

# Quick Guide to ISEP

## Part 1: Sending Outbound ISEP Students

### I. What ISEP Offers

- a. ISEP Exchange between the USA and 50 countries
- b. International-to-International Exchange among international members (formerly Multilateral)
- c. ISEP Direct – fee-paid option, if demand is higher than exchange space (i.e. UK, Australia)
- d. ISEP GEP Programs

### II. Recruiting

- a. Comprehensive student catalogs are mailed out in August. Distribute materials where they'll be most used (e.g. study abroad fairs, classroom info sessions, student union building, intl. office advising center). Additional tools for download are available online: see coordinator's section of website, under "Promote ISEP". Power point presentations can be customized.
- b. Gain support from faculty, returned students, or visiting students.
- c. ISEP Ambassadors, Facebook and Photo-essays are great recruiting tools.

### III. Advising

- a. ISEP's mission is immersion. Students need to be mature, independent and have realistic expectations. Encourage students to do their own research on ISEP website and member institution websites.
- b. Tools on Student's Section of the Website: Go to [www.isep.org](http://www.isep.org), click "Students".
  - Search by Language and Field of Study: From blue bar for US or International students, select "Search for a Program."
  - ISEP Membership Directory: Click on the Directory link on the far right side of the screen, then select US or International members. You can view sites by state or country. For example, click on a site in Argentina or Arkansas. Notice the link for the university's website where the student can research course offerings. Check Language notes and Academic notes. Particularly note any closed departments. Many have Photo Essays.
  - Sites Open for Applications: Click back to the students' page and click "Sites Open for Applications". This is the most important webpage to check for the actual space available for applications at each institution. It is updated regularly before and during the placement season. You can see ISEP Exchange or ISEP Direct programs open for applications. Refer to this site also for late applicants after the deadline.
- c. Tools on Coordinator's Section of the Website: See "Advise Your Students" or "Application Tips"

### IV. How to Apply

- a. See "How to Apply" on ISEP website for a detailed list of application contents. All applications on website can be typed into PDF forms, saved, and printed. Home coordinators should review applications to ensure completeness and that requested sites are available on "Sites Open for Applications". Note payment option on checklist and sign nomination.
- b. Application fees and deposits: \$375 Exchange; \$375 Direct deposit that will be applied towards the overall program cost; \$475 for all dual placements. Payable to ISEP.
- c. Priority Deadlines
  - Fall or Full-year placements: February 15 for all US and International students
  - Spring placements: September 1 for all US and International students
  - After the priority deadline, applications are accepted as space is available and time remains for visas. See Sites Open for Applications page. ISEP Direct will usually stay open longer.

- d. Submission of applications: Home coordinator signs and mails original application with photocopy to ISEP. For competitive sites, it's essential to submit a complete application on time. If the application is incomplete, it's better to wait to send the complete application late, rather than send the incomplete application by the deadline. Exchange applications are generally not reviewed before the priority deadline. If application arrives incomplete or without photocopy student's placement may be impacted.

## V. Placement Process

- a. Home coordinator mails applications to ISEP. ISEP begins to enter host placements based on requests and availability 2-3 weeks after the priority deadline. Each student's exchange placement is assigned a value: 1.0 for a full year, 0.5 for a semester and 0.25 for a summer term. An outgoing student counts as a negative (-1.0, -0.5, -0.25) and an incoming student counts as a positive (1.0, 0.5, 0.25). ISEP-Direct placements are listed as 0.0 because they do not count in the exchange balance. Please see your status report online in WebIS.
- b. ISEP mails applications to host. Host has 3 weeks to review apps and return Host Institution Placement Confirmations (HIPC). Over 90% of placements are confirmed.
- c. Immediately after receiving HIPC confirmation, ISEP emails home coordinator to download the PPAF acceptance packet and Institutional Information Sheet (IIS) from WebIS. The acceptance process usually begins 6-8 weeks after the application is sent to ISEP.
- d. See Status Report in WebIS throughout the process, which will be covered later in this document

## VI. PPAF Acceptance Process

Once the student is placed by ISEP and confirmed by the host institution, an email will be sent to the home coordinator and the student indicating that the home coordinator may download the PPAF for the student. You will need to log on to the coordinator's section of WebIS to retrieve the PPAF.

