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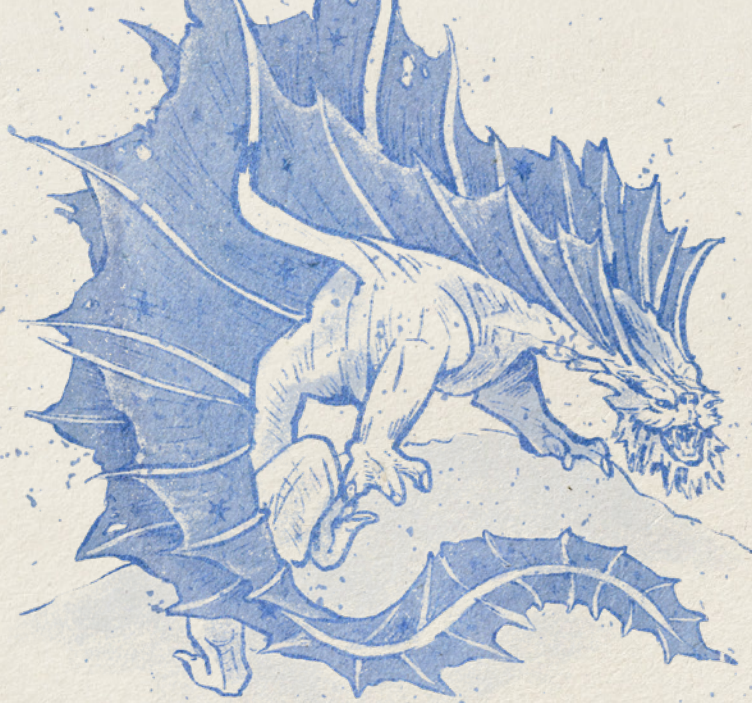


THE SCHOOL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

AT THE VERY EDGE of the world, north of the Vyndur Mountains and perilously close to the stars, where enchanted waters flow over salt flats and into the immeasurable abyss beyond, a school has stood for three thousand years. Elseridge Academy is the realm's premier institution for practitioners of each of the magical arts, a home both for beginners to hone their craft without endangering civilians and for experts to further the realm's understanding of high-level magic.

The history of Elseridge Academy is the very history of magic itself. Once a small outpost for studying the Old Magic, the academy gradually expanded to include facilities for newer and progressively complex schools of arcana. As innovators from across Hjass discovered revolutionary means of evoking magical effects, the school grew to encompass increasingly diverse modes of spellcasting. Now, the academy consists of six colleges:

- + The Old Magic
- + Druidry
- + Divinity
- + Cosmology
- + Alchemy
- + Translocation



One need not study at Elseridge to become an expert spellcaster. Still, many organizations, corporations, and governments across the realm will not work with individuals unless they have received a spellmark from one of Elseridge's colleges. An aspiring alchemist will find no work in the great cities of Tokaren without this priceless license, and militaries rarely trust pyromancers without the proper training. As such, studying at the academy is the single best way for a young mage to prepare for life as a professional spellcaster, whether as a freelance enchanter, a court mage, or a professor.

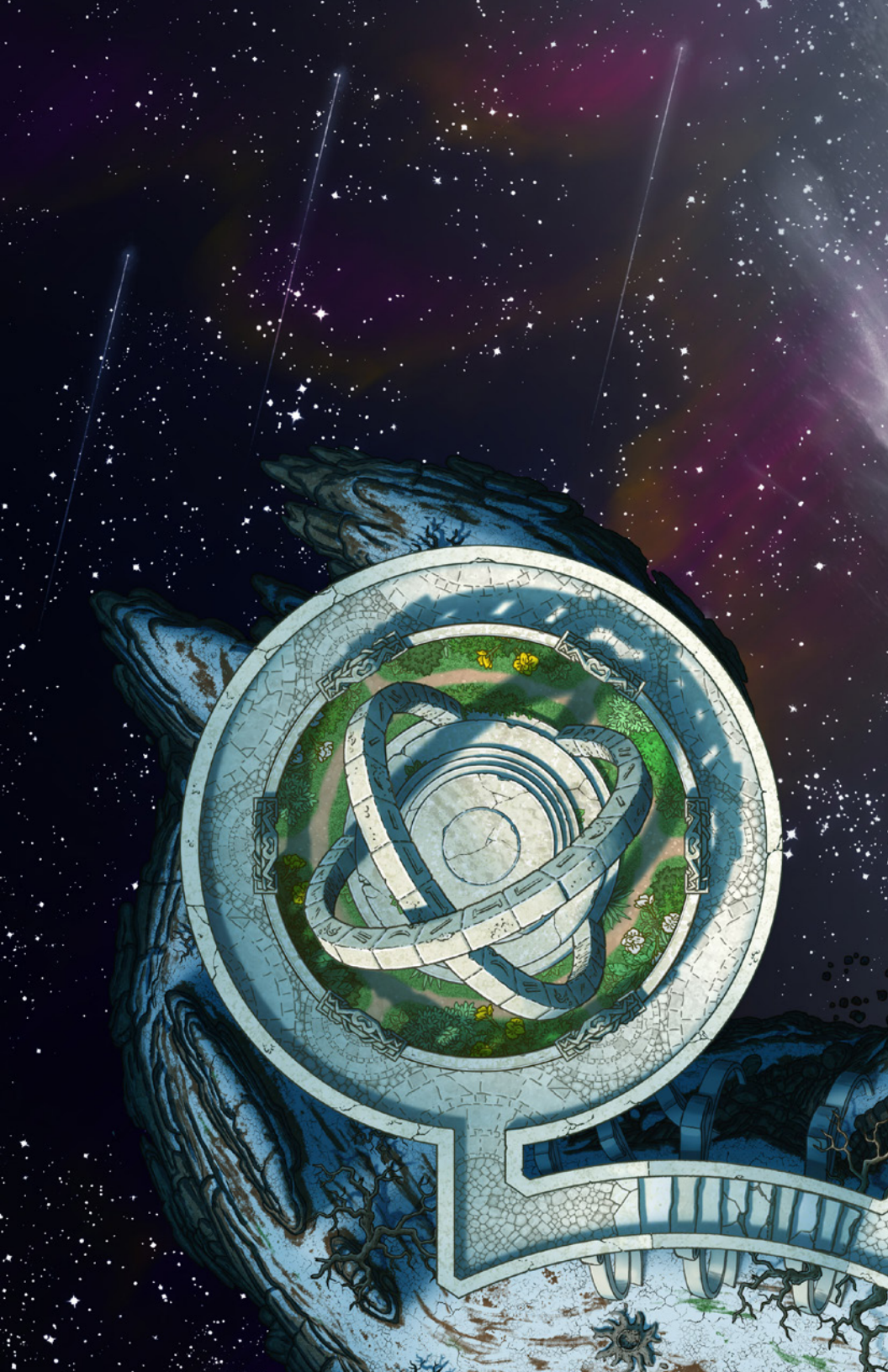
Life at Elseridge is complicated. Coursework is rigorous, extracurricular participation is compulsory, and the demands of social life can be more complex than even the most intricate spell. What's more, the academy holds valuable secrets that any self-respecting mage-in-training would be foolish to ignore. Villainous professors plot in open defiance of the institution's trust, and promising students may be tempted to join the wicked legions that linger in the shadows of the academy.

