REU Applicants
Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility and Selection Process

How do I find which research projects are being offered this year?
Our program is quite large (approximately 50 students funded from a variety of sources), so we do not have a listing of research projects available prior to the program. Applicants may find it useful to refer to past student projects at www.eduprograms.seas.harvard.edu/reu.htm, and to look at the research of individual faculty associated with each funding source to find areas of interest.

I am NOT a Citizen or Permanent Resident of the United States. Am I eligible?
Most of our funding for the program is provided by the National Science Foundation, which has the restriction that participants must be Citizens or Permanent Residents of the United States. The Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering and the Rowland Institute at Harvard do not carry that restriction. If you are an international student, you may find this link on obtaining the appropriate visa useful: http://www.hio.harvard.edu/immigration/obtainingavisa/. Please note that if you are not already in the United States on an F-1 visa, the process for obtaining a visa can take as long as 2-6 months.

I am a graduating senior. Am I eligible?
Unfortunately, no. We suggest you contact individual faculty to see if they have any opportunities for graduating seniors.

I have my own funding. Can I participate in the REU activities and housing?
If you have made arrangements with a faculty member to work in his/her lab during the REU program, and have your own funding, you are welcome to participate in our activities. However, you might find less expensive housing options using Craig’s list or other online searches.

I have been in contact with a faculty member or researcher at Harvard, and would like to apply for REU funding to sponsor my research this summer.
Faculty or researchers must be associated with one of our funding sources. Among research groups that are associated with the various funding sources, we have more faculty who are interested in hosting students than we have capacity each year – therefore, all official offers for the REU are made through the Office of Educational Programs. If a faculty member or researcher tells you that he or she will host you in his or her research lab, it is not a guarantee of REU funding.

I really want to get an internship at Harvard. How can I increase my chances?
First, complete and submit your application. Ask people who know you well to write letters in support of your application. Second, apply to other programs at Harvard. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences has compiled a list of all summer intern programs based at Harvard, at http://gsas.harvard.edu/hils/summerinternships.html.
I am a Harvard student. Am I eligible for REU funding?

Much of our funding is from the National Science Foundation (NSF), which in many cases strongly encourages grant recipients to reserve the majority of NSF-funded REU spots for students coming from outside the home institution. This approach gives students the opportunity to experience research environments at different universities. We encourage you to explore these opportunities external to Harvard for yourself, particularly if you are interested in graduate school. If you would like to stay at Harvard for the summer, we **strongly** encourage you to apply for sources of funding and support that are sponsored by Harvard in addition to applying for REU funding. We have had many students sponsored by HCRP or other Harvard funds participate in our REU activities. Please see these links for potential funding sources for your summer research:

- Program for Research in Science and Engineering (PRISE) – [http://prise.harvard.edu](http://prise.harvard.edu) - see also this helpful link for funding for summer research: [http://priselink.harvard.edu/funding_your_summer_research.html](http://priselink.harvard.edu/funding_your_summer_research.html).
- Faculty Aide (matches faculty funds, submitted by faculty).

Please note that the REU has many program elements and weekly meetings – if you are selected for and accept REU funding, you are committing to be a part of our SEAS REU community and participate in these activities. Therefore, if you receive a PRISE award, we do not award REU funding, since both programs have substantial commitments outside of research.

Do I need to have my references submit the waiver form?

Depending on what your references write, their letters can be classified as educational records, and may be subject to access privileges as described in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html)). Therefore, we do need to know that your references are aware of whether or not you waive your right to see the letter, as it may influence what they write in the letter. You can have them fill out the form and send it in with their letter, or you can send an email to me and both of your references that includes the following text:

> I am applying for the joint REU programs of the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for me. I waive (or do not waive) any right of access I might have, as provided by law, to this letter of recommendation. Letters may be sent from the reference writer to Dr. Kathryn Hollar by one of the following methods:

- Email to [reu@seas.harvard.edu](mailto:reu@seas.harvard.edu)
- Fax to 617-812-0760
- US Mail or Fedex to:
  
  Kathryn Hollar  
  Director of Educational Programs  
  Harvard School of Engineering & Applied Sciences  
  29 Oxford Street  
  Cambridge, MA 02138
Have my application materials been received?

Please log in to your application to check arrival of supporting letters and your transcript before emailing or calling. If a letter or transcript has been received, your application shows “Received” to the right of the name or item. Supporting documents are scanned and uploaded by the end of each day. While we try to respond to all inquiries regarding receipt of materials, we typically receive over 800 applications each year, so it is difficult to answer every request immediately. If you do not see an indication that application materials have been received, it may be because:

1. You have not entered your reference information into the online application. We cannot upload reference letters unless we have a name with which to match them.
2. There is a mismatch between the name of one or more of your references and the letters we have received (for example, we received a letter from Professor Smith, and you had originally entered Professor Jones). Please either change the name in your application or email us with the name substitution.
3. The letter or transcript has not yet been uploaded. We try to upload materials they day after they are received.
4. We have not yet received the supporting document.

Please note that you are responsible for requesting that letters and transcripts be sent via one of the methods above. Our application website does not automatically send a request for supporting documents to references.

How does the selection process work?

Some programs use a committee to select the students who will be in the program, and then match the students either in the spring, or at the program start. Our program’s process is a little different. Once our applications have closed on February 28, and all materials are loaded up (we scan in letters and transcripts, which takes about a week), we open our application database to faculty who are interested in working with a student during the summer. As soon as a student is selected, an offer with a short project description is made to the student, and the mentor(s) are copied on the email. Students are given 1-2 weeks to respond. Once the student accepts the offer, we will send official paperwork. This process sometimes takes more time, especially for a program of our size. We try to notify students mid-April at the latest regarding their status in the program. If you have any questions during the selection window in March or April, please contact us and we will respond as soon as possible.

What are my chances of being accepted into the REU program?

Last year, we funded ~70 students out of a pool of 900 applicants. This year, we anticipate funding about the 50 students.

When will I know if I have been selected?

We begin making offers in the second week of March, and try to notify students mid-April at the latest regarding their status in the program. Offers are made as soon as research mentors send their selections to our office for review.
I have pending offers from other programs. Can I get an early decision?
We do not make offers until after the application deadline so that all applicants have an equal chance. If you have a pending offer, please email us and we will put a note on your application with the date on which you must notify the other program.
Program elements and expectations

What are the program dates? Are they flexible?
Our program dates are June 4 - August 11, and are set by housing availability. We will not have housing for students outside of these dates. For students on the trimester or quarter system, we have in the past had students start a few days late or take exams here at Harvard with a proctor. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the research group hosting the student.

What is the stipend for the program?
Our stipend is $4000 for the 10 week program, and is set by the amounts in each funding source.

Is housing provided?
Yes, interns will be housed on the Harvard campus, a 10-minute walk, or a short ride on public transportation, from most laboratories. Housing is provided free of charge.

What is the housing like/what amenities are provided with housing?
While we do not have full details at this point regarding which residence halls will be available this summer, the living situation will likely be a 2 or 3 room suite with a shared bathroom. Custodial staff will clean bathrooms every 2 weeks. Rooms are NOT air-conditioned.

Do you provide a meal plan?
We do not provide a meal plan, but students will have the option to purchase one. The laboratories and residence halls are very close to many inexpensive restaurants.

I would like to take a class during the summer.
Research and professional development activities associated with the REU will keep you busy. Summer courses are a significant time commitment. Therefore, we do not allow REU students to take classes during the program.