

The ISEP Advising Guide





ISEP's Advising Philosophy

ISEP values a student-focused approach to advising that is centered around individualized discussions of students' goals and desired outcomes for their study abroad experience. Often students have pre-formulated expectations in mind when they meet with their ISEP advisor and our philosophy is to ensure that the program that they select meets their goals both academically and experientially. In all of our advising conversations, we focus on transparency in order to ensure that students have all the details that they need to make an informed decision. We also strive to provide equity throughout the process to ensure that all students can overcome any barriers that they face to studying abroad. Overall, ISEP subscribes to an appreciative advising approach that uses a personalized structure to ensure students' success abroad.



How to create a strong ISEP application

- Students interested in ISEP Exchange programs should **diversify their program lists**. A competitive exchange application is a flexible application, so students should add as many programs as they are interested in and that will meet their academic needs.
- For ISEP Exchange, we recommend that students list **at least 3-5 programs that they would be excited to attend**. They are welcome to list up to 10 programs on their application, keeping in mind they could be placed at any program on their application.
- Students interested in ISEP Exchange should **note the [Chance of Placement](#)** for each program and aim to have at least 1-2 programs on their application with a “Good” or better chance of placement. They can only add one site with a “Most Competitive” chance of placement, and if they do, it must be listed in the first slot.
- Consider [ISEP Direct](#) to guarantee their spot on a program.
- Utilize the links in the **Course Description section of the program pages to navigate the course catalogs** and see if there are enough relevant courses to meet their needs.
- **Talk to the international office at their home university about applying financial aid to their programs.** Most financial aid can be applied to Exchange programs, but they will need to confirm what exactly can be used for Direct programs.
- If they are not quite sure whether they would like to add a program to their application, they can “**Save for Later**” and talk to us about whether the program is a good fit.

Application FAQ

Q: How does a student start an ISEP application?

A: Students can create an ISEP account at isepstudyabroad.org/apply. Once they have an account, they can click on “Application” in the menu to get started.

Q: When is ISEP’s priority deadline?

A: ISEP’s priority application deadlines are September 15 for spring (approximately January – May) programs and March 1 for fall (approximately September – December) and summer (approximately June – August) programs. Some ISEP Exchange programs and many ISEP Direct programs remain available following these deadlines. **All students who apply by the priority deadline are equally considered for competitive exchange sites.**

Q: How many programs should students apply to?

A: Students may list up to 10 programs on a single application. We recommend listing at least 3-5 programs that they would be excited to attend. If applying to ISEP Exchange programs, they should list at least two programs that have a “good” [chance of placement](#) or better. Placement decisions are made based on exchange space available. If applying to ISEP Direct programs, students usually only need to list one program, as placement is guaranteed on ISEP Direct if the minimum requirements are met.

Q: How can students find the requirements for the program they are interested in?

A: Each ISEP program requires an official transcript. ISEP Exchange programs also require an academic reference. Some programs may require a statement of interest, writing sample, language proficiency report, or resume. Students can find specific requirements on each individual program page, which shows academic and language requirements, fields of study, dates, fees, and links to course lists.

Q: What documents do students need to complete an ISEP application?

A: ISEP Exchange and ISEP Direct programs require an official transcript from the student’s home university and ISEP Exchange programs require an academic reference. A language evaluation or other language certification (TOEFL, IELTS, etc.) may be required if applying to study in another language. The host university may also require additional application materials, such as a personal essay. Check for any program-specific requirements under the Other Academic Conditions section of each program page.

Q: Can students submit an application without a transcript / academic reference / language evaluation?

A: Students’ application must be entirely complete, including all required documentation, before it can be submitted. We ask that students follow up with their professors to ensure they submit their academic reference and/or language evaluation. If a student’s official transcript will be delayed, we can in some cases accept unofficial transcripts. The student’s ISEP Student Services Officer should be contacted for assistance.

Application FAQ Continued

Q: A student requested an academic reference / language evaluation, but their professor didn't receive an email from ISEP. What can I do?

