

Learning Abroad Center

PROGRAM GUIDE



Scholarship Exchanges (IRSEP)

2007–08



Learning Abroad Center
Office of International Programs

Important Names & Addresses

In the United States

Learning Abroad Center
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 Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430

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 612.625.6065 gwoodruf@umn.edu

Thank you for observing office hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am–4:30 pm) when contacting the people above.

In case of an emergency, contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000 or 888.700.UOFM. If it is after business hours, there will be a recording that provides you with a number to call. The Learning Abroad Center will always have staff on-call to handle emergencies.

Prior to the start of your program, contact the LAC IRSEP Program Staff for all policy-related questions and questions about preparing for your study overseas. For questions regarding the details of the program on-site, contact the overseas institution directly, if the information provided in this guide and by the overseas institution is not sufficient. Please keep in mind that you may not receive a response from the on-site coordinator immediately; depending on the county and site, responses may take one to two weeks. If you have not received a response after two weeks, please contact the LAC IRSEP Program Staff for additional assistance.

In the host country- list contact details

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

IRSEP returnee contact info for additional resource information while abroad.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

Table of Contents

- Important Names & Addresses 2**
- Overview & History of IRSEP 3**
 - Program Overview 3
 - History of IRSEP..... 3
 - Terms of Participation 3
- Preparation & Planning..... 4**
 - Safety Precautions..... 4
 - Emergency Procedures..... 4
 - Passport & Visa..... 4
- Practical & Program Information..... 4**
- Academics 5**
 - Coursework..... 5
 - Courseload..... 5
 - Academic Planning..... 5
- IRSEP Participant Responsibilities 6**
 - Pre-departure Phase..... 7
 - While Abroad 7
 - Upon Return..... 8
- The Final Report..... 9**
- Selection Process 10**
 - Selection Committee Procedures 10
 - Application Review and Pre-screening..... 10
 - Interviews..... 10
- Concluding Remarks 11**
- Appendix..... 11**
 - Packing..... 11
 - Checklist 11
 - Reading List 13
 - Ten Things To Remember 14

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Overview & History of IRSEP

Congratulations on your nomination to represent the University of Minnesota on the IRSEP Scholarship Exchange Program! You are about to embark upon a life changing experience.

The International Reciprocal Student Exchange Program (IRSEP), offers a full scholarship for selected University of Minnesota students to attend one of six institutions overseas. In the spirit of reciprocity, the overseas host institutions select students to study at Minnesota for one year. University of Minnesota students selected for IRSEP must be independent learners and must commit to participating in IRSEP activities before, during, and after their study abroad experience. The active participation of students in IRSEP is the hallmark of this scholarship exchange program.

Program Overview

IRSEP is the oldest continuous exchange program at the University of Minnesota and primarily offers opportunities to study at non-traditional destinations around the world. Founded by students in 1952, it is still characterized by active student participation. Applicants who receive an IRSEP scholarship must actively participate in promoting and improving the IRSEP program and must return to the University of Minnesota following their exchange in order to recruit, select, and orient the next year's student.

The IRSEP program is designed to provide an educational and cultural experience for applicants who have not had extensive experience in the country to which they are applying. Extensive experience is defined as more than six months of living or studying in that country.

Most IRSEP programs enable exchange students to pursue independent projects and internships overseas for one academic year. This must be arranged with your host-country institution prior to departure.

History of IRSEP

IRSEP began in the 1950's when a University of Minnesota study abroad student returned from Berlin, Germany with the idea of a student-to-student exchange. She convinced the International Student Adviser's Office at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Student Association to support this new initiative. The Minnesota Student Association agreed to provide funding for the foreign exchange student's living expenses, and the University of Minnesota agreed to finance the student's tuition expenses. The Free University of Berlin agreed to provide a scholarship for a Minnesota student. Moreover, this became the model for the subsequent IRSEP exchanges.

From the very beginning of IRSEP, students were actively involved in many aspects of the program. Because the program was considered a student development experience and offered a full scholarship, students were selected for an approximate two-and-a-half-year commitment. They were selected by a country committee, which was composed of student, faculty, and staff. This model continues to this day for IRSEP.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, many IRSEP students have gone on to pursue prominent careers in international education and other related fields, and IRSEP alumni continue to contribute to the program years after their IRSEP experience. IRSEP participants are now administrators in international education, university faculty, and active in private industry.

