Program and Service Branding Principles

1. Overview

These are branding principles for all new Harvard IT programs and services, including new websites for existing services.

Programs

- Both CIO Council-sponsored Strategic Programs and HUIT Programs will go through the branding process to determine their program name and website URL.
- All programs will go through the process again for each new service created by the program. Following the conclusion of the program these services are maintained by a HUIT service area.

Services

- All HUIT service areas will go through this branding process prior to the public launch of any new service, service offering, application site, or informational site.

2. HUIT Branding Principles

Well-branded services and programs all share common characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program examples</th>
<th>Service examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User-focused</td>
<td>Canvas for Harvard takes advantage of a familiar brand, as few users know what an LMS is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short and clear</td>
<td>Harvard Key is succinct and its application easy to guess.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discoverable</td>
<td>my.harvard is both a name and a URL, making it easy to find on the web.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aligned and consistent</td>
<td>Harvard Directory, Harvard Phone, and similarly named services reinforce the message that HUIT services operate together to support the University.</td>
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Aided by these guidelines, the branding principles will help a program to choose one of the following three branding options:

1. Create a **new Harvard brand** to
1. Identify something uniquely provided by and for Harvard
   a. Create intuitive, consistent, and comfortable understanding of what's offered
   b. Draw distinction between services and tools

2. Use an **existing Harvard brand** to leverage something that works well and conveys meaning through its familiarity

3. Use a **vendor brand**
   a. When there is no visible and/or unique Harvard attribute
   b. Audience is familiar with the vendor product and it is common practice to refer to the vendor/product name

Following the completion of this process, services and programs will have the following deliverables:

- **Name of Program/Service:**
- **Name of Program/Service website URL:**

### 3. Brand Approval Process

**Programs**

- Program directors preparing to brand their program will initiate the process by contacting the **HUIT communication officer**, who will help them identify a brand that aligns with Harvard’s Trademark Policy, style guidelines, and other existing guidelines *(see Appendix A)*. Together they will answer a series of questions that determine which of three types of brands to choose *(see Appendix B)*.
- The preferred brand name will be reviewed by the **Harvard Trademark Program**, as appropriate.
- The preferred brand name will be recommended to the program’s **executive committee** for approval.
- Program directors will work with the **HUIT communication officer** on the creation of any program websites. Programs are encouraged to have standalone websites since they remain in a promotional phase throughout the lifetime of the program. These websites will go through a decommissioning process following the program’s conclusion *(See Section 4. Brand Decommissioning Process)*.
- The program director will go through the process again for any service or service website developed as a part of the program. Standalone service websites tend to be University-wide service applications or portals *(e.g., directory.harvard.edu, surveytools.harvard.edu)* and are not solely informational. Proposed service brands and websites will be reviewed by the **SLT’s Service Delivery subgroup** for alignment with HUIT’s service catalog.
● Service brands will be approved by the program's executive committee or other governance groups, as appropriate.

Services
● HUIT service areas developing new services or service websites will go through the same branding process as programs.
● Unlike programs, services are discouraged from creating websites outside of the HUIT service catalog to promote their services. New service websites are typically created for web-based applications or for service portals that bundle multiple services under a familiar URL. All service websites and applications will go through a decommissioning process following the service's conclusion (See Section 4. Brand Decommissioning Process).
● Following consultation with the HUIT communication officer and approval by the Harvard Trademark Program, as needed, proposed service brands and websites will be approved by the SLT's Service Delivery subgroup or other service area governance group, as appropriate.
● The UCIO and Deputy CIO must sign off on all new service names and websites.

4. Brand Decommissioning Process

Programs
● At a program's conclusion, program directors will notify all program stakeholders and remind them of any new services created as a part of the program, as appropriate.
● Program directors or their communication designees will conduct a digital audit of the program's entire online presence, including program websites, non-HUIT sites that promote the program (e.g., FAS site, School IT sites), and all search results for the program.
● All relevant files and resources related to the service will be provided to the HUIT service owner for use in the HUIT service catalog and other digital spaces.
● All sites linking to program sites and material will be instructed to redirect links to the relevant service content on the HUIT website or service website as appropriate.
● All sites promoting the program will be contacted and instructed about the conclusion of the program.
● All expired content will be deleted from the program website.
● An archive of public program materials will be provided to the managing director of the HUIT service area inheriting the program’s services.
● The program website's homepage will be changed to notify visitors that the program has concluded and point them to the HUIT service catalog where any new services created by the program are maintained. The website will be kept live for at least the remainder of the current academic year.
● Program managers will **report the program’s brand retirement** to the program’s executive committee, the HUIT SLT, and the CIO Council, as appropriate.