- a. **Step 1: Print the PPAF.** The Participant Placement Acceptance Form is the firm contract for the student's acceptance. It outlines the placement, special conditions, and further steps to complete the acceptance. It includes a medical self-assessment form and instructions for enrolling in ISEP health insurance online at \$56 per month (current rate). For US and I-to-I students, PPAF includes the ISEP Certification Letter needed for a visa.
- b. **Step 2: Print IIS – Institutional Information Sheet.** The IIS is also downloadable from the coordinators section of WebIS. Part of PPAF contract, it contains specific details about the host program and benefits. IIS is only available in the password-protected WebIS. Coordinators should highlight important IIS sections with students, particularly housing, meals, and transcripts. Students should thoroughly read the IIS and carry it abroad.
- c. **Step 3: Student Handbook** – Found online in the "Placed Students" section of the ISEP website. Emphasize "Before You Go", "Health and Safety", and "Your Return".
- d. **Step 4: Country Handbook** – Found online in the "Placed Students" section of the ISEP website. Specific to each country, it includes visa details, information about daily life, and a bibliography.
- e. **Step 5: Sign and Accept.** Students have 3 weeks to decide, sign and submit PPAF to their coordinator for signature. The home coordinator will then fax the signature pages of the PPAF to ISEP.
- f. For International-to-US ISEP students: ISEP will begin to mail the DS-2019 visa documents to home coordinators in May for fall students and October for spring students. See Part 3 of the Quick Guide, or the ISEP website for details on the visa process, extensions, travel, employment authorization, and academic training.

## VII. Financial Information for ISEP-Direct

- a. PPAF lists the program balance due. Students mark financial aid release date. ISEP-Direct deposit of \$375 is due when the application is submitted to ISEP.

- b. Fee breakdowns are published in password-protected WebIS. ISEP authorizes home coordinators to complete financial aid forms on behalf of ISEP.
- c. Invoices for remaining balances are sent approximately one month before program begins to home coordinator only, never to individual students. Includes institutional invoice for all ISEP-Direct students and individual invoices to forward to student.
- d. ISEP-Direct program balance is due before the program begins, or immediately after the financial aid release date. Payment may be made by the student or university, but the home coordinator is ultimately responsible for collecting payment and mailing checks.

#### **VIII. During the Program**

- a. Home coordinator conducts pre-departure orientation. Host provides onsite orientation.
- b. Emergencies should be reported to ISEP. An after-hours emergency number is on the ISEP website.
- c. Clear communication from the student directly to the on-site host coordinator, who can contact ISEP Central or the home coordinator if problems arise. Encourage students to use resources at host site before alarming parents or home coordinator.

#### **IX. After the Program**

- a. Transcript Forms are included in PPAF. For extras, see WebIS Resources Tab, under "Placement Information", click "Guidelines and Forms", scroll down to "Transcript Related Documents".
  - Host Institution Enrollment Form (optional) – Only for US students abroad. Upon arrival, students verify course enrollment with host coordinator and complete Part 1; fax a copy to home coordinator. The student does not need to send a copy to ISEP Central. At the end of term, students complete Part 2 with list of courses actually completed; host keeps a copy, and the student carries a copy to home coordinator upon return. Best resource for avoiding transcript discrepancies. Can also be used for financial aid purposes.
  - Transcripts are sent from the host university to ISEP Central only; ISEP will forward to home Coordinator. ISEP may hold if there are unpaid charges on student's account. Do not accept transcripts from students. See IIS for transcript release date.
  - Transcript Evaluation Guidelines – give link to registrar and academic advisors. Only a guideline. Please refer students to any individual regulations related to credit transfer at home university.
  - Problems with Transcript – contact ISEP Transcript Manager.
- b. ISEP Student Evaluations online – reminders are emailed after the program ends.
- c. Photo Essay Contest – Students can submit up to 10 photos, creative writing, or videos on their ISEP experience; twice annual cash prizes.