Terms of Participation

- Enrollment for a regular full-time course of study (according to University of Minnesota policy) or, under certain conditions, for a special course of study arranged with the faculty of the receiving institution.
- Additional benefits of the kind normally provided to students at the receiving institution, such as access to athletic facilities, health services, etc., as agreed by the receiving institution in its terms of agreement with the University of Minnesota.
- Depending upon the program, the assistance of the receiving institution's exchange coordinator in securing appropriate housing and coverage of housing costs.
- The assistance of the receiving institution's exchange coordinator and the University of Minnesota staff in resolving the student's academic and programmatic concerns to the extent of their abilities.

Due to differences among host countries, exchange benefits are reciprocal, but not identical, to what other exchangees receive. Essentially, your exchange benefits are meant to provide you with the experience of being a student in an overseas university.

IRSEP

Exchangee Responsibilities

- Students are responsible for arranging and paying for their own transportation to and from the receiving institution.
- Students are responsible for all personal expenses and any costs beyond those for tuition and fees as described above (Exchangee Benefits).
- Students are responsible for maintaining a full and normal course load at the receiving institution according to the receiving institution's policy or the University of Minnesota policy, whichever is greater.
- Students are responsible, upon their return to the University of Minnesota, for submitting a written final report.
- Students are responsible for completing all items on the To Do Checklist and for completing any paperwork and/or procedures required by the Office of Student Finance prior to their departure for the exchange period abroad.
- Students are also responsible for returning with appropriate academic documentation if they wish coursework undertaken at the receiving institution to be considered for degree requirements at the University of Minnesota.
- Students are required to work with the receiving institution to be sure all requirements are met and to request a transcript sent to the U of M prior to departing the receiving institution.
- Students are responsible for notifying the Learning Abroad Center and their specific program of any change of student status (i.e., cancellation) or address. This includes your summer address, address in the host country, and address upon return to the University of Minnesota.

IRSEP and You

The information below can help ensure that your learning goals match IRSEP's program philosophy. Consider these statements and reflect on your own goals for the program.

IRSEP requires independence

IRSEP scholarship students are often the only U of M student at the host campus though there will be many other international students. As the only U of M student you may not receive the attention that you would on a group study abroad program. It is important to understand that IRSEP is an independent program and that you will need to be responsible for yourself. In most countries you will need to be willing to ask questions, as you will not be prompted as much as you are here at the U of M.

IRSEP requires a real sense of commitment.

Full attendance at classes is expected. In most countries, no one will be checking up on you, and missing class may have a negative affect on your grades. Recreational travel should never interfere with your academic commitments. Weekend travel is sometimes feasible, so long as you are caught up on your coursework. IRSEP asks friends and family to schedule visits only during these breaks in order not to disrupt your studies. Most IRSEP universities will have holidays and breaks during the semesters and between semesters and these times are ideal for travel.

IRSEP calls for cultural sensitivity.

Respect for other cultures is a must in any study abroad program, and especially in an immersion program like IRSEP. You will need to adapt to the host culture and not expect it to adjust to you.

IRSEP presents special challenges to women.

For some students, the feelings engendered by being female in what may seem an anti-feminist society have proved painful and distracting. This will vary by IRSEP country but is a reality you may face. While striving to remain culturally sensitive, women have experienced incidents of harassment, seemingly overprotectiveness by host families (with respect to hours kept, places frequented, friends chosen), and a general feeling of being watched and even judged in public. Roles are quite defined by gender in many cultures, and you may elicit negative responses if you do not follow the prescribed role. Moreover, foreign females may sometimes experience harassment even if they do follow the rules. When in country, be prepared to find your values challenged daily.

IRSEP will change you.

Students repeatedly return from this program talking about how it has transformed their lives. You will learn astonishing things about yourself, acquire invaluable skills, and return to US shores asking searching questions about your own society and your own values. Hopefully that is what you want.

Preparation & Planning

Safety Precautions

It is important to consider safety issues while overseas. You are urged to pay close attention to the discussion on safety during your orientations, and consult the Emergency and Safety Precautions section of this guide. You should also consult the US State Department of Travel advisories for up-to-date information on travel precautions at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, immediately contact the international student support staff at your host university. If for any reason you should have legal difficulties while abroad, you should contact the American Consulate or Embassy. While you are subject to the laws of your host country, the consulate can assist you in contacting a lawyer if necessary. For further information on emergency precautions, please see the section on Safety Precautions in the *Student Handbook*.

Passport & Visa

A passport is required to study abroad. Some IRSEP countries also require a student visa, and it is your responsibility to obtain both of these. Since passports can take four to eight weeks to process, apply IMMEDIATELY if you have not done so already. You can find information on how to apply for a passport at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/travel/travdocuments.