● Program managers or their communication designees will **notify the Harvard Trademark Program** that the brand has been retired.

Services

● When a service is retired or replaced, the service owner will **notify all service stakeholders** of the change and alert them to any replacement service.

● Service owners or their communication designees will conduct a **digital audit** of the retired service’s entire online presence, including the HUIT service catalog, the IT Service Management application, non-HUIT sites that promote the service, and all search results for the service.

● **All relevant files and resources** related to the retired service will be provided to the HUIT service owner of the replacement service. If there is no replacement service, materials will be provided to the HUIT ITSM team.

● **All sites linking to retired service** will be instructed to redirect links to the replacement service and their webmasters informed that the service has been retired.

● **All expired content** will be deleted from the service catalog.

● **An archive of service instructional materials** will be provided to the service owner of the replacement service.

● **The service catalog entry for the service and any service site** will changed to notify visitors that the service has been retired and point them to any replacement service. The page/site will be kept live for at least the remainder of the current academic year.

● Program managers will **report the service’s brand retirement** to the ITSM team, the HUIT SLT, and other governance committees, as appropriate.

● If needed, service owners or their communication designees will **notify the Harvard Trademark Program** that the service brand has been retired.
Appendix A — Resources

The HUIT service and program branding principles are grounded in the following Harvard policies and guidelines:

- [Harvard Trademark Program policies](#)
- [Harvard Public Affairs & Communications Style Guidelines](#)
- [HUIT Service Management guidelines](#)
- [PMO Project Standards](#)
Appendix B — Questions to ask when creating a program or service brand

New Brand

Use the following questions to guide your decision-making in creating a new HUIT brand:

**Is there a priority audience within the Harvard community for this service that should influence its brand identity?**

**Yes** The brand should not to conflict with or cause confusion with other services used by a priority audience. Consider what words your priority audience would use to describe the service to others or to find the service on a search engine.

*Example:* A course registration application may be used by both administrators and students, but should be named to maximize clarity and memorability for the students.

**No** If there is no priority audience for the service, the brand for a University-wide service should easily cross Harvard's tubs and make sense to all users.

*Example:* “Crimson” tends to be associated most with Harvard College. Using the letter “X” denotes an association with edX.

**Can the service be described in one or two words?**

**Yes** Simple, definitive service names ensure your brand is easily found, easily understood, and easily remembered. When possible, avoid using acronyms to describe the service or in the service application’s URL.


**No** Consider aligning with the vendor’s brand or using an existing Harvard brand before settling on a new Harvard brand.

*Example:* Harvard’s collaboration apps from Google and Microsoft would not be easily understood by the name “Harvard Collaboration.”
## Can the same name be used for the program/service provider and the service?

**Yes**  
A single name that can be used for both the service provider and the service can be very effective at maximizing clarity and discoverability.

**Example:** Cloud Services provides Harvard with cloud computing. Harvard Web Services builds Harvard websites.

**No**  
The service provider may offer multiple services and require a different name. If this is an issue, consider what you are actually promoting with a branding strategy. You should name websites and services with a user-focus and recognize that internal team names may not be as easily remembered by external audiences.

**Example:** HUIT’s IAM team manages the Harvard Directory and other services, meriting a name other than, say, Harvard Directory Services.

## Can the service brand parallel the name, look, and feel of other HUIT services, particularly similar services?

**Yes**  
Consistent names and design reinforce the overall HUIT brand.

**Example:** Harvard __ Services parallels Harvard Web Services and Harvard Cloud Services.

**No**  
Similar names may sometimes create clarity problems.

**Example:** Harvard Voicemail could have an easy parallel with Harvard Email, except that email clients are predicated by audience. Therefore, email services tend to have vendor brands.
Existing Brand

Use the following questions to guide your decision-making in maintaining an existing HUIT brand:

Is the existing brand associated with a specific School or unit within the University?

