

An Invitation to Explore

Introduction to Exploration and Advising

The Office of Academic Advising (OAA) has prepared this handbook to help freshmen examine the rich possibilities of a Johns Hopkins education. We believe in the power of a liberal education to give you flexible skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of the world.

So begin your Hopkins education with a commitment to wander. Enjoy the wide range of disciplines and course work open to you now and in the four years ahead. You will never get another chance to explore so widely or so deeply. So enjoy the feast before you by sampling and savoring each offering.

- Try unusual courses.
- Talk to faculty.
- Participate in co-curricular activities.
- Work as an intern.
- Try your hand at research.
- Consider traveling abroad.

Don't worry about making mistakes or disliking a class or switching majors. That's part of the process. And if you keep an open mind, you will find an academic home.

Majors and Careers

Most freshmen already have a plan for life after college.

"I want to major in economics, go to law school, and open an anti-trust practice."

"I plan on a residency at Mass General with a specialty in orthopedics after majoring in biophysics."

Goals are important, but you shouldn't be so quick to limit yourself. You are here at Hopkins to savor the next four years, not simply to check them off as one more completed step toward your career. Many students select a career based on a desire to help people, but without realizing that the courses leading to that career hold little allure to them.

The problem often begins with choosing an academic major for preprofessional reasons. A major is not a commitment to follow a specific career path, nor should it define who you are. The expe-

riences of Hopkins alumni prove that majors are poor predictors of careers. Alumni work in hundreds of professions: journalism, education, finance, marketing, public service, real estate, research. Some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, like Michael Bloomberg '64, are Hopkins alumni. They will tell you that they could not anticipate their careers.

Many entering freshmen have been so focused on the process of getting into college that they haven't really considered what they want to study when they get there. Ask your parents and other adults you respect. Did they predict their future at age 18? Did they follow the plan they developed in college? Did their major determine their future? Probably not. Your dreams should inspire you to do well, not imprison you.

Any major will open your future, not narrow your choices. Your career may have its genesis in a class outside your major or while traveling abroad. A research project or a summer internship might inspire you. More likely, you won't decide on a career until after you graduate, and even then it will change. In the meantime, look for a discipline that you enjoy, rather than one with obvious professional ramifications. And build flexible skills, such as good writing, on which you can build a future as yet undefined.

Advising at Johns Hopkins

For perhaps the first time in your life, you have primary responsibility for your education. That freedom, coupled with an invitation to explore, can be a bit overwhelming. You do not have to negotiate this open terrain alone. Johns Hopkins has an academic advising system to help you, composed of academic advisers, open advisers, preprofessional advisers, and faculty advisers.

• Academic Advisers

All freshmen in Arts and Sciences get academic advice from the professionals in the Office of Academic Advising (OAA). You can speak to our advisers about issues like:

- choosing a major
- picking courses
- managing your workload
- getting academic help
- adjusting to college life

These advisers can work closely with you this summer and will continue to be your principal source for advice all year. Initially, you will be assigned an adviser, but you are free to change advisers or see several. You must see an OAA adviser in October to pre-register for spring classes, then again in March to pre-register for next fall's classes. After freshman year, you are welcome to visit us anytime.

- **Open Advisers**

Each discipline has faculty who serve as “open advisers.” Anyone, including freshmen, may meet with these advisers to talk about course offerings, the major and the minor, research opportunities, or other general questions about the discipline.

- **Preprofessional Advisers**

Freshmen are encouraged to participate in pre-professional advising activities, including the initial meeting in September and events throughout their first year. In addition, freshmen are encouraged to meet with the advisers and utilize the resources in the Preprofessional Advising Office.

- **Faculty Advisers**

At the end of your freshman year, you will be assigned a faculty adviser based on your interest in a major. For the rest of your time at Hopkins, faculty advisers will help you navigate the major by suggesting courses, explaining requirements, and discussing opportunities for research and scholarships.

We urge you to take full advantage of all the advisers in this system. No one has a monopoly on wisdom. You may have to meet with many advisers of all kinds before you find one or two whose counsel makes sense to you.

As a freshman, you can turn to OAA first and often for advice, but the open advising system encourages you to talk to faculty members in any discipline you find interesting. Talk to as many of them as you like. That is part of the exploration process.



Some Advice on How to Get Started

Time for the nitty gritty—you have to make choices about courses before setting foot on campus. We realize this, so we've gathered some pointers you may find useful as you choose your first courses and negotiate your first year at Homewood:

Relax

You do not have to meet every requirement, decide on a major, and map out your life right now. So take a deep breath. You'll be fine.

Experiment

Most freshmen take five classes their first term. Sure, get some requirements taken care of, but also pick something new and intriguing. Try a seminar designed for freshmen. Some 300-level courses welcome freshmen—be sure there are no prerequisites (send an e-mail to the professor when in doubt), and don't take more than one at a time.

Shop Around

Don't assume you know which major is best for you. Many students head for the most well-known majors—Biology, Political Science, International Studies, and Economics—then find they connect better with a discipline that's new to them. Smaller departments like Sociology, Classics, Romance Languages, Earth and Planetary Sciences, and Cognitive Science can give you more attention in class and in person. So look around.

Develop All of You

If your goal is to get a great job or get into graduate school, then you must do more than get an impressive GPA during your years at Hopkins. Volunteer. Get work experience. Check out research and internship opportunities. Involve yourself in student life. Leave Hopkins as a well-rounded grown-up.

Expect to Work Hard

This will be the hardest job you'll ever love. Students always underestimate the time commitment they must make to their studies. There are no easy courses at Hopkins. So build a schedule that mixes courses with varying time commitments and types of assignments.

If You Are Struggling or Worried, We Can Help

Faculty and teaching assistants want you to succeed in their classes, so turn to them first. Some departments have help desks. The Counseling Center can help you deal with adjustment and anxiety. OAA can help you manage your course load and with programs such as the drop-in tutoring and study mentors. We want every student to do well, but you have to tell us if you need help.

Do Not Treat "Covered" Grades as a Free Pass

Hopkins has an unusual policy of "covering" first semester freshman grades. Students earn a letter grade and then this grade is covered with a "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" mark. The theory here is that this is your chance to show

yourself that you can handle the independence you've been pushing for these last few years. But don't blow this opportunity—uncovered letter grades are used by Hopkins to determine academic standing, eligibility for scholarships, and other purposes. So poor grades in the first semester can lead to academic probation or suspension of a scholarship. You may apply for programs later that want grades uncovered. Most important, bad study habits and lousy comprehension will make it difficult to succeed later.

Be Prepared to Be Surprised

Your freshman year will be very different than you expect. You may dislike classes you liked in high school—or you might like ones you hated. You may discover activities and subjects that you didn't know existed. You will share a bathroom. You will meet people from all over the world. In short, it will be a fabulous, disruptive shock. See the opportunity in this disruption to experiment and to grow. And when in doubt, come in to see us. We can help.

Last of All—Read This Handbook!

We've designed this handbook to provide you with the basic information you will likely need not only to select your first-semester classes, but also to understand the many options and expectations ahead. We've anticipated your questions and you should be able to find answers here. In case we have forgotten something or you just want guidance, you are welcome to contact us this summer (see section on Summer Advising Guidelines).