Refer to the Final Report of your IRSEP country for details on any visa requirements for your program. Typically you will have to request a student visa application from the embassy of your host country. You will generally have to complete paperwork, sometimes including a medical exam and proof of financial resources, and submit your original passport to the embassy for processing. Since visa processing can take a long time, the sooner you begin the visa process, the less stress it will be for you prior to your departure! The Learning Abroad Center recommends Perry International at 312.372.2703 as they can advise you on and assist you with the visa process.

Practical & Program Information

It is decidedly helpful to review your host country's university website, as well as use all the Learning Abroad Center's international resources to thoroughly prepare yourself before you go abroad. The Learning Abroad Center has many helpful resources, such as binders that include catalogs, past participants' reports evaluations, and many more important details. **The IRSEP past participants will serve as your main contact for details regarding your program.** You can feel free to be in touch with them throughout your preparation year and while abroad.

Once you have been accepted by the overseas institution, you will receive information and forms directly from their international student support office. It is your responsibility to read all of these materials thoroughly and complete the required information in a timely manner.

Academics

Coursework

As an IRSEP exchange student, you will most likely be in a classroom alongside regular students at your host institution, doing integrated coursework. Depending on host institutions, classes for only exchange students are provided. In China, you will be placed in a language and culture center with other international students, but will be on campus with local students. Expectations about classroom behavior and academics vary widely depending on your host institution and country. For example, many exchange students have found there were few assignments or quizzes during the semester. Instead, one final exam at the end of the semester or the year formed the basis for the final grade. It is very important that you understand your host university's academic expectations and maintain good study habits throughout your exchange. Be sure to contact the professor or the on-site coordinator if you have any questions about academic expectations or if you would like help with your classes.

You should also be prepared for different professor-student relationships than what you are used to at the University of Minnesota. You are encouraged to introduce yourself to your professors at the beginning of the semester, as faculty members are often pleased to have international students in their classrooms.

You must be flexible with regard to the courses you are able to take, since exchange programs usually involve integrated coursework. Usually it is not possible to guarantee that you will be able to take certain courses prior to your arrival.

IRSEP

Courseload

You are required to enroll in a full-time course of study while overseas. Consult with the onsite staff and Learning Abroad Center to discuss any questions you may have. The Learning Abroad Center and past participants will provide details on what the specific requirements are for your country.

If you are on financial aid, at least 13 credits per semester are required to retain your aid while overseas. (Credit load is in University of Minnesota equivalencies.)

ECTS Credits and Transfer Credit

Many European institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) of standard credits. Approximately, two ECTS credits equal one University of Minnesota credit. For example, 24–30 ECTS credits per semester equals 12–15 credits at the University of Minnesota.

Non-European Institutions and Non-ECTS Systems

All non-European institutions and some European universities do not use the ECTS system or use it only in certain departments. If your overseas institution or department does not use the ECTS system, consult with the LAC IRSEP Staff and your on-site advisor at your host institution to ensure your semester credit load will meet the requirements of a full-time student (according to University of Minnesota policy). It would be wise for you to have a strong idea of the courses you plan to take days before the semester begins, so that you have enough time to work out any credit configuration problems before you begin attending class.

Maximizing Study Abroad

Maximizing Study Abroad is a one-credit online course that enhances the experience for all participants on the University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad Center-sponsored programs. The price of the course is included in all Learning Abroad Center-sponsored programs and all students on semester and academic year programs are required to participate in the course. Your scholarship pays for this class. The benefits of the course include:

- Helpful tips for you to further enjoy your host country's culture
- Tools to adapt to new challenges and to help you understand your experience
- Suggestions for you to articulate the value of your experience to future employers, graduate schools, and scholarship committees
- Helpful suggestion for you to record what you learned outside the classroom

Further information is available at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/academic/maxsa/

Academic Planning

As a key component of pre-departure preparation, all students are required to complete the Academic Planning for Study Abroad (APSA) form. This is the green form you received at your First Step Meeting. The APSA form will assist you in receiving academic credit for your overseas studies, and deciding how to fit these credits into your academic goals at the University of Minnesota. This process also includes setting up your registration, payment plan, and financial aid, if applicable.

In order to complete the APSA form, you will need to meet with your academic adviser and any other required faculty. After this you must submit a copy of a completed academic planning form to the Learning Abroad Center. Please keep the original form in a safe place.

Registration

You will have two registrations: University of Minnesota registration that takes place prior to departure and one that occurs on site.

You will receive registration instructions via email from the Learning Abroad Center prior to each term of your study abroad program. This registration must be completed in order to maintain your University of Minnesota student status and allow for your student aid to be released (if applicable). Failure to complete this registration on time may result in a late fee that will be charged to your student account. Complete failure to register may cause you to lose your student status, prevent the release of financial aid, and and/or result in you receiving no credit for your study abroad program. This registration will differ from the actual course registration you may additionally complete once you arrive on site.