A: ISEP automatically sends a request email as soon as a student inputs their professor's name and email address into the application. If their professor didn't receive an email, let them know to check their spam folder for an email from portal@isep.org or have the student send a new request. If the student's professor/academic reference has still not received an invitation, they should contact their designated ISEP Student Services Officer for assistance.

Q: Who can write a student's official academic reference?

A: Their academic reference should be written by someone who can speak to their current academic abilities and potential for academic success while abroad. This could include a university professor or their academic advisor. References from personal acquaintances, fellow students, former high school teachers, or other non-academic contacts will not be accepted by ISEP or their host institution.

Q: Why isn't the student's Biography section saving?

A: Due to immigration documentation regulations, the Biography section does not support special characters. Students should not use special characters (letters with accents, commas, periods, hyphens, etc.) in this section.

Q: Do students need a passport to apply for an ISEP program?

A: A passport is not required to submit an ISEP application, however we strongly recommend that students begin applying for a passport as soon as possible if they do not have one. Passports should be valid for at least 6 months past the end date of their program, so they may also need to apply to renew their passport if it is expiring soon. To submit their ISEP application without a passport, they should simply click "no" to the question in the Biography section, "Do you currently have a passport?" When they receive their passport, they should upload it to their ISEP application.

Q: The Eligibility section says a student is ineligible for a program. What do they do?

A: If they do not meet the program requirements, or if they have not fully completed the other sections of the ISEP application, they may show as ineligible for a program. They can resolve the issue noted in red text or remove the program from their application if they do not meet the requirements. They cannot submit their application if they show as ineligible for a program, and they cannot be considered for any program where they do not meet the application requirements. Students should contact their ISEP Student Services Officer with any questions about eligibility.

Q: How do students pay the application fee?

A: Students can click on Invoices & Payments in their ISEP dashboard to pay the \$100 application fee. The fee can be paid by debit or credit card. If the student is having issues submitting their Application Fee payment, they should contact their ISEP Student Services Officer for assistance.

Application FAQ Continued

Q: How do students submit their application?

A: Once all application sections are complete, a large blue “Submit Application” button will appear on the top of each application page. If the submit button is grayed out, it means the application is not yet complete. Once students click “Submit Application,” they’ll be prompted to pay their ISEP application fee (if applicable). After the application fee is paid, the application will go to the home university ISEP coordinator for review and approval. Each step will need to be completed by the deadline to ensure the application is submitted on time.

Q: Why does the application say “ISEP Coordinator approval pending”?

A: Student’s home university ISEP Coordinator must first approve the application before it can be submitted to ISEP. A student’s application isn’t considered submitted to ISEP until the Coordinator approves it, and they pay the application fee (if applicable). In the student’s application tab, they will see “Your application has been submitted to ISEP” if their application has been fully submitted and is ready for review by ISEP.

Q: How can I confirm that ISEP has received my student’s application?

A: If a student’s application status is “Your application has been submitted to ISEP” it means we have received it. If their application says “Home university ISEP Coordinator approval pending” or “Pay your application fee to submit,” their application has not been fully submitted to ISEP.

Q: When will students find out about their placement?

A: We do our best to notify students about their placement within one month of the priority application deadline. They can expect to receive their placement notification by mid October if submitting for the September 15 deadline, or by late March if submitting for the March 1 deadline.

Q: Does ISEP accept late applications?

A: ISEP will continue to accept applications following the priority deadline, however late applicants will not receive priority placement consideration for ISEP Exchange programs. We will do our best to place them at one of the programs on their list, but please know that many programs do fill up immediately after the deadline. If they submit their application after the priority deadline, ISEP Exchange space will only be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Q: What if they want to study abroad with a friend? Will they be placed together?

A: While we can take requests for students to be placed together into consideration, placement together is not guaranteed on ISEP Exchange programs, out of fairness to all students from across the ISEP Community. If a student and a friend would like to be placed together, they should consider applying to the same ISEP Direct program as placement is guaranteed, applying to ISEP Exchange programs with excellent chances of placement, or considering studying in different locations.

Q: What if a student needs to withdraw from their program?

A: [View ISEP’s withdrawal policy and terms.](#)

The Student Journey

[More details here](#)



Exploratory Stage

Students work with their home university's study abroad office and their ISEP Student Services Officer to narrow down their options.



