. Students need to request that an instructor add them as a 'guest' to the Canvas course site in order to audit a course and gain access to the Zoom links.

Can we have access to all recorded lecture/seminar classes regardless if we are enrolled/officially auditing.

If you are officially enrolled in, or are auditing, a course, you would have access to all recorded lectures via Canvas. If you are not enrolled in or auditing a course, you will not have access unless the instructor decides to post lectures publicly.

Will the GSD be canceling the spring break?

No, the Academic Calendar will remain on schedule as it has been.

Could the GSD consider offering students alternative options to co-work, such as a stipend to rent a studio space that could be safely shared between several students? What is GSD doing to acknowledge the cost associated with retrofitting our homes to be an appropriate workspace?

Students who are facing hardships and are unable to establish an adequate work environment should contact [Keith Gnoza](#) with a specific request for financial aid.

Students are having a hard time accessing doctors through Harvard's Health Services for both mental health needs and COVID testing (which they aren't eligible for). What can the GSD do to help make health services more accessible?

[Mental health support and Covid-19 testing resources](#) to support students were sent out by Laura Snowdon, and a series of webinars titled *Self-Care in Uncertain Times* have been scheduled, which students may choose to attend. If a student is in the Cambridge area, there is a list of outside providers who are available to work with students. If students are outside the Cambridge area, please review the information on the pdf's included in the document. We continue to discuss options with CAMHS and are investigating other options.

How will the GSD improve the spring experience for students in vastly different time zones?

A team of staff, the ITF and members of the student forum have begun to look at different ways to schedule required courses and studios, while recognizing the impossibility of getting every required course into the multiple time zone "sweet spot." If you have ideas or specific examples (positive or negative experiences), please be sure to share them with your class reps so they can be considered.

Can the school work on having one calendar for all GSD events/talks/lectures with the embedded zoom link for next spring?

Details for events in the official public lecture series, including registration and zoom links, are linked to from the main [GSD Events](#) page. Direct links to the zoom registrations are embedded into the [fall 2020 events poster](#). Additionally, information and Zoom registration links for official GSD public programs as well as departmental events can be found on the "Community Calendar" Outlook calendar. If you don't have Outlook, you can import the calendar into Google.

How will the school continue to offer exciting studio professors from abroad?

Spring course listings are still being finalized and will include additional visiting faculty.

Is there any clarification on commencement for both '20 and '21 years?

Decisions regarding commencement will be coordinated centrally with Harvard College and other Harvard graduate schools. There are no updates at this time, and information will be shared when it becomes available.

Will additional town halls be scheduled to address remaining and new questions that arise?

Yes, additional town halls will be scheduled. We apologize that the meeting last week could not be extended due to prior commitments, but we look forward to future meetings and will try to schedule them for longer blocks of time.

Student Dialogue questions

Is there a place to provide student input rather than just going through student reps and other hierarchies?

Student Forum and class representatives are the best way to provide feedback and ensure that it is being received by those who can act on it. The Dean will also be offering office hours once a week, for which you will receive more information soon. If for any justified reason, using the established channels of communications is an issue, you can always go directly to your department, or the Dean of Students, Laura Snowdon. Laura can be contacted at deanofstudents@gsd.harvard.edu. We are committed to creating more open dialogue and conversations.

Where does the repository of student ideas and suggestions get collected and how can this be made available to students for feedback?

We encourage students to work with their class reps regarding ongoing feedback. Ideas and suggestions go to different places depending on whether they are specific to your department or program, to the ITF, a student activity, class experience, etc. School-wide information continues to be updated on the [FAQs page](#).

Is there a chance to give mid-semester feedback about which courses are not accommodating students?

Feedback of this nature is welcome at any time, not just mid-semester. To ensure anonymity, we encourage you to reach out to Laura Snowdon directly.

When can students provide feedback on course structure, faculty, and the changes ITF made?

Students should continue to provide feedback through their class representatives.

It is clear that questions and ideas are widely duplicated across students/disciplines but access to information is disaggregated. It seems that collating these into a single location (miro board/google document on Covid website for instance) where admin/students can access equally, rather than decisions shared in dispersed email chains would be beneficial for both clear response, transparency, and reference. Is this something that the administration can generate and share with students to implement more open lines of communication?