All students will register for (1) a block University of Minnesota foreign studies credits and (2) the one-credit Maximizing Study Abroad course at the University of Minnesota prior to departure. University of Minnesota students will register themselves for both courses. Again, this registration differs from the onsite course registration you may additionally complete in country.

Transcripts

After you return from your exchange and the Learning Abroad Center receives an official transcript from the overseas institution, we will send you the transcript so you can verify it for accuracy. We will then work with the University of Minnesota Office of Admissions to post the credit to your University of Minnesota transcript as foreign transfer credit. Your transfer credit does NOT count toward your University of Minnesota GPA, and only the number of credits transferred will be indicated on your University of Minnesota transcript. You can view your individual courses on an APAS report, but not on your University of Minnesota transcript. Once your credit has transferred onto your University of Minnesota transcript, you will need to approach the appropriate department or college office to apply your overseas coursework toward specific University of Minnesota degree requirements.

Please Note:

- **Before leaving your host university, request that your transcript be sent to the Learning Abroad Center. You are responsible for doing this.**
- Please be aware that it can take up to three to twelve months after you complete your program for the University of Minnesota to receive your official transcript from the overseas institution. As a result, it is not possible to graduate immediately upon return from your program.
- If you receive a transcript directly from your overseas school, **DO NOT** bring it to the Admissions Office at the University of Minnesota. This will cause significant problems with receiving credit for your work. You must bring it to the Learning Abroad Center in a sealed envelope.
- You can expedite the process by completing all coursework and documentation before returning to the US.
- If at all possible, be sure to bring all course materials back with you. They are sometimes requested by advisers in order to fulfill certain CLA or major and/or minor requirements.
- For more information regarding transfer credit, refer to the *Undergraduate Transfer Credit FAQ* at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/academic/ungradTransferCredit

Registration Upon Return

You may need to register for your continuing academic program at the University of Minnesota while you are still overseas; on-line registration will allow you to accomplish this. Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to register for the courses you need; the Learning Abroad Center cannot assist you with this process. In addition, please be aware that students with reciprocity status must reapply for this upon their return.



Outline of IRSEP Participant Responsibilities

Selected participants should be certain that they are able to complete all IRSEP participation responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

Before Departure: Initiate or continue appropriate language studies as required by the specific program site; attend IRSEP orientation sessions; work with returned IRSEP exchange student and international IRSEP exchange student to prepare for time abroad.

While Overseas: Pursue appropriate course of study; be active in host country student life; assist in selecting and orienting the incoming international exchange student, if requested; submit monthly reports of which the IRSEP staff will advise you; complete the online Maximizing Study Abroad course; represent the University of Minnesota and the IRSEP program with dignity.

Upon Return: Take the lead to recruit, select, and orient the outgoing University of Minnesota exchange student; assist with receiving and acclimating the new incoming international IRSEP exchange student; serve on the IRSEP advisory committee; prepare a final report that details your experience; update all program materials including the program binder and website.

The continuation and success of the program depends on the commitment of the international and University of Minnesota IRSEP participants to fulfill the responsibilities of the program.

Responsibilities: Pre-departure Phase

In addition to the aforementioned activities, you will receive a general *Know Before You Go Guide* that will include a general predeparture checklist. Please use this checklist as another tool to plan for your IRSEP experience abroad. The IRSEP program is unique in that the student participants are responsible for most of their predeparture preparations. The staff is available to answer your questions, guide your predeparture process, and assist you with academic and financial planning. In taking responsibility for your own predeparture plans, you are one step closer to becoming the independent student that you will be abroad.

IRSEP

Prior to Departure

January–May

- Attend required orientations.
- Meet independently with the IRSEP returned exchange and current international student
- Inform yourself about the political, economic, social and educational issues of the host country
- Refer to the *Know Before You Go Guide* for additional pre-departure information
- Complete all Learning Abroad Center and host university requirements including: host university application and University of Minnesota registration
- Make preparations for departure (passport, visa, flight, etc.)
- Continue to meet and/or be in contact with the returnee and international student to learn about your country

June–September

(Note: IRSEP Malaysia student departs in late May)

- Make final preparations for departure
- Complete all remaining pre-departure items on the Exchange Checklist in this handbook

Responsibilities: While Abroad

While you are abroad, you will be integrated into the host institution as a regular student. You will have support from the host institution's exchange coordinator and past IRSEP participants from that country. Because you will need to be independent, you will need to take the initiative to introduce yourself to faculty and students and to establish your own networks for accomplishing your study abroad goals. Please keep in mind that higher education will differ abroad, and you may need to set and determine how to realize your own goals in order to maximize your experience overseas.

