



THE UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL ON HARVARD TIME

Max Gillmer '21, Eliot House Representative and Education Committee Vice Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Peer Institutions.....	4
Student Input.....	5
Recommendations.....	6

INTRODUCTION

Harvard has traditionally employed the loose policy of scheduling where each class begins seven minutes after the scheduled time of a course period, known as Harvard Time. For example, if a course begins at 11:00 AM, class would not commence until 11:07 AM and adjourns at its scheduled time. The college continued to employ this policy because conventional wisdom says that when the College was smaller, students could walk from one building to any other building on campus within the seven-minute passing period. The seven-minute passing period was necessary to Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences classes as classes were scheduled back to back on the hour. Therefore, without this passing period, students would not be able to conceivably take back-to-back classes, which may dissuade students from enrolling in classes that may be scheduled directly after one another.

A committee on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences voted to abolish Harvard Time in April of 2018 alongside the motion to adopt the new Faculty of Arts and Sciences schedule. This schedule lengthens classes to 75 minutes and 165 minutes, creates fifteen-minute passing periods between classes, and stratifies classes on the Cambridge campus with classes on the Allston campus. This change in schedule increased the passing period to allow for students to reach classes with ample time; however, students still regard Harvard Time as a necessary component to their Harvard experience at the College.

PEER INSTITUTIONS

Currently, there are no policies similar to Harvard Time where classes begin later than their registered start time at Harvard's peer, Ivy institutions. However; University of California Berkeley employs a similar, official policy colloquially known as "Berkeley Time." Berkeley students praise Berkeley Time as their effective means to reach classes on time. Their method, dissimilar to Harvard, permits a ten-minute late-start time. Similar to Harvard, their campus has expanded and the distance between buildings surpasses the allotted ten-minute buffer due to hills as well. The ten-minute buffer also restricts disabled students from reaching their classes on time. The uncanny resemblance suggests that similar policies may exist at other institutions as well.

No similar policies are officially publicized at any other colleges or universities around the country; however, a lack of publicity on a policy such as this one does not prove that they do not exist. In Harvard's case, besides articles published on the Crimson and blog posts on sites such as the Harvard College Admissions website "Hear from Our Students" student blog, the University itself does not publicize how "Harvard Time" was a practiced policy. Naturally, as Harvard Time was an unofficial, technically unrecognized policy, information on Harvard Time would best be known and transmitted through word of mouth or more intimate modes of communication rather than official, University-published web posting.

Because Harvard has no official recognition of Harvard Time, the Harvard Undergraduate Council cannot assume that other institutions do not have a policy similar to Harvard Time based solely on the lack of any unofficial publicity on a late-start policy. Therefore, the determination of the presence of a peer institution's unrecognized policy similar to Harvard Time remains inconclusive rather than wholly absent.

STUDENT INPUT

This ballot measure to preserve the seven-minute passing period known as Harvard Time received 685 signatures to be approved for the general election ballot. This number of signatures, compounded with constituent report, reflects that the majority of undergraduate students are unhappy with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences vote to end Harvard Time. Students remain in favor of reinstating Harvard Time for a variety of reasons. One reason that students brought up the need to preserve Harvard Time is that now that the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has voted to end Harvard Time, other clubs and organizations have discontinued their use of this policy as well. As club and organization meetings are not built into the Faculty of Arts and Sciences schedule, there now remains no passing period in between meetings for different clubs. Most undergraduate students are involved in many extracurricular activities, and many meetings line up back to back. Without Harvard Time for these clubs, students are unable to arrive at their meetings on time.

Students and alumni also know Harvard Time to be a tradition at the University. Harvard culture is rich with its traditions with aspects from Convocation (despite it being a relatively young tradition) to Primal Scream to Housing Day. Harvard Time has been an appreciated part of Harvard life throughout the course of its life. Despite the fact that this policy on its own no longer provides students with an ample amount of time as a passing period as the area of the campus size has grown, it nonetheless remains as a tradition that students and alumni hold as integral to the Harvard experience.

Taking disabilities of students into consideration is also imperative. Disabled students may require even more than the fifteen-minute passing period as Harvard is generally inaccessible where accessible entrances are located in back doors and basements, requiring disabled students to cover a larger distance to travel than able-bodied students. Disabled students also face other difficulties that slow their travel time such as maneuvering through tourist groups. As Harvard is a major tourist destination and as the sidewalks in the Yard are often narrow in width, disabled students have difficulty passing these large, often slow walking tourist groups. An extra seven-minute buffer would allow disabled students a comfortable amount of time to travel between classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preserve the seven-minute passing period known as “Harvard Time.”