## Part 2: Receiving Incoming ISEP Students

### I. Providing Information about Your Institution:

- a. **Review your Membership Directory Entry:** From [www.isep.org](http://www.isep.org), click "Directory", and select your institution. This description is used to advertise your program to incoming students. It is updated annually. List accurate information on fields of study if classes are feasibly open. Check if TOEFL is correct or if alternative language tests are accepted.
- b. **Prepare your Institutional Information Sheet (IIS)** - Review IIS Updating Procedures for WebIS. Northern Hemisphere IIS's are updated every December-January, Southern Hemisphere IIS's are updated every August.
  1. Access coordinator login for WebIS by going to [webis.isep.org](http://webis.isep.org), or by going to our website and clicking on the coordinators tab, then selecting login.
  2. Click on Update Exchange IIS or Update Direct IIS (depending on which type of IIS you need to update) in the tabs across the top of the page.
    - a. Note: Some institutions may have more than one IIS because they may have different program options that require separate information.
  3. Click on Details for the IIS you would like to update
  4. Once you have selected details you will see a list of options on the Actions menu to the left.
    - a. Options two through seven will be the only options you will select for updating your IIS. Selecting option one (organization) will simply show your institution's details in the database.
  5. After selecting one of the updating options click Edit to make any changes.
  6. Click on the Update button to save any changes you have made to the IIS.
  7. As soon as ISEP Central approves these changes you will be able to view the updated version of your IIS.
  8. **Pay special attention to:**
    - a. **The Calendar:** Dates are very important; students are making their plans and buying tickets based on this information. If you do not know your SM2 dates yet, indicate TBA or Tentative under the Official Arrival Date Notes or Last Date of Benefits Notes sections of the Calendar Actions tab. Please remember to update this section with the actual dates as soon as this information is available. The official arrival date and last date of benefits are the official dates when students must receive housing and meal benefits. The arrival date must be at least one day prior to orientation. The last date of benefits should be one day after the last day of exams.
    - b. **Housing and Meal Benefits:** All ISEP participants should receive housing benefits and 19-21 meals per week for the full period of the exchange. Exception: during breaks between semesters for full-year students, only housing is required. Meals are not required
    - c. **Transcripts:** Ensure that transcripts are sent to ISEP Central only, never to students, by the dates indicated on your IIS. You may need to work with registrars' office or collect student waivers. **First official copy of transcript sent to ISEP Central should be free of charge.**
    - d. The more detailed information you provide on the IIS, the less surprise, confusion and questions you will receive from students! Put yourself in the students' shoes and think of what you would want to know if you were studying abroad.

### II. Confirmation Process

- **Review Applications:** ISEP Central will begin to make placements in cycles about 3 weeks after the priority deadline, based on students' requested sites and space available at your site. Start reviewing your applications as soon as you receive them to speed along the confirmation process and allow time for visas. Each institution determines how confirmations are processed internally (i.e. through your office, admissions office, departmental advisors, etc.). Applications are usually sent to hosts in early October for Spring semester, and mid/late March for Fall or Full-Year placements.

- **Check the Course Request List** to confirm if the classes requested are available or suggest alternatives. Note any program officer comments or mandatory required courses.
- **Fax the Host Institution Placement Confirmation (HIPC)** to ISEP by the due date listed. The HIPC is the yellow cover sheet on the application. Circle yes/no; undergrad/grad; write in if the student is confirmed for a degree-seeking graduate status. Include any special conditions/comments on class availability or alternatives. If an academic advisor has been designated, include his/her contact information. The HIPC indicates your institution officially agrees to accept the student. Check the Status Report to see when students accept.

### III. Pre-Arrival Preparation

- **Send Welcome Packet Directly to Students:** Do NOT send to ISEP Central. Include general international student information, i.e. admission letter, housing information, course registration instructions, etc. NOTE: Be sure to customize your general materials with specific differences for ISEP students - visas, insurance, benefits, finances, etc. IMPORTANT: For the incoming students to receive their visas, they will need an official admission letter from your institution.
- **Prepare Student Benefits:** Make arrangements for housing and meals as soon as the students are confirmed. Don't delay, especially with the short time frame in the fall.
- **Open Communication:** After students are confirmed, you can have direct contact with them. Incoming students will also have your contact details in their IIS. EXCEPTION: If international students ask about J-1 visa/DS-2019, refer them to their Home ISEP Coordinator or ISEP Central, since ISEP is the student's visa sponsor. DS-2019s are sent to the student's home coordinator after they are confirmed. The host institution cannot issue any visa forms for ISEP students.
- **Please be sure** that university administrators realize that these are exchange students and not scholarship students. Any stipend given to the exchange students should not be taxed by the IRS.