When you arrive in the host country, inform the IRSEP staff in the Learning Abroad Center of your address, email, and telephone number (if available).

Your main contact will be the host institution staff, **and you should be certain to maintain contact with them throughout your stay**, as well as seek their guidance on important program matters. You should also keep them informed of any changes you make regarding academics, housing, vacation, travel, and other matters.

IRSEP expects that you will abide by the cultural norms of your host country, such as appropriate dress and behavior, and that you will comply with regulations within the host country regarding housing, university requirements, and laws. If you have any questions pertaining to specific regulations, please take the time to contact your host institution staff.

Keep in mind that when you return to Minnesota, you will be responsible for the promotion, recruitment, and orientation of the next exchange student. Be sure to bring back cultural artifacts to use in these activities such as photos, small crafts, and picture books. You will also be expected to update the Country Report for your host country, so be certain to take plenty of notes on the details of your experience.

While Overseas

- Fulfill the academic responsibilities of the exchange program
- Inform the Learning Abroad Center IRSEP staff of your overseas address, email, and phone number
- Complete monthly assignments sent by the Learning Abroad Center IRSEP team
- Maintain a detailed record of information on the exchange to include in your final report for next year's candidate(s)
- Gather promotional materials and artifacts to use in the program binder and at future Study Abroad fairs
- Comply with regulations within the host country regarding housing, university requirements, local civil laws and political activity
- Abide by the cultural norms within the host country such as dress, relationships — especially male–female, and official living situations
- Serve as the IRSEP liaison and representative with the academic staff overseas
- Follow all onsite established procedures regarding academics, housing, vacation, traveling, and other matters
- Inform the overseas staff of your travel plans, so that they are aware of your itinerary
- Assume responsibility for communication regarding concerns you may have about the exchange
- Complete the online Maximizing Study Abroad course

Responsibilities: Upon Return

As you are aware, the returned IRSEP exchange student is considered the primary contact for the new exchangee. The returned exchange student also leads the recruitment and selection process of next year's participant.

Timetable of Responsibilities for Returned Exchange Student

Although the following timetable is a rough guideline, you will receive a timetable with exact dates upon your return to Minnesota.

July

- Begin your Final Report (due August 15)

August

- Inform the Learning Abroad Center when you return to Minnesota and provide an updated telephone and address
- Inform the Learning Abroad Center by August 15 if you are willing to pick up the incoming IRSEP student(s) at the airport
- Submit your final report by August 15 (details will be sent to you by the Learning Abroad Center by the end of July)

September

- Attend the IRSEP returnee meeting to plan your schedule of responsibilities
- Organize and staff the IRSEP table for your site at the Study Abroad Fair in September
- Attend the IRSEP welcome reception
- Promote the IRSEP program and recruit students by conducting classroom visits. You will receive information for conducting classroom visits from the Learning Abroad Center.
- The Learning Abroad Center oversees all classroom visit arrangements. You will need to visit 5 classes during the fall semester and 5 classes during the spring semester. Classroom visits are the most effective way

to encourage students to study abroad. You will work with a classroom visit intern who will train you on the classroom visit protocol and assist in the selection of courses.

- Post IRSEP promotion flyers, which the Learning Abroad Center will provide you, around campus.
- Be in contact with the IRSEP international student to answer questions and assist with adjustment to campus and US life
- Begin to update the Learning Abroad Center country binder and website for your IRSEP country

October

- Continue to promote IRSEP via classroom visits
- Serve as an information resource for interested applicants
- Communicate with IRSEP student(s) abroad
- Continue to update your country binder and webpage at the Learning Abroad Center

November

- IRSEP application deadline will be between November 20-22 (varies each year)
- Organize an interview committee and coordinate their review of the applications.

December

- Along with your selection committee members, review all submitted applications. The IRSEP staff will provide you with specific information regarding this process.
- Interview day! You are the Chair of the selection committee and will lead interviews and discussion on selecting candidates. (Interviews are mid-December)
- Call the selected candidate no later than three days after interviews. Provide the IRSEP staff with the Chair's completed review forms, which states reasons for the selection/non-selection of each candidate.
- If there are no suitable candidates, continue promotion of scholarship exchange.

January

- Serve as the contact person for the selected outgoing student.
- Alternative interview timeframe if first search is unsuccessful.

IRSEP

February

- Work with the newly selected exchangee for informal orientation.
- Attend IRSEP exchange orientation and potluck dinner.
- Organize and staff the IRSEP table for your site at the Study Abroad Fair.