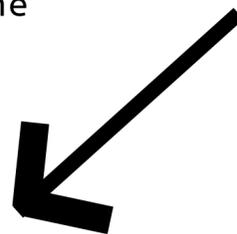
Application Stage

Once a student has added a program or programs to their application, they will start working with their ISEP SSO to complete their application and to ask questions about the region, country, or specific program they are interested in.



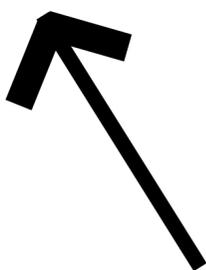
Placement

Students are placed, complete their course list, and are confirmed during this stage. The host university coordinator is responsible for ensuring the student is fully enrolled at the host site.



Pre-Departure

Students review and sign their participation contract and attend mandatory pre-departure orientations hosted by ISEP Student Services Officers. Students can now contact host coordinators for on-site information. They can also contact SSOs for special need accommodations on program.



On Program

Host coordinators are the student's on-site point of contact while on program. ISEP Student Services Officers continue to support students throughout the process. Health and Safety concerns are handled by the SSO in conjunction with the home and host coordinators.



Post-Program

ISEP collects student feedback and encourages enrollment in ISEP's alumni network - isepalumni.org. For lingering questions, students can contact their Student Services Officer.

ISEP's Advising Tips & Tricks

Take full advantage of the [ISEP Program Finder](#)

- There are lots of qualifiers to help narrow down programs
- Don't forget about the "more filters" and export (under Detail view) functionality!

Setting good expectations

- ISEP's programs are immersive
- Students should keep an eye out for information from their host site- they may send important information like housing forms
- Encourage students to read their email carefully (& check spam folder)
- Students should keep in mind that they can be placed anywhere on their program list and that they should carefully review the program page for at least their top 3 programs

Focus on academics

- Encourage students to research what courses are available for each program that they are applying to

Advising for a variety of student identities

- There is a special needs section of the ISEP application that we encourage students to use so that we can ensure they select the right program for their needs.
- We have a variety of different accommodations types, including for students with disabilities and dependents.

ISEP's Advising Tips & Tricks Continued

Looking at cost on an individual level

- Review home university-specific fees & cost structure
- Make sure students understand tuition, housing, meals, insurance, & visa costs
- Ensure that students understand how financial aid will be applied
- Utilize the budget sheets in ISEP's [Marketing Toolkit](#)

For institutions that send on ISEP Exchange

- Consider [chance of placement](#) and setting clear expectations for a “good list”
- If students only want 1 host site, discuss options on ISEP Direct
- Sites should be listed in order of preference
- Students should list at least 3 – 5 options and at least 1 or more having a “good” or “excellent” [chance of placement](#)
- Students applying to the United States are advised to list up to 10 host sites
- Any student applying to a “most competitive” site should list it first and may only list 1 site marked as “most competitive”.
- Students should not add any sites that they aren't willing to attend!
- For students applying to study in the U.S., we advise against listing 9 programs that are “most competitive” or “limited”, and the 10th site as “good.”

Reminders

The ISEP Placement Process

- All applicants who meet the enrollment requirements for a given host site have an equal chance of being placed there.
- Each student receives only one placement .
- The only way to guarantee a placement at a certain site is to apply through ISEP Direct.
- The number of spaces available at each site is based on the previous balance, how many students apply to go outbound for the term, and the host site's balance flexibility

What is needed to apply

1. ISEP application
2. Official transcript
3. Academic reference (for ISEP Exchange applicants only)
4. Home university approval
5. \$100 app fee
6. A language evaluation (if applicable)

What isn't needed

- No letter of recommendation is needed for ISEP Direct programs

Other Resources

ISEP's website

- [Application FAQ](#)
- [ISEP Direct budget template](#)
- [ISEP Exchange budget template](#)
- [In-Depth series advising resources](#)
- [Marketing toolkit](#) - includes additional advising tools

The Forum on Education Abroad

- [The Intersection Of Appreciative Advising And Inclusive Excellence](#)

Appreciativeadvising.net

- [Appreciative Advising Inventory](#)