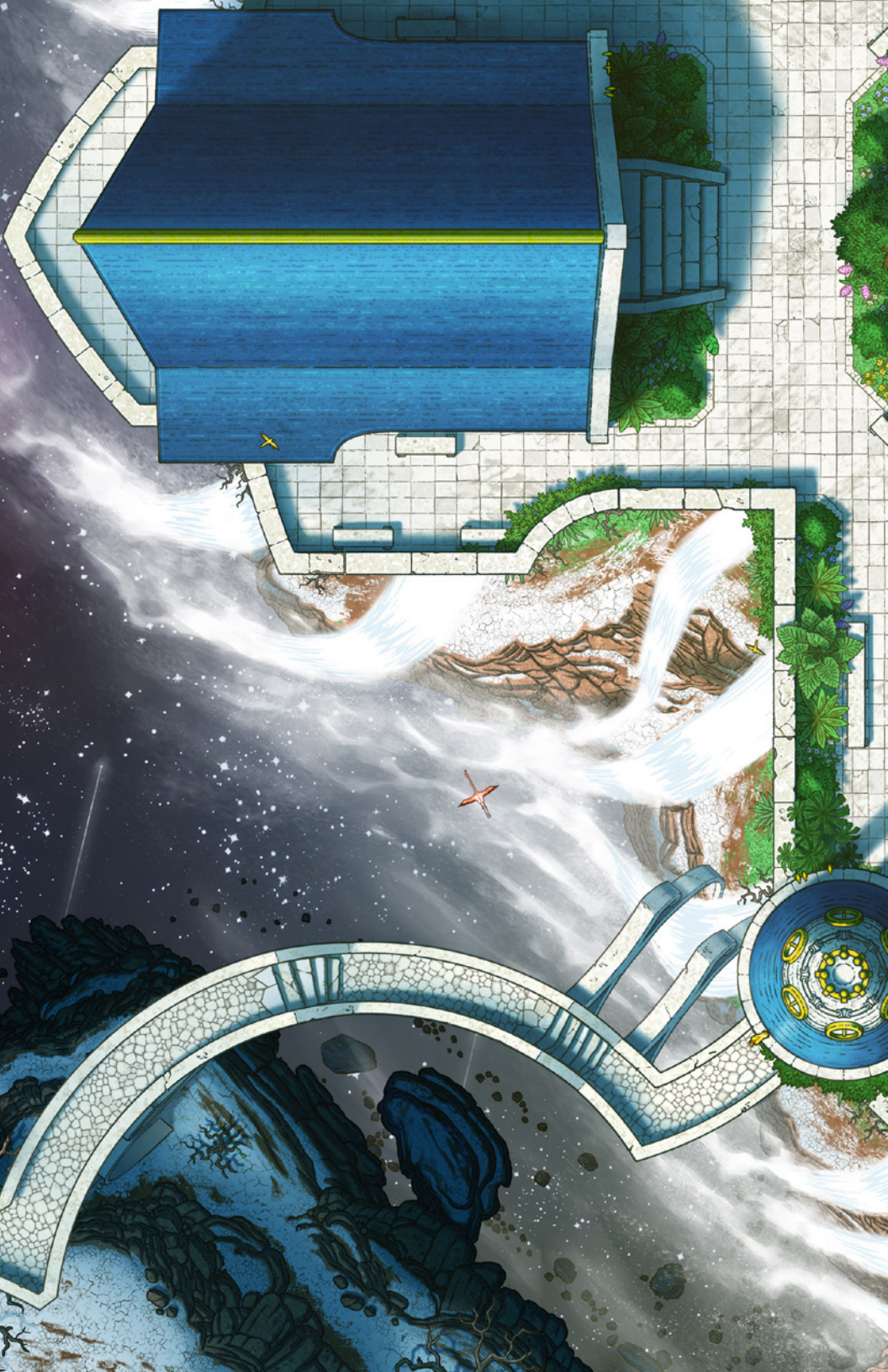
There is danger and opportunity at the edge of the world. The possibilities for a mage who earns their spellmark at Elseridge are endless, but earning one is not so easy as merely acing a few exams. Thriving at the academy necessitates taking risks, pushing boundaries, and cultivating unlikely friendships. A new crop of students has just begun their first year at the academy, and their exploits may just shape the future of the academy and of magic across the realm.