March–May

- Continue preparation with newly selected students.
- Complete at least five classroom visits by end of semester.
- Continue promoting IRSEP.

Please do not hesitate to contact the IRSEP program directors if you have any questions about the responsibilities outlined in this handbook.

The Final Report

After the conclusion of your study abroad, you will be required to submit a final report which will be given to next year's candidates as a means for learning as much as possible about the country in which they will study. The Learning Abroad Center staff will provide you with the Final Report of the previous IRSEP exchange student. Reports are due in August upon your return to the U.S.

Using this handbook as a reference, you will address the following topics:

1. **Obtaining a visa/residence permit**
2. **Materials received prior to departure from the host institution**
3. **Arrival**
4. **Health issues**
5. **Money Matters**
6. **Stipend/Scholarship**
7. **University/Campus**
8. **University Calendar**
9. **Academic Issues**
10. **Language Courses**

11. **Volunteer/Internship**

12. **Housing**

13. **Eating & Entertainment**

14. **Transportation**

15. **Communication**

16. **Background information on country/city**

17. **Safety**

18. **Packing**

19. **Resources**

20. **IRSEP Requirements**

21. **Overall Assessment**

Selection Process

Selection Committee Procedures

The IRSEP program is the only University of Minnesota program that offers a full academic scholarship overseas. In order to give students who are not selected for IRSEP the opportunity to apply for other study abroad programs, the selection process is conducted in November. In the event that an IRSEP site does not fill by the November deadline, recruitment may continue until a suitable candidate has been chosen.

In order to begin the selection process, you will need to form your committee. Identify at least one person beyond yourself and the international exchange student to serve on the selection committee for your site. Ideally, you should have a relevant faculty member as one of your committee members in order to develop faculty awareness of the IRSEP program. Furthermore, there should always be an odd number of people on a committee to avoid an impasse.

The Learning Abroad Center will be able to assist you as you work to build your committee. Past IRSEP Committee Chairs have consulted the following in their search for committee participants:

- China: consult with the China Center staff and the Chair of Asian Languages & Literature
- Germany: consult with the Chair Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch

- Iceland: contact the Minneapolis Icelandic Committee and the Department Chair of German Scandinavian and Dutch

Provide the Learning Abroad Center exchanges staff with a list of committee members by the deadline indicated on the timetable you receive when you return.

Meet with the committee prior to the application deadline to review the selection and interview process, and the *Guidelines for Interviews*. Design your additional interview questions with the assistance of the committee.

Application Review and Pre-screening

It is your responsibility to oversee the application process. You will need to review applications and ensure that committee members read them, as well as complete the application review sheets by their deadline. It is your responsibility to be certain that the committee members clearly understand the process of reviewing all applications.

Applications cannot be removed from the Learning Abroad Center and must be reviewed in 230 Heller Hall. Learning Abroad Center office hours are 9:00 - 6:00 pm on Mondays and 9:00am – 4:00 pm Tuesday through Friday.

Application review and pre-screening is based on the student's application, transcripts, essays, and letters of reference. They are to be rated according to seven criteria on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest. The numbers should be written in the box provided on the form, and the total points noted in the blank space at the bottom of the each page of the Applicant Evaluation Form.

There must be one evaluation form for each applicant from each selection committee member. The blank forms will be available in each applicant's file when you review each application. When you are done evaluating the application and essay, leave your evaluation form in the completed reviews file. Please do not read evaluations made by other committee members, so that your evaluations will not be affected by theirs. Also keep in mind that there is no one student "type" better suited to a particular exchange than any other type. IRSEP is open to students in all academic fields, except where restrictions are placed by the host institution.

Interviews

Rooms will be reserved for your use by the Learning Abroad Center staff. A staff member will most likely be on duty in the Learning Abroad Center, and there will be light refreshments for the applicants and your committee.

You may interview as many candidates as desired; however, you should interview a minimum of five candidates. There are two major reasons for this: 1) Students who look average on paper may have the interpersonal skills that make for an outstanding exchange student. 2) The interview process is educational and may help a student identify alternative study abroad options or become a stronger candidate next year. 3) You and your committee need to identify one nominee (two for Germany and Malaysia) and two alternates. It is important to interview enough candidates to make a good selection. If less than five students apply, all qualified students should be interviewed. The Learning Abroad Center staff will assist with these decisions.

Be certain to contact all finalists at least three days before the interview date to schedule an interview time.

Before the Interviews

Committee members should meet at least 30 minutes before the first scheduled interview in order to discuss procedures.