We appreciate these suggestions – even prior to the pandemic, communication across the GSD posed a challenge. We are developing a website which will be called, “GSD Now,” and which will provide a comprehensive overview of activities happening across the school at any given time—public programs, classes, student group events, department events, etc.—and which we hope will allow both students and faculty to be able to share work with the school’s community. Additionally, we are implementing weekly open office hours with the dean and we are hoping to schedule more frequent town halls. Thank you.

While I appreciate the desire expressed by the Dean and administration at large to listen to and collect student thoughts, ideas, and opinions on the decisions regarding the operation of the School, it seems that there is a lack of implementation of these ideas or an integration of them into the planning process. The student survey regarding the Spring reopening (or lack thereof) was closed mere days before the final decision was made public, making the impression that our feedback and opinions played a minimal role, if any, in the decision to remain virtual in the spring. If these opinions had very little influence on the actual decision of keeping the school physically closed, which, as the Dean said, was due primarily to space-planning constraints, health concerns, and Harvard's legal council, our feedback as students, then, should be important regarding how the deficiencies resulting from an online education should be ameliorated.

The student survey was indeed taken into account, as were conversations with faculty and staff, as well as conversations across Harvard, particularly regarding health and safety measures. It is very important for all of us to pause and consider that we are in a worldwide pandemic, that rates are rising across the U.S. and Europe, that cities and schools around us are tightening, not loosening their COVID restrictions.

We have now been virtual for the combined length of a full semester and a total of over seven months. During this time, there has been little clear and direct action to address the very real needs of students beyond academic concerns of zoom lectures and a limited number of digital tools for the library and studios. Can the administration please set forth a clear "areas of concern" which they want to address, based on student feedback, and propose solutions to said concerns? If you continue to ask us about everything and anything, there can be no structure to the response- it ends up being a confusing mass of issues. We need clearly defined areas of actions: digital learning tools, time zone differences, grading, protocols for faculty-student engagement, financial assistance, fabrication resources, spatial concerns, mental health, international student concerns, etc. Initiatives, FAQ pages, and info regarding these areas need to be centralized, perhaps on a website similar to the fablab site, so information is standardized and easily accessible. Feedback mechanisms should also be incorporated. This, I believe, will allow students to give specific critique and raise specific needs that can be addressed more effectively under a set framework of action. Right now, it feels as though all concerns are being launched into a single digital void rather than targeted issues. Again, while I appreciate the desire of the Dean and administration to integrate student ideas, the current structure for doing so is too nebulous and has led to much frustration. It is my hope that we can address these issues as an entire community, with respect, civility, and grace towards one another. I believe that by setting forth specific domains of action, the administration and students can find more clarity in how to address the myriad problems facing the school.

Thank you for recognizing the challenges at play. Please see above – we are working to improve communication and we hope that "GSD Now" will help provide exactly what you're calling for. As you rightfully note, there are many different foci of concern, which necessarily happens when you have 17 different programs and 860 students with very different considerations and issues. Program-specific questions should be addressed to program directors and coordinators.

How can we learn more about the work undertaken by the Innovation Task Force (ITF), and how can we provide feedback?

We have received a lot of questions about the ITF and the work they are undertaking. The ITF has initiated a weekly newsletter which will be used to address specific questions they receive. These newsletters will summarize the scope of their activities and give examples of their work by pointing readers to resources on an ongoing, weekly basis. Feel free to send specific questions and suggestions to itf@gsd.harvard.edu, and take a look at the [guidebook](#) they've started.

International Student questions

Can international students enter the country this spring semester?

Per current law, new international students, international students who returned this fall from a leave, and international students returning this spring from a leave cannot study in the United States.

All other international students who were enrolled last spring, and this fall, assuming they have valid travel visas and current travel signatures on their I-20s/DS-2019s, can return to the US to study if they want to. They can also continue to study outside of the US.

[What is the] rationale for not offering any hybrid option to international students, so they are able to study in North America time zones and work? Specifically, what scenarios and institutional considerations (e.g. cost of making Gund Hall safer for some uses) were considered? Further, what attempts to address these shortcomings were made?

Please see above, in General questions.

Are international students allowed to study from-outside the U.S. during the last year/semester and get the degree? Knowing that international are NOT allowed to work under F-1 without CPT in the US, I wonder if international students are allowed to work in their home country for local employers under F-1?

Yes, international students who were not on leave last spring or this fall can study outside of the U.S., complete their degree requirements, and receive their degree. The US government has no say in whether you work for non-US employer.