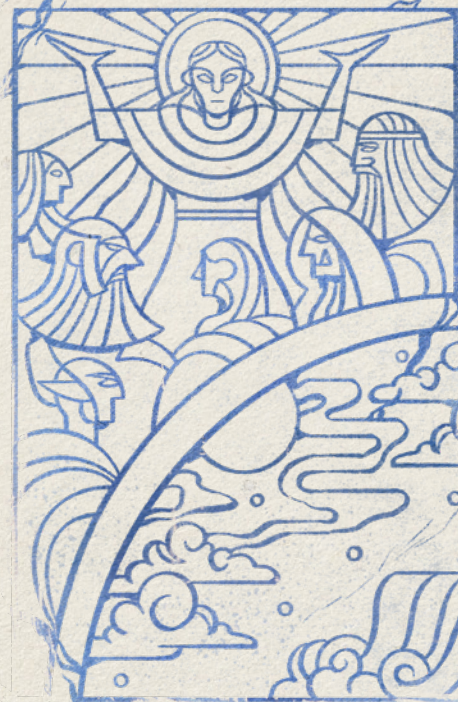
GMING ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

Elseridge Academy is Borough Bound's answer for GMs who want to run campaigns in a school for magic. This is an exceedingly popular fantasy subgenre, and yet few comprehensive resources exist to help facilitate tabletop campaigns with a magic school as a backdrop. We want to be exceedingly clear about what this guide is and is not and provide some tips for how to proceed.

- » We will not make any assumptions about the RPG system you're using.
- » We have embraced some of the tropes of this subgenre, but we've also subverted just as many. If you'd rather play a more traditional magic school adventure, you can always simplify the setting to fit your needs.
- » Our six schools of magic will not line up one-to-one with the arcane taxonomy you're used to. It's totally fine to slot your players into colleges that don't perfectly align with their class or spellcaster archetype, but you should also feel free to add or subtract colleges to fit your RPG mechanics or worldbuilding.
- » This guide does not include an overarching adventure. We provide a setting, NPCs, some interlocking plot hooks, and a number of additional roleplaying tools. Ultimately, however, you will still be responsible for defining the central narrative of your Elseridge adventure.
- » Elseridge Academy exists in our world of Hjass, but you can easily slot it into another fantasy setting with minimal changes. Likewise, its placement "at the edge of the world" is mostly set dressing that you can choose to ignore.
- » Most of the materials in this guide assume that the player characters are 1. proficient in magic and 2. students. That said, you can absolutely run adventures in which some or all of the PCs are nonmagical and/or do not enroll in the school. Perhaps the party consists solely of professors, or maybe they're all Luddite bandits who want to ransack the school. There are still plenty of useful tools in this guide to facilitate those sorts of adventures.
- » The standard arc of a magic school adventure starts during the first year of studies and wraps up as the party graduates. As this will necessarily take a number of in-game years, we provide mechanics to facilitate time skips, delineate discrete phases of play, and streamline downtime.







THE FOUNDING OF ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

Magic is dangerous because people are dangerous. No one knew this better—nor will ever know this better—than Salma Sahrou (she/her), the founder of Elseridge Academy. Salma's world was one in which unfettered magic ran rampant, where petulant magi wielded apocalyptic spells with reckless abandon. For decades, Salma watched as her world inched toward a cataclysmic end at the hands of irresponsible spellcasters. She knew just how close the world was to destruction, for she was one of the magi toying with equally unpredictable spells. Knowing that total ruin was near, Salma thrust herself into the distant past with the intention of averting a catastrophic future. She traveled to the edge of the world and founded a school for the magical arts. That school is Elseridge Academy, and as far as anyone can tell, its mere existence has prevented the worst possible future.

Salma's goal in founding the academy in the distant past was to steer the progression of magic. She wanted to ensure that those with a capacity for spellcasting could practice in a safe

environment—or, at least, an environment far from the rest of civilization. She wanted to transform how the people of Hjass saw magic, not as an unlimited force of radical potential but as an academic discipline that must be studied carefully lest its power tear the world asunder. She could not save the Hjass she was born to, but she could commit one last irresponsible act in an effort to rewrite history.

When Salma traveled back in time, she brought with her riches from the future in the form of gold, gemstones, rare metals, and arcane artifacts. She used this wealth to establish a trust to invest the riches and use the earnings to fund the school's wildly expensive operations. This trust still acts as a board of overseers, selecting headmasters as necessary and approving the creation of new colleges. Needless to say, the location of the trust, the nature of its investments, and the identities of its board members are all closely guarded secrets.

All of this happened 3,000 years ago... allegedly. The origin of Elseridge Academy sits firmly in the category of legend, not

verifiable history. There was almost certainly a powerful wizard named Salma Sahrou, and she almost certainly helped to found the school. However, little

concrete evidence backs up the rest of the tale. Consider rolling on the Academy Origin Rumors table for some alternative possibilities.

D8 ACADEMY ORIGIN RUMORS

- 1 Salma was not from the future but the distant past. The Hjass of today is, in fact, post-post-apocalyptic.
- 2 Time travel is possible, but it is not possible to alter the past. Regardless of what Salma accomplished, the world will still eventually cascade into an arcane catastrophe.
- 3 The academy was founded by a sect of ancient magi who fabricated the entire story of Salma as a means to scare young spellcasters.
- 4 Salma was a malevolent wizard who was responsible for all of the tragedies of her version of Hjass. She fled to the past in order to avoid suffering retribution.
- 5 Salma traveled through space, not time. Her distant home realm was destroyed, and she traveled to Hjass to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring in this world.
- 6 Salma was an avatar of the Goddess of truth and lies. She founded the academy so that she could more easily keep an eye on the mages of Hjass.
- 7 Salma was an avatar of the Goddess of past and future. She founded the academy to ensure that future mages wouldn't time travel irresponsibly.
- 8 The official story is true, though it omits the fact that Salma is still alive and well. She used magic to greatly lengthen her lifespan. She now controls the academy and the trust in secret.