During the Interviews

Interviews should last 20 minutes, with 10 minutes for committee discussion before the next interview.

Group interviews can be intimidating, so do all you can to put the applicant at ease: arrange the chairs in a conversational grouping, introduce all of the committee members to each candidate, avoid "courtroom-style" questioning. Assure them that you (as the committee chair) are very interested in them and would like to get to know them better. Leave approximately three minutes at the end of the interview process for questions that the applicant may have.

All interviews should be seen as an educational opportunity for everybody. Do not expect the candidates to have the same level of knowledge about the country that you do—they have not yet had their experience abroad. Instead, ask questions that allow them to show what they do know, and perhaps, more importantly, how open they are to learning.

When conducting the interview, please be certain to abide by the following guidelines:

- All candidates must be interviewed by the entire selection committee at the same time. No candidate will separately meet with a committee member or be judged by a committee member who was not present for all interviews.
- All candidates must be asked the same set of questions.

You, as the Chair, will be in charge of the entire interview process. The Learning Abroad Center will provide you with more details to prepare you prior to the day of the interview.

Concluding Remarks

The Learning Abroad Center is delighted that you are participating in IRSEP, and we look forward to hearing about your experiences and adventures. Please do not hesitate to call on us during your pre-departure preparations, while overseas, and as you fulfill your responsibilities upon return. While this program requires independence and self-initiative, the Learning Abroad Center is also committed to ensuring that you have a quality academic experience overseas. We look forward to assisting you throughout this unique opportunity.

Appendix

Packing

It is *extremely* important that you pack lightly, because you will be carrying your luggage yourself during the trip, often for long stretches in airports, and bus and train stations. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is “easily carried” is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up, and walk around the block. If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you’ve packed.

Important: Take clothing that needs a minimal amount of care (this is especially important if you plan to do any independent traveling). You may have to go a couple of weeks without doing any laundry, especially at the beginning of the program.

Suggested Clothing

Please adjust according to your own personal tastes and style!

7 or more pair of underwear
7 or more pair socks
1 pair pajamas
slippers
2 pair jeans or dress trousers
2 sweaters
3 dress shirts
1 skirt/sportcoat
1 nice outfit
comfortable walking shoes
1 pair dress shoes
1 jacket for cool weather
walking shoes/hiking boots
1 swim suit

It is extremely easy to over-pack. Keep in mind you will be gone for close to a year and will more than likely purchase clothing during the year.

Checklist

The following is a list of all the tasks you will need to complete before leaving the United States, while overseas, and upon your return. It is never too early to begin to fulfill these tasks, especially since these items can take a considerable time to complete.

1. **APPLY FOR A PASSPORT.** This is the most crucial task, since you cannot enter a foreign country without it. Prior to your departure, make a photocopy for yourself, the Learning Abroad Center, and for someone to keep for you at home.
2. **ATTEND ORIENTATION.** You are responsible for reading and completing all materials received at this session.
3. Return all paperwork to the Learning Abroad Center. This includes:
 - Health Information Form
 - Program Deposit/Method of Payment Form
 - Release & Waiver Form
 - Host University application
4. Apply for a VISA, if required. It is your responsibility to obtain a visa or any other documents required to enter your host country. See the Passport and Visa section in this guide for more information.
5. **REGISTER** for your study abroad program with the Office of the Registrar. Instructions will be provided by the Learning Abroad Center to complete this process.
6. Plan for good **HEALTH** and **SAFETY** by contacting your doctor about immunizations required for your host country and planning for any prescriptions you know you will need while overseas. You can further contact Boynton’s Travel/Immunization Clinic at 612.625.3222.
7. Book your **AIRLINE TICKET** once you have been officially accepted to your host institution. Booking early helps you to avoid paying outrageous airline prices. Two of the most popular and helpful sites, which offer some of the best student discounts, are: www.studentuniverse.com and www.startravel.com
8. Give the Learning Abroad Center your **TRAVEL ITINERARY** at least 30 days prior to your departure.
9. If you are using **FINANCIAL AID**, complete the **SACE** process
10. Set up a **POWER OF ATTORNEY**. Most students name an immediate family member, such as a parent, to legally represent them with any financial or university affairs while they are abroad.
11. **REVIEW YOUR CISI INSURANCE** policies. We recommend that you maintain minimum insurance in the United States while you study abroad to ease renewal of your policy upon return. Be sure you take your CISI insurance information and a claim form with you overseas.