### IV. Arrival and Orientation on Campus

- Each site can create their own internal orientation procedures. ISEP students can be included with other students' orientations, but remind them of the benefits provided in the ISEP IIS. Make sure International-to-US students know they are under ISEP's J-1 visa sponsorship. Orientation Guidelines can be found on the ISEP website:  
[http://www.isep.org/Coordinators/onsite\\_orientation\\_guide.asp](http://www.isep.org/Coordinators/onsite_orientation_guide.asp)

### V. Post Exchange

- Send transcripts to ISEP Central only, not to students. First transcript sent should be free of charge. Encourage your visiting students to complete an ISEP Photo Essay to help promote your site to other ISEP students.

## Part 3: General Reference and Resources

### General Reference and Resources

#### I. **J-1 Visa Information for International-to-US students**

Read more about visa issues such as temporary departures, as well as extensions, employment authorization, and academic training. From [www.isep.org](http://www.isep.org), go to Students, then Placed Students, select Country Handbooks, and USA, Visas and Residency.

#### II. **General information:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/visa\\_information.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/visa_information.asp)

#### III. **Arrival information:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/visa\\_procedures\\_status.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/visa_procedures_status.asp)

#### IV. **Validation information:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/visa\\_keeping.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/visa_keeping.asp)

- As your program start date passes (as listed on the IIS), ISEP Central will send an ISEP-L with instructions and a form attached that coordinators will return to ISEP Central either via email or fax. You will need to verify you have seen each student arrive on campus and send us their current physical US address. This needs to be done ASAP upon arrival.
- If a student does not have the DS-2019 upon entry, they will be issued an I-515A (a 30-day temporary entry document). Contact ISEP's SEVIS department for assistance.
- Student must be enrolled full-time to stay in status.

#### V. **Travel Validation:** DS-2019s should be collected and mailed to ISEP as soon as possible for travel signature. **Please Do Not Sign These!**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/visa\\_departure\\_travel.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/visa_departure_travel.asp)

#### VI. **Social Security Number Letter:** ISEP students only need Social Security letters if they are gainfully employed. Then, their Academic Training letter or Employment Authorization will suffice to apply at the Social Security office.

#### VII. **Employment Authorization:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/working\\_usa.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/working_usa.asp)

Students can do on-campus, part-time jobs during the semester (form under Guidelines and Forms). Students need to go to the ISEP coordinator to obtain the form and signatures. Host Coordinators will submit original paperwork to the Program Officer that oversees the student's home institution. Do not allow students to begin working unless they have received ISEP's authorization letter.

#### VIII. **Academic Training:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_students/academic\\_training.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_students/academic_training.asp)

Students can stay in the US after their exchange to pursue Academic Training in a job directly related to their academic field of study at the host. They must find the job offer and complete the request form (found in ISEP Guidelines and Forms). ISEP will extend their program end date, update their primary site of activity in SEVIS, and send a new DS-2019. Students are responsible for housing and meals on their own. See guidelines on the ISEP website or contact the ISEP SEVIS department. Deadlines: April 1 and November 15.

#### IX. **Extension Information:**

[http://www.isep.org/students/Intl\\_Students/visa\\_extensions.asp](http://www.isep.org/students/Intl_Students/visa_extensions.asp)

Students will need to complete the form with the coordinator, found in the Coordinator's Section of the WebIS under Guidelines and Forms. Deadlines: December 1 and May 1.

## II. Resources Tab in WebIS

- a. **Emergency Response** – contact numbers and emergency response guidelines

- b. **Coordinators Contact List**: For networking, use ISEP-L. For emergencies, contact coordinators directly.
- c. **Guidelines and Forms** – includes forms for Academic Training and Work Authorization
- d. **Status Reports** – updated list of incoming and outgoing students' status at each stage of placement process. See Status Report Code Chart found in the Resources section of WebIS for explanation of codes.
- e. **ISEP Central Staff** – includes "Whom Do I Call" guide, staff directory, and biographies for ISEP staff.