THE SIX COLLEGES

Elseridge Academy has six colleges, each formed in response to the emergence of a new field of arcane study across Hjass. In the early days of the academy, the Old Magic was the *only* magic practiced widely among academically-minded mages.¹ When Druidry became more common—and, more importantly, better understood—Elseridge added a college specifically for its study. Over the next few millennia, the academy added four more schools, with the College of Translocation only opening its doors several decades ago. The inevitable progression of magical understanding is a core tenet of Elseridge Academy; there is no doubt that more fields of study will become available in the centuries to come.

Elseridge Academy's six colleges act semi-autonomously. Each has its own body of students, curriculum, culture, academic policies, uniforms, and administrative hierarchy. As such, one's experience at the academy depends largely on the choice of college. Students can enroll in whichever college they choose when they first arrive at Elseridge, but they will be forced to withdraw or transfer if they do not meet academic standards. In most instances, a student's natural proclivities determine which college will be the right fit.

As many academy facilities are college-dependent, it's worth understanding the basics of each school before delving into lengthier explanations in future chapters.

[1]

There were those who dabbled in other magics even prior to the academy's founding. Nascent forms of alchemy were common in prehistoric times, and druidic magic may *technically* predate the Old Magic (counter-intuitive though that may seem). However, common arcane standards and communities of practitioners for the other five schools did not emerge for hundreds of years.

GM NOTE

Choice of college is an essential part of an Elseridge campaign. It deserves a healthy amount of fanfare and narrative complexity. Make sure to consult this chapter's Plot Hook for some tips on making the most of the occasion.



THE OLD MAGIC

Areas of Study: Elemental manipulation, elemental summoning, probabilistic influence

Signature Characteristics: Practitioners of the Old Magic tend to be chaotic and ambitious. They are tapping into raw forms of power, and though their methods may be ancient, the possibilities for this magic are still ever-expanding.

Aesthetic: Simple robes with gemstone accessories, runic symbols, simple geometric patterns

DRUIDRY

Areas of Study: Nature magic, familiar bonding, agricultural/climatological manipulation

Signature Characteristics: Druids are in tune with nature, and as such, they rarely study in buildings. They work closely with animals and plants and are, by and large, committed to preserving the sanctity of the natural world.

Aesthetic: Furs and leather, horns, talismans, tattoos

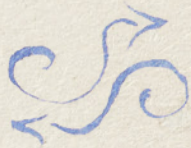
DIVINITY

Areas of Study: Blessings, wards, healing, necromancy

Signature Characteristics: Priests, prophets, and oracles channel the magic of gods and other divine beings. As such, true faith is an absolute requirement. This often—though not always!—goes hand-in-hand with ritual and orthodoxy.

Aesthetic: Vestments and sacred imagery²

[2] Divinity students display a wide range of aesthetics, owing particularly to the diversity of faiths and customs represented within the college.



COSMOLOGY

Areas of Study: Star magic, divination, light manipulation

Signature Characteristics: Cosmologists are, by and large, spacey. They spend their time in observatories, studying star maps and doodling geometric proofs. They tend to be introverted and kooky. Theirs is the most disparaged discipline.

Aesthetic: Big hats and elaborate robes, bright jewelry, complex geometric patterns

ALCHEMY

Areas of Study: Healing, golemetry, item enchantment

Signature Characteristics: Alchemists are consummate professionals. Their work is by far the most in demand across the realm, and thus alchemists must study diligently to compete with their classmates. They are driven and typically extroverted.

Aesthetic: Practical shirt and pants, copious pockets and functional accessories, minimal aesthetic accessories, alchemical symbols

TRANSLOCATION

Areas of Study: Teleportation, gravitational manipulation, chronomancy

Signature Characteristics: Translocation is still a nascent field of study; thus, practitioners are among the academic vanguard. They are thrill seekers, creative, and curious. They are also often reckless and foolhardy.

Aesthetic: Ultra-modern clothing, high fashion, abstract art, gaudy colors

REDUNDANCIES

A number of schools teach magics with overlapping effects. For example, scholars of both Divinity and Alchemy learn how to heal, though the methods are wildly different. This can occasionally lead to conflict between practitioners, particularly when members of one college view the means of another college as wasteful, dangerous, or simply inelegant.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRACKS

In addition to the six primary areas of study, Elseridge Academy also offers two interdisciplinary tracks. These programs are no more or less prestigious, and their curricula are equally demanding. While access to a standard program is granted to every capable applicant, admission standards for interdisciplinary tracks are quite a bit more involved. Students must declare their intent to study Harmony or Arcanology before they arrive at Elseridge.

HARMONY

Students studying Harmony are able to evoke a wide range of magical effects through aesthetic means: most commonly music, dance, or poetry. Typically, students who study Harmony are already talented performers before they arrive at the academy. During their studies, they work with both dedicated tutors as well as professors from each of the six colleges, thereby gaining proficiency in a variety of magical fields.

ARCANOLOGY

All students at Elseridge have at least some ability to cast spells. Some, however, are better at the *theory* of magic than its actual practice. Students of Arcanology must demonstrate minimal competency in one or more forms of magic, but their primary academic focuses are history, ethics, mythology, political science, and ethnography. Understanding magic's place in the world is a crucial part of Elseridge's mission statement, for it's hard to protect the future if one does not understand the past and present.

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD



Elseridge Academy sits at the precipice where Hjass ends, and the cosmos begins. This is not a euphemism. At Hjass's northern edge, the world simply stops, and the gaping maw of space opens up beyond an infinite cliff face. Elseridge's placement here is no accident; Salma Sahrou wanted the study of magic to occur as far from civilization as possible. She knew the mages of Hjass would someday discover cosmological magic and wanted the academy to be as close to the stars as geometry would allow. Most of all: she wanted to ensure no government could claim ownership over the far-off school.