12. If you plan to withdraw funds from a savings account in the United States for personal expenses, such as traveling, an ATM debit card is the fastest, easiest and usually the cheapest way to withdraw money from your own account at your destination. Before your departure, MAKE SURE TO INFORM YOUR BANK that you may use your card while abroad, in order to avoid any assumptions that your card has been stolen and being used abroad.
13. Plan for EMERGENCY FUND transfers by setting up a bank account that allows cash withdrawal from an ATM. In addition, make plans with someone back home in case you need emergency funds.
14. If you plan to return to University of Minnesota on-campus housing upon your return, check with the Housing Office regarding their application timeline. Make other logistical arrangements for your return (ex., financial aid application, etc.)
15. Make sure to notify the Learning Abroad Center of any change of address while you are abroad. Because of a new international address, you will not be able to register your host country's address with your OneStop student account. Furthermore, make sure to update your University of Minnesota student account, so that all personal US mail is delivered from the University of Minnesota to your desired destination.

Once You Arrive Overseas

1. MEET WITH YOUR HOST INSTITUTION'S EXCHANGE COORDINATOR to introduce yourself and ask any questions you may have regarding times for orientation and other immediate issues. You may want to contact him or her via email and schedule an appointment before you leave the United States.
2. CORRESPOND WITH AN ACADEMIC ADVISER in your department, as needed, regarding the courses for which you wish to register.
3. Each month, while you are studying in your host country, the IRSEP program directors in the Learning Abroad Center will assign monthly assignments to you, which are to be completed as statly prompted. The monthly reports you submit is a sound way to help your IRSEP program advisors to prepare themselves to advise future IRSEP participants. Additionally, they allow your IRSEP program directors to observe your academic and personal developments during your time abroad.
4. Inform the staff of any CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER while overseas.
5. KEEP A RECORD of important resources, addresses, and relevant advice regarding the exchange experience.
6. WORK WITH YOUR HOST INSTITUTION TO ASSURE THAT YOUR TRANSCRIPT WILL BE RECEIVED BY THE LEARNING ABROAD CENTER. This should be done well in advance to returning to the US, and is your responsibility.

Once you return to the United States

- ___ Inform your IRSEP program directors of YOUR NEW ADDRESS and telephone number within two weeks of your return.
- ___ Submit a completed EVALUATION FORM, available at www.UMabroad.umn.edu.
- ___ If you have reciprocity status, you must reapply for this at the Admissions Office upon you return.
- ___ Once your credit has transferred, work with your department or college office to APPLY YOUR COURSEWORK TOWARDS SPECIFIC DEGREE REQUIREMENTS. Please note that courses will appear on your APAS report, not your transcript. (This process may take three to six months.)
- ___ Complete your IRSEP third year commitments, on which the Learning Abroad Center will advise you. (See other sections of this handbook.)

Reading List

***Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide*, by R. K. Brislin, C. Cherrie, and M. Yong.** A series of "critical incidents" designed to help you recognize cultural clues in a variety of situations, and to generate several possible explanations for a particular situation.

***The Silent Language*, by Edward T. Hall.** Known as "the father of intercultural communication," Hall writes about many of the more subtle cultural differences such as nonverbal communication in an engaging and anecdotal way.

***Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, by L. Robert Kohls.** A rather simple but useful general guide for persons preparing to live abroad. A good, basic introduction; short and easy to read.

***Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, by L.A. Samovar and R.E. Belmont.** A book of collected readings on various topics of intercultural communications.

***American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, by Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett.** A description of contrasting values between the mainstream US culture and other cultures. Examples of problems encountered between Americans and citizens of developing countries.

***The Art of Crossing Cultures*, by Craig Storti.** Storti focuses on learning how to anticipate differences and to employ different reactions according to the cultural situation.

Many of these books are available in the University of Minnesota libraries. Nearly all of them, and many others, are available through Intercultural Press, P.O. Box 700, Yarmouth, ME 04096. Call 207.846.5168 or write to get their catalog.

Ten things to remember while you are abroad

- 1.** Don't expect to find things as you have at home, for you have left home to find different things.
 - 2.** An open mind and a light heart are the beginnings of a wonderful journey.
 - 3.** Pack sensibly; bring only the essentials.
 - 4.** Unnecessary worry brings little pleasure.
 - 5.** Know where your passport is at all times; a person without a passport is like a person without a country.
 - 6.** Remember to not judge the entire host country in the event of a single unpleasant incident.
 - 7.** Do not let fellow sojourners get on your nerves; keep in mind that you have prepared yourself thoroughly for an enjoyable experience.
 - 8.** While abroad, be prepared to "DO AS THEY DO."
 - 9.** You can learn so much by just sitting back and observing.
 - 10.** Remember, you are a guest in your host country. Those who treat their hosts with respect shall decidedly assume that respect will be shown to them.
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