[Has] the administration considered a ghosted hybrid semester? In other words, a "virtual" hybrid semester that would allow international students to be in Cambridge if OPT is a concern?

By government policy, students can only take one course online in a hybrid model. Schools have the obligation to inform Student and Exchange Visitor Program, an ICE agency which oversees the F-1 visa, as well as the Department of State, which oversees the J-1 visa, of any change in the teaching mode.

Are international students allowed to study abroad (outside the US) and get the diploma if they're graduating in May 2021?

Yes.

What's the reason for not having an "invented" seminar like many other universities to allow international students in difficult situations to enter the border?

As previously noted, students would need to be enrolled in at least 3 classes with significant in person component.

How hard is it to open 1 class for internationals so they can be physically closer to school, their peers, and opportunities? [Could there be] a proper survey asking internationals what they would prefer (the community affected most severely by these decisions, a community which has almost faced deportation)?

The GSD would need to offer three classes, like the Harvard Kennedy School is doing. There are no three classes that would meet the needs of our students across all degree programs and concentrations.

For second year MDes students graduating in May, does class online in Spring affect their ability to apply for OPT?

Assuming they were not on leave last spring or this fall, no, being online this spring will not compromise their ability to apply for OPT. However, students will need to be in the U.S. with F-1 status when they apply for OPT.

It's the last year of my master's degree. Can I study abroad (outside the US) to accomplish the online study and get the degree? What are things that I need to pay attention to regarding visa, status, etc.? I'm currently in the US, but I'm considering going back to my country.

Yes, according to the current guidance, you could study outside of the United States in the spring and still maintain your F-1 student status. With that in mind, you would be eligible to apply for OPT, but it is important to note that you must be physically in the United States when you apply for OPT. As a May graduate, the earliest you could apply for OPT is mid-February. We will be hosting an OPT workshop with Ivana regarding the OPT application process, likely in mid to late December. You can find information about the process here: <https://www.hio.harvard.edu/optional-practical-training-opt> Note that if you depart the US prior to applying for OPT, and then make plans to return in order to apply, you must be sure that your F-1 visa is valid, and that you have a current travel signature on your I-20.

Knowing that F-1 students are not allowed to work without CPT during study in the US, I wonder if F-1 students are able to work for a local employer in their home country.

Yes, if you are not in the United States, and the company is not a US one, the US government has no authority in your ability to work for a company in your home country.

If I depart the US and come back right before the commencement, would I face the situation of being rejected entry because the I-20 ends right after the graduation?

As per current regulations, you can return to the US as an F-1 all through Commencement. Given the COVID situation and the lack of flights and the unknowns regarding travel bans, however, it is advised that you do not plan to come right before Commencement, as the flights may be cancelled.

If I successfully come back to the US before the graduation, can I apply for H-1B during my two-month grace period after graduation? I had H-1B but transferred to F-1 for the school.

This scenario is one that you will need to discuss with the attorney who will be filing your H-1B for the future employment. I presume that your previous H-1B was for a cap employer, as that is important, given that most likely the H-1B cap cases will be exhausted by then.

What are the on-campus job opportunities for International Students? Will TA/RA positions be made available?

Faculty will continue to hire students who are legally eligible to work remotely to serve as TAs, RAs, etc., All students—incoming and returning students, domestic and international—who are in the United States and are legally authorized to work in the US may be hired as GSD student employees through December 31, 2020. Additionally, students residing internationally who have a valid I9 on file with the GSD from a previous job, including jobs during summer 2020, are eligible to work. Returning and incoming students who are not in the US and do not already have a valid I-9 on file from a previous Harvard job are not eligible to work. Additional information pertaining to fall 2020 student employment eligibility is available on the [GSD TA/RA info page](#). Spring 2021 information will be added as soon as it becomes available.

Currently, international students residing outside the US cannot work as TA or RA (which is an essential part of academic life for most of us). Is the administration thinking of ways to address this specific situation concerning the Spring semester? . . . If international payment is the issue preventing this from happening, couldn't perhaps the payment be credited in our student e-bill until we get to the US?

Decisions regarding employment of internationally-based students are not GSD decisions; they are related to larger University issues of compliance with tax and labor laws. The University is looking into these questions more thoroughly and we will pass along guidance when it is available.