SEASONS

As a rule, the further north you travel in Hjass, the colder it gets. The Vyndur Mountains are one of the harshest terrains inhabited by any of the world's unusual populations, and the entire range lies *south* of Elseridge Academy. And yet, students at Elseridge enjoy comfortable temperatures nearly the whole year round.

So close to the stars, the seasons and climate are determined not by latitude and axial tilt but instead by cosmological influence. The distant stars provide arcane warmth, and interstellar winds carry astral phenomena into the skies above Elseridge. The atmosphere can be a danger to students, to be sure, but the academy is altogether more hospitable than the snowy moun-

tains further from the edge.

The cosmological year near the edge of the world is the same length as in the rest of Hjass,³ but spring, summer, winter, and fall are replaced with the uneven seasons of lightwind, starfall, and fluxum.

Lightwind. The longest of the 3 seasons, lightwind lasts for roughly 180 days. Temperatures are mild, rarely requiring little more than a light jacket. Rain is infrequent, but runoff from the Vyndur Mountains provides plenty of potable water. Unexpected astral storms occasionally cause bursts of extreme temperature or wind, but nothing approaching the dangerous weather phenomena of Hjass's more inhospitable environs. Elseridge's school year starts on the first day of lightwind.

[3] 244 days, divided into 26 weeks of 9 days and 1 week of 10 days at the end of the year.

Starfall. During starfall, a cloud of astral debris blocks out the sun. There is no “daytime” but instead 20 days of uncanny darkness. Partway through, tiny beads of light start raining from the sky, ethereal, weightless crystals that are used in countless cosmological rituals. These “starfall gems” give the academy an enchanted and otherworldly appearance. Starfall showers pick up in intensity over the course of the season, culminating in a stunning downpour of beads as Hjass passes through the thickest section of the debris cloud. Exams are held during starfall.

Fluxum. During the final 40 or so days of the year, Hjass passes through the most chaotic arc of its orbit. Throughout fluxum, solar winds create a variety of bizarre and dangerous effects near the edge of the world: nebula storms, hyperstatic auroras, and radiation bursts. Fluxum creates the potential for heightened magical rituals, but students are required to return to their homes until the school year starts anew at the dawn of the following lightwind.

ENVIRONMENT

Druids have transformed the grounds of Elseridge Academy over millennia, rendering it verdant and hospitable. They have drawn the flows of disparate riv-

ulets descending from the northern edge of the Vyndur Mountains and carved canals between the school’s buildings. As such, the campus is lush and picturesque, an academic paradise on the brink of the cosmos.

However, the territory surrounding Elseridge is a far more punishing terrain. Eons of oppressive solar winds have carved the plains into barren crags. Interstellar radiation has killed all but the hardiest ferns and lichens. The tumultuous confluence of frigid northern winters and oppressive fluxum storms create a land where little can grow, and geography is constantly morphing. Most of the land between Elseridge and the mountains is an unforgiving salt flat.

In decades past, students would have to traverse this treacherous landscape twice yearly, typically by airship or on the backs of powerful creatures. The College of Translocation has rendered such mundane means of travel unnecessary via their device the *Hexacoil*, but some still opt to make the dangerous journey without teleportation.

FAUNA

Despite the perilous climate of Hjass’s distant north, a number of strange animals make their home in the star-scorched plains beyond the mountains.

Steppebeasts. One of the hardest creatures throughout the multiverse, the humble steppebeast has no trouble thriving among the salt flats at the edge of the world. These scaly bovine grazers subsist off of little else than salt, carrion, and cosmic algae. Steppebeasts lumber across the plains, cracking the ground under their bulky frames. Students often use roaming steppebeasts as target practice for long-range spells; after all, there's almost no chance that a dinky starbolt or iceshard will pierce their thick carapace.

Starlarks. There's little in the way of seeds or insects throughout the northern fringes of Hjass. Nevertheless, a unique species of bird has claimed the edge of the world as its territory. So-called "starlarks" symbiotically bond with a form of exotic lichen that produces excess energy from starlight. The lichen covers the starlark's face, rendering the bird completely blind. However, starlarks are able to perceive the world in a vivid magical array via the symbiotic bond they share with the lichen.

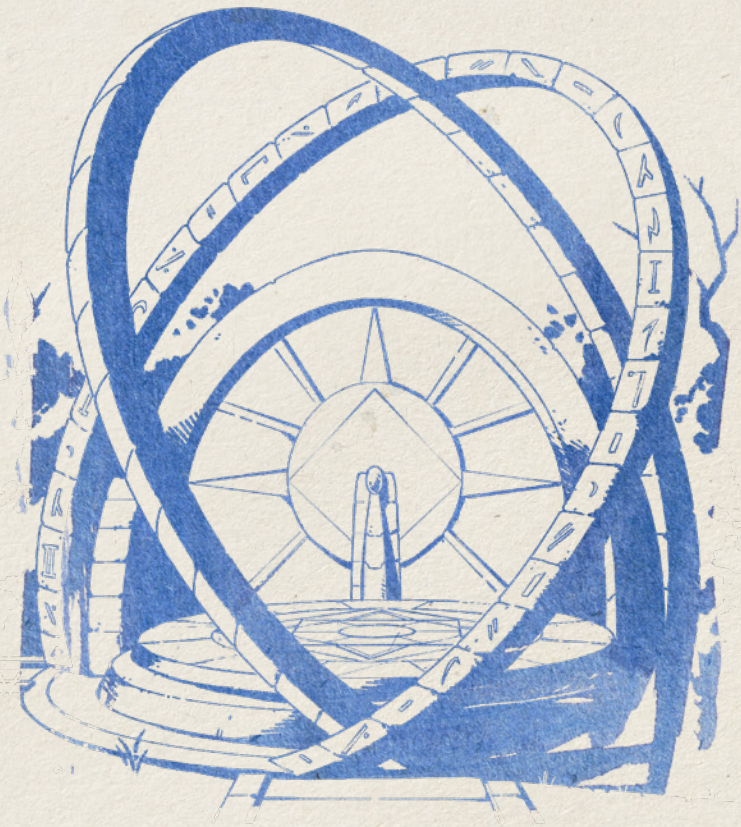
Dragons. Countless dragons make their homes among the plains and alongside the cliff face that descends below the academy. They roost in gemstone caves, atop salty mounds, and along the beds of deceptively deep rivers. Most dragons at the edge of the world have cerulean and white-marbled scales and feed on steppebeasts or other large prey wandering north beyond the mountains. While many students dream of bonding with a dragon or—at the very least—riding one, the druid faculty at Elseridge strictly forbid the practice. Officially speaking, the druids have no right to forbid students outside their college from approaching the dragons. In practice, the administration has little ability to reign in insubordinate druids.