Yes  Popular IT services may be well-known in some quarters but unfamiliar elsewhere. Consider the service’s most critical audiences when expanding a service to the whole University. Could the service be dismissed as too School-specific, or conversely is it so entrenched and familiar in a given tub that it merits keeping the name as it expands to other Schools?

Example: my.harvard.edu, blogs.harvard.edu and blogs.law.harvard.edu

No  Even if a service’s name may not be School-specific, a given School or well-known Harvard group may already have a service with a similar name or purpose. Consider how a HUIT service’s brand is integrated into Schools that have previously provided a version of that service themselves.

Example: ; iam.harvard.edu and itooamharvard.tumblr.com

Is the existing brand well-established and well-regarded?

Yes  Consider retaining old service names and URLs if they will continue to effectively communicate to end users. The name should be free of association with a specific, dated, technology.

Example: my.harvard, HOLLIS+

No  Well established is not the same as well regarded. Even if a brand has a lengthy pedigree, consider rebranding if the old name was confusing or if it will be associated with outdated technology.

Example: harvie.harvard.edu → hr.harvard.edu; isites.harvard.edu → canvas.harvard.edu; icemail → Office365 for Harvard
Vendor Brand

Use the following questions to guide your decision-making in using a vendor brand for HUIT services:

Is the audience familiar with the vendor product and do peer institutions commonly refer to the product name in their description of similar services?

Yes  If using the name of a well-known brand would improve familiarity and user experience, then it may be an option.  
Example: Google Apps for Harvard

No  The vendor’s product name is generally unfamiliar in the marketplace, so it adds less clarity for a broad user base.  
Example: PeopleSoft

Could the use of the vendor’s trademark be perceived as an endorsement?

Yes  Whether in the look of the application or its URL, endorsements are strongly discouraged.  
Example: Promotional information a product site such as a “sign up for deals” link

No  Harvard Trademark can make a decision on whether there is the potential to see the vendor’s trademark as an endorsement.  
Example: canvas.harvard.edu

Is the vendor name future-proof and self-explanatory?

Yes  You have given consideration to what would happen if the vendor were to change the product name or go out of business.  
Example: Microsoft and Google services are unlikely to disappear in the lifespan of a HUIT service
No There is a reasonable chance that the URL or service is at risk of being compromised by a significant change at the vendor level.

**Example:** The service has undergone multiple name changes (Google social services) or the vendor is small and could be bought out or fail.

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**Does Harvard have the permission of the vendor to use its trademark?**

Yes Vendors must approve the use of their trademarks within Harvard products and services.

**Example:** The owners of Canvas, a proprietary LMS used at Harvard, granted permission for the University to use its name in the URL canvas.harvard.edu.

No If the vendor prohibits the use of their trademark, a different name must be used.

**Example:** Harvard IT may see value for the user in using a familiar brand in a service URL and on the application website, but the vendor may have its own policy that prohibits the use of its trademark on external URLs.

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**Is the content of the service public-facing or generally limited in its user group to the Harvard community?**

Yes Services and products that are password protected or largely intended for internal audiences may be more appropriate places to use vendor trademarks.

**Example:** Harvard’s Peoplesoft services can only be seen after logging in, which reduces the concern about external trademarks being closely associated with Harvard.

No If the site is publicly promoted outside Harvard, the relationship with an external vendor should not be promoted.

**Example:** Many Harvard video offerings are public, so the presentation of the relationship with any vendor should be
Does the proposed domain name or service name accurately represent the activity?

Yes  The service accurately expresses the relationship between Harvard and the vendor.  
Example: “Google for Harvard” explains this is a service provided to the University.

No  A reasonable person might misunderstand the relationship.  
Example: “Harvard Google” would be a name that inappropriately implies ownership or authority questions between the vendor and Harvard.

Would using a new or existing Harvard brand be an option?

Yes  Always consider using a non-vendor name first.  
Example: Instead of advertising a survey service as “Harvard Qualtrics” consider “Survey Tools for Harvard.”

No  Use of a vendor’s trademark should be a last resort, when it is the best option available for describing the service  
Example: Office 365 and Google Apps both provide so many features, a non-vendor brand would provide less clarity than a brand name that identifies the vendor.