Leave of Absence / Flexibility with degree programs questions

Can lecture/workshop-based electives be taken next semester instead of a studio option? Can we rethink the approach to the semester? Students would like to be given the option of not taking up a studio and complete electives instead. Can there be flexibility in the credits one has to take? Few courses that are theory based and fall within the required courses to be completed would be easier done on virtual. (Pay per credit system and complete studio once conditions are better).

The logistics of changing sequence are complex. Programs Directors and Chairs are currently discussing options specific to their programs, and hope to be able to update their students before the end of this week.

Based on the results from the student survey, substantial number of people might be taking a LOA. A lottery spread over two years can significantly upend future plans for many. Given the exceptional scenario, can the lottery policies be amended to prioritize its current students over the next year intake?

At this point, we still hope not to have to resort to a LOA lottery. Once we have a better understanding of how many students plan to take a LOA, we'll have a better sense of how to handle the returns. Ideally, we would not need to impact future cohorts and applicants' ability to begin their studies.

For LOA, if too many students apply, there will be a lottery to stagger the return of students. When students get the lottery results, will they be allowed to reconsider their decision to take a LOA?

If a leave petition is approved, a student can request to rescind the petition no later than two weeks after the announcement regarding the results of a return lottery, if one is needed. All requests will be considered shortly

after that date and granted based on the number of students asking to cancel their planned LOA and the impact on the program(s). Thus the ability to rescind cannot be guaranteed.

At this point, we still hope not to have to resort to a LOA lottery. Once we have a better understanding of how many students plan to take a LOA, we'll have a better sense of how to handle the returns.

Can you elaborate on the workings of a semester long LoA? Are we allowed to do a LoA for only one semester? Or is the school mandating a full year or full two-year LoA? How does one progress with the remainder of the course?

The length of your LOA may depend on **a)** where you are in the core studio sequence, OR, **b)** if you are entering into your final semester and have requirements to meet during your spring term. If you are in either of these situations you would need to take a full year LOA in order to resume or complete your program next spring, when those courses are offered.

Are all Leave of Absence requests for the spring being granted? In other words, are there specific conditions by which a request might not be granted?

Yes - all requests are being granted.

What numbers of Leave of Absence requests from specific programs trigger a lottery to determine 1-year and 2-year absences?

Because course enrollment is only program-specific for core courses, leaves affect enrollments across the entire school, not just specific programs. As such, the number of leaves in any single program would not result in the need for a lottery, necessarily, but rather across all programs.

If some students are granted 2-year Leaves of Absence, and other students rescind their leaves, would those 2-year leaves be changed into 1-year leaves?

It seems likely, but we would still have to look at where we stand with the overall numbers before we could make that assessment.

On LoA/ Part-time proposal: So many of us are planning to take a LoA since the school has not made any strides towards making sustainable adjustments to learning in Covid times. Rather than figuring out how to live with Covid, the school's approach feels like a temporary solution that will affect most of our time here. Those who had not initially considered LoA are now panicked as we consider how sparse our course offerings may be for the partial-student semesters.

Many of us would like to pursue a part-time course load while others take LoA in order to extend our time at the GSD, minimize the negative effects of having less course offerings, and reduce overcrowding upon LoA returns. During part-time semesters we would be able to work, take our ARE exams (which would reflect well on the school to have more licensed Architects), or focus on personal professional endeavors.

The GSD doesn't offer part-time enrollment. Another issue is that our current international students, those who were enrolled in Spring 2020, would not be able to go part-time. Doing so, they would lose their OPT or CPT eligibility, and if they are in the US, they would need to depart.

Tuition / Financial Aid questions

Is tuition reduced for Spring? How can the GSD justify charging full tuition for an academic year that has been entirely online? Is there any objective metrics to prove or assert that the online experience is comparable in value to the in-person experience? Is there any promise for future semesters to be in-person?

There will be no change in tuition, as is true across the university. Students dealing with financial hardship should contact Financial Aid to see if increased funding is warranted and available.

Will the GSD consider freezing tuition hikes while we are virtual?

The dean has advocated a tuition freeze with the upper administration.

Can the GSD make the budget publicly available? If nothing else, this gives students into the insights into how hard it is to balance a budget.

The Associate Dean for Operations and Finance gave an overview of the school's finances during the last SAAC meeting. The GSD receives approximately a 5% payout on its endowment each year, which covers a third of operating expenses.