THE HEXACOIL

Travel to and from the academy is now a simple process. Thanks to a collaboration between the Colleges of Cosmology, Alchemy, and Translocation, students and faculty from across the realm

ELSERIDGE'S FLAMINGOS

Mundane flamingos are more prevalent by far than any magical beasts at the edge of the world. These flamingos thrive in the extreme salinity, and they've become something of a mascot for the academy. For most, the novelty of these hyper-social birds quickly wears off, as students have to constantly shoo flamingos away from practice fields, residential halls, or even classrooms.



can arrive at Elseridge Academy via a device known as the *Hexacoil*. This arcane gateway is a masterwork of teleportation, a portal that can simultaneously connect to dozens of simpler portals across Hjass, resist magical disruptions, and juggle hundreds of overlapping translocational channels without producing undesired effects (e.g., teleporting two students to the exact same location, or thrusting cosmic energy into an explosive feedback loop).

The *Hexacoil* accounts for 98% of trips to and from the academy. There's just one catch:

it only functions during the season of fluxum and the first few days of lightwind. The teleporter requires a massive influx of interstellar energy to charge its runic apparatuses. As such, it lies dormant in the quad for most of the year. Luckily, its active period lines up perfectly with students heading home for fluxum break and returning for the start of the new year. If anyone wishes to leave the school mid-semester, they must politely request the assistance of one of the Translocation professors or else voyage over the treacherous terrain at the edge of the world.

ADMINISTRATION



Overseeing the academy is a herculean task. While most universities across Hjass feature complex centralized administrations, Elseridge instead divvies up most responsibilities to the various colleges: druids are responsible for the grounds, translocators for travel to and from the academy, cosmologists for record-keeping, and so on. However, a handful of administrators work directly for the academy's trust.

ADMISSIONS

Students may choose to join any college they wish if they are granted access to Elseridge. As such, the office of admission must act independently from individual colleges. Perhaps counterintuitively, the admission counselors are among the most talented voyagers working with the academy. Each year, they travel across the entirety of Hjass, visiting both massive cities and tiny, far-flung hamlets in search of promising mages to interview. Elseridge admission counselors are multilingual, extremely extroverted, and tireless in their quest to seek out all young mages from across the realm.

Once they've completed their treks across Hjass, they return to the academy to confer. The mission of Elseridge is to train *all* mages, regardless of their specific aptitudes, backgrounds, or proclivities toward acts of profound evil. Of course, not every young spellcaster will accept the summons to Elseridge, but unless there's evidence that a mage is, in fact, a stage magician—that is: a charlatan—they *will* be offered admission. The admission counselors set off again to deliver acceptance letters by hand. All across Hjass. Gods bless them.

GM NOTE

If your friends are excited to play as students in a magic school, don't bungle the pacing by having one or more lengthy sessions during which each PC meets with an admission counselor. Just start the campaign at the school! If you absolutely must explore the home life of the adventurers, run those sections during fluxum break or consider roleplaying some flashbacks once the meat of the adventure has already begun.

HEADMASTER IFFDISDEM BRONGOR

Rank: Headmaster with a spellmark from the College of Harmony

Academic Focus: Item enchantment

Arcane Implement: A celesta he built himself, which he keeps in his study

Heritage: Orc, son of his tribe's storyteller, from the tiny forest village of Luugwin

The ideal Elseridge headmaster is one who can help the academy adapt to the ever-changing nature of magic in Hjass. When the College of Translocation opened its doors a mere 33 years ago, many feared what it would mean for the academy. Iffdisdem Brongor (he/him), then a young Harmony graduate working as a low-level administrator, believed wholeheartedly in the nascent college's vision. He worked with the first batch of professors to help integrate the college into the rest of the academy. It was only because of Brongor's influence that the previous headmaster—a gnomish sage of the Old Magic known as The Amber Sculptress—allowed for the installation of the *Hexacoil*, the teleporter that allows students and faculty to rapidly travel to and from the academy.

At the time, Brongor's influence was scandalous. Many feared the *Hexacoil* was too dangerous or that it gave too much precedence to a poorly understood field of magic. Many be-

lieved it was inappropriate for Brongor, a recent graduate, to influence the headmaster's decision-making. Brongor was not swayed. He knew the *Hexacoil* would bolster student retention and outreach, that it would save the academy countless resources, and that, over time, it would bring the school together, not tear it apart. The years have proven Brongor right, and now he is the first harmonist and first orc to serve as the academy's headmaster.

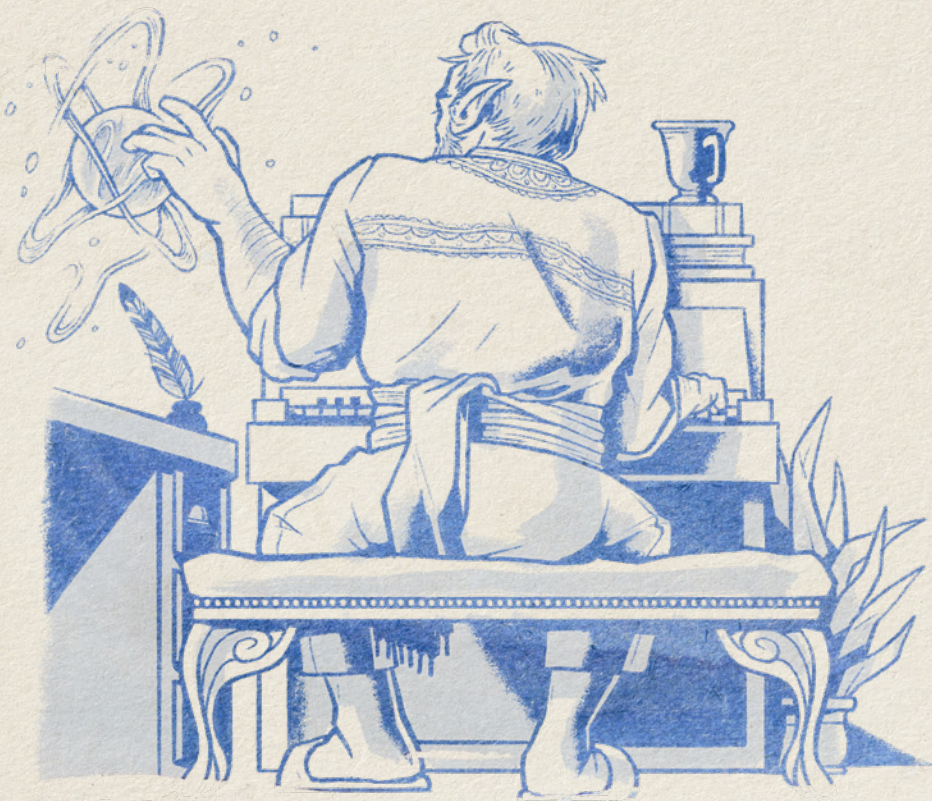
Brongor's Harmonic Magic. Brongor is a musician, and though he is a bridge builder and excellent public speaker, he typically only performs in the privacy of his study. He has enchanted countless curious artifacts via his musical influence, channeling unusual effects into various baubles and amulets through his arcane compositions. Many of these unique creations now sit in the Hall of Marvels on this very campus.

Leadership Style: Headmaster Brongor makes excellent proclamations, convincing and emphatic. Whenever he makes a speech to the entire school, students and faculty alike listen with rapt attention. He is authoritative but never comes across as condescending. More than anything, his passion for magic and higher education comes across as unambiguously sincere. One-on-one, Brongor is quite a bit more awkward. He gets nervous around others and speaks frantically. As such, he is a decidedly

private person, choosing instead to make grand and important decisions only once he has had ample time to first prepare his remarks.

Enemies and Alliances.

In general, faculty from the older colleges look upon Headmaster Brongor with disdain. They see him as responsible for “diluting” the academy by legitimizing the College of Translocation when it was still new. Some bigots also scoff at the notion that an orc from a tiny tribe could



possibly be worthy of the title of headmaster. Regardless, Brongor has plenty of allies among the three newest schools and is beloved among the Harmony and Arcanology faculty. He is often called upon by the academy's trust to speak with world leaders,

and they overwhelmingly find him to be charming and easy to negotiate with... of course, these leaders are also quite relieved to know that they have direct access to the academy via the teleporter Brongor himself helped install.

D4 ENCOUNTERS WITH HEADMASTER BRONGOR

- 1 The party is summoned to Headmaster Brongor's study. They were accused of stealing one of his creations from the Hall of Marvels. To prove their innocence, they must deduce who actually stole the artifact.
- 2 As the party returns from the dining hall, they cross paths with Brongor. The frantic headmaster is chatting with a visiting diplomat, and he is clearly making a terrible impression. The party could earn favor with Brongor by buying him some time to collect his thoughts.
- 3 One of the adventurers wakes up to find Headmaster Brongor cowering in the corner of their dorm room. Brongor whispers that he is hiding from a violent golem that started thrashing about the school in the middle of the night. Without an arcane instrument to play, Brongor is essentially powerless.
- 4 The party crosses paths with Headmaster Brongor in the library. He looks up from the tome he is reading to share a tale of a legendary arcane implement known as the Pentode Stones. He slyly implies these stones might be hidden not far from the academy... Does he *want* the party to discover this artifact?



PLOT HOOK:

ENROLL AT ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

Unless an aspiring young mage does everything in their power to avoid being found, Elseridge Academy's admission counselors will eventually arrive at their doorstep and implore them to receive proper training at the edge of the world. Inevitably, countless spellcasters refuse this summons: dwarven inkbinders prefer to learn amongst their own kind in Vyndurvoht, gulch witches reject the authority of the academy, and anyone dabbling in mind-manipulation knows that they'll be endlessly stymied at Elseridge. Nevertheless, anyone who *wants* to go to Elseridge certainly can.

TRAVEL TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

New students at Elseridge are expected to bring very little to the academy. Primarily, this is because the academy wants to ensure that wealthier students do not arrive at the edge of the world with boundless luxuries. There ought to be no disparity between students based on heritage. At Elseridge, everyone starts as equals.

When an admission counselor offers a student their acceptance letter—usually a few months after meeting the fledg-

ling spellslinger—they also provide a map and a calendar that show where they need to be in order to teleport to the school at the beginning of the new school year. Most often, this is a public square, church courtyard, or noteworthy landmark no more than 50 or so miles away. If the student foresees trouble making the trek, the academy will do its best to provide accommodations.⁴

At the appointed time, anyone in the vicinity of a teleportation zone holding a letter of admission will be transported directly to the *Hexacoil*.