An increase in the payout would result in endowment declines and reduced distributions in the future. This year, we face additional pressures from the COVID crisis. Some examples are lower enrollment which results in lower revenue, more financial aid necessary, challenging fundraising, less executive education revenue and lower levels of sponsored research funding.

We considered many options and decided it would be most fair, and in line with our values, to offer increased financial assistance where it was most needed. Making tuition reductions across the board would reduce our ability to assist those with the most need.

Many questions came in regarding the university endowment, the GSD access to it, and, more generally, of how the endowment works. This following link: <https://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/harvard-glance/endowment> provides some perspective on how endowments work. The GSD endowment represents approximately 1% of the Harvard endowment.

[Can you] please discuss where the option studio travel funds went, what you can do to advocate for lower tuition, and why we were denied money for workspace updates so that we could work from home, etc.

Option studio travel is typically funded on an annual basis by donors who wish to support specific studio or research efforts. As there are no traveling studios this year, the GSD did not receive any funding to support this. Endowed funds are also used to cover studio travel, and these funds can only be re-allocated for specific uses based on the specific terms of the gift, such as salaries for visiting faculty. As always, Students who are facing hardships and are unable to establish an adequate work environment should contact Keith Gnoza with a specific request for financial aid.

Would it be possible for the student body to vote on issues like allocating funds/support to students?

GSD Leadership consults with student forum on many issues, but financial aid depends on specific and individual financial information that each student confidentially provides to the School, and is not decided upon in a public forum.

Can the emergency funds be more clearly described to students?

Detailed information related to Emergency Assistance, Summer Work, and Research Grants is available at the following page: <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/2020-summer-work-and-grant-opportunities/>

Is financial aid guaranteed if we take a LoA?

Every spring student applies for financial aid for the following year. If a student's financial status remains the same, financial aid typically remains the same. So, if you take an LOA you would still be eligible for financial aid upon your return, but the award will not carry forward. You would need to apply again when you intend to return.

Will Summer Research grants be available during summer 2021?

Summer Research grants were provided during the summer of 2020 and were funded by an urgent call to donors, alumni, staff and community members. Those funds were matched with GSD funds. Nearly \$800,000 in grants were awarded last summer. The fund provided financial relief for students facing hardship due to the COVID-19 outbreak. If you're continuing to face hardships due to COVID-19, please reach out to [Keith Gnoza](#) to discuss your situation.

[Note: Information about 2020 Summer Research Grants is published online on the page titled, "[Emergency Assistance and 2020 Summer Work and Grant Opportunities](#)", and we've just added clarifying text to this page as well.

Will a round of relief aid go out to students for this Spring semester? Is there any possibility for increased financial aid or other funding for the spring semester, including funding for technology assistance?

As always, if you are seeking support resulting from an unexpected emergency causing financial hardship, please reach out to [Keith Gnoza](#), Director of Financial Assistance.

Option Studios

How are the instructors, particularly studio critics, being consulted and advised with respect to student expectations? [Regarding the considerations that] a number of critics require physical models, for example, or consider the fact that we are learning/working from home to mean that we have more time to do more work in an already intensive program.

All instructors have been advised regarding expectations, including the issue of models.

If module studios were to continue, will there be more consideration to the scale of a 7-week project, in addition to healthy work expectations?

Yes, constructive student feedback on the module system was taken to the Chairs, who met with all module instructors for fall and spring—thank you for helping to improve this new system.

What is the benefit of modules?

One benefit is enabling students to take more studios with more instructors, thereby gaining more exposure to multiple disciplines and points of view; an additional benefit is focusing on a more specific question than a typical full semester studio might do.

What was the reasoning for the 50/50 split of modules/full semester studios? Are there plans to adjust the ratio of module studios to full semester studios next semester? Will this be adjusted in the future if modules remain an unpopular choice?

We propose holding judgment on the modules until they have run longer; as noted above, valuable feedback has been incorporated.

Would you be concerned about a student who took (or was forced into) modules both option studio semesters? Would this student be ready to transition back into a full semester (or even yearlong) self-driven thesis investigation?

If a student does not want to enroll in modules, they should not select modules during the lottery.

Could the module gap happen over a weekend next semester, so students have a short breather between modules rather than jumping into the next one the day after their final review?

The spring module schedule is still being finalized. We will do our best to ensure there's a breather between modules, and will share the draft schedule with student forum before it is finalized.