[4] Typically, this means deploying a professor of Translocation to the student's home to teleport them directly.

OTHER MEANS OF TRAVEL

Students do not technically have to use the teleportation zones that the academy recommends. Instead, they can journey hundreds of miles over snowy mountains and oppressive salt flats. Some traditional students—mostly druids, unsurprisingly—prefer the enriching ritual of this trek. Wealthy students who spurn undignified teleporters might charter an airship or ride on the backs of winged mounts. Either alternative is decidedly rare.

GM NOTE

Don't agonize too hard about which colleges your players pursue. A thief-archetype character could study Alchemy to make poisons or Cosmology to study the shadows. A barbarian might study Druidry to tap into their primal side or Divinity if they see their fervor as emanating from faith.

A cleric will probably gravitate toward Divinity, but they might prefer the Old Magic if they worship a fire god.

You can *always* come up with a justification for why a student might slot well into any given college. Plus, if it really does end up feeling like a bad narrative or mechanical fit, you can lean into it! Maybe the party's wizard finds they disagree with the Old Magic faculty and transfers to Translocation. Maybe, the bard forsakes the Harmony track to just play drums with all of the druids. Just like at real universities, academic departments are not one-size-fits-all. Let that friction drive your narrative, not derail it.

SELECT A COLLEGE

Upon arrival at the courtyard surrounding the *Hexacoil*, students will find themselves surrounded by six festooned gates. Each gate corresponds with one of the six colleges. The very first choice a first-year student must make is which line of study they will pursue. Upper-level students from each of the programs stand ready to direct new students, pitch the merits of their college, and help the first-years assess their own innate proclivities. When the new student is ready, they must walk through the gate. As they do, they will find that a half-mantle—a short cape worn on the left, the iconic accessory for Elseridge students—magically appears on their shoulder in a style befitting their chosen college. This half-mantle is evidence that they have made their choice.

Any students hoping to pursue spellmarks in Harmony or Arcanology must have already cleared the decision with an admission counselor before arriving at Elseridge. When they arrive, they must travel through each of the six gates before speaking with a representative from their chosen track. This representative will then bequeath the new student with their half-mantle.

MEET YOUR DORMMATES

Soon after the first-year students select colleges, a team of upper-level students will chaperone them to their dorms. First-year students live together in suites with three to six beds. These suites almost always consist of students from different colleges. The administration wants students to intermingle, so though these first-years may be required to follow different rules and practice distinct magics, they live together all the same.

▶ A student's dormmates will almost certainly be the first other Elseridge students they get to know. As a group, they'll have to find common ground to avoid conflict. It is not always so easy for a druid and an alchemist to share a living space.

ATTEND THE LIGHTWIND FEAST

Once the students have settled into their dorm rooms, their next obligation is to attend the Lightwind Feast, a banquet celebrating the start of the new school year. The Lightwind Feast will be the first opportunity for students to meet their professors, mingle with upper-level students, and explore some of the more ornate halls within the academy. In all likelihood, most students will still be dumbstruck by the splendor of the occasion.

If all goes well, the Lightwind Feast is also the academy's first opportunity to truly wow the students. Chefs serve elaborate dishes spiced with exotic herbs from the druid gardens, lanterns filled with starlight give the banquet hall an ethereal glow, and students of Harmony perform enchanting fugues on arcane instruments. New students *ought* to be wowed by this display, but something inevitably goes wrong. Consider rolling on the Lightwind Feast Mishap table to add a little excitement to the first night of the school year.

GM NOTE

The assumption is that the party will all live together in one suite. This streamlines the campaign, giving you a perfect excuse to bring the players together right at the start of the adventure. If the characters have not yet met, you can roleplay their first introductions as they enter their shared dorm one by one.

You can also use the dorms as an opportunity to force your characters to interact with different students. If each adventurer lives in a separate dorm suite, they'll each have a small cast of additional NPCs to interact with during their downtime. Keep in mind that having even just a couple dormmates each might introduce a few too many NPCs for you to juggle.

Finally, after dessert bowls are busied, and tea is served, Headmaster Iffdisdem Brongor delivers a rousing speech. He speaks of founder Salma Sahrou and the academy's mission. He muses on the importance of collaboration and responsibility. And finally, he delivers the three rules that all students of the

academy must follow, rules that are repeated across the academy. Should the students break these rules, expulsion will be the least of their worries.

1. Do not destroy books
2. Do not use magic to control or alter minds
3. Do not go back in time

D6 LIGHTWIND FEAST MISHAP

- 1 Student protesters cause a scene as they demand Headmaster Brongor address the supposed "encroaching influence of interstellar superpowers."
- 2 A freak storm bathes the banquet hall in cosmic energy, briefly snuffing out all of the arcane lights in the room. In the darkness, a single maniacal chuckle resonates from the walls.
- 3 The students and faculty all find that they are having a bit *too* much fun. Professor Dwegyd realizes that one of the harmonists is playing a forbidden bewitching melody and escorts the student outside to an unknown fate.
- 4 A 20-foot-tall mountain giant smashes through the door to the banquet hall. There is a moment of panic before an admission counselor announces that this giant is a new student who has arrived late to campus.
- 5 The banquet hall lurches; it seems that yet another teleportation mishap has shaken the foundation on which Elseridge sits. Or, perhaps, it is the work of the Haritama Society.
- 6 A priestess of a war God starts hovering in the air, her eyes rolling back in her head. She bellows with a demonic voice, "*The mages of Elseridge are ready for war, and it would be a disservice to deny them this honor. March through your eldritch gates and into realms of unceasing battle.*" When she's done, she sits back down and hiccups.

