International Reciprocal Scholarship Exchange Program (IRSEP)

2010–11
Important Names & Addresses

**In the United States**
Learning Abroad Center  
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271 19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430

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612.626.6712, tschi066@umn.edu

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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 IRSEP returnee for your study abroad country.

**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** .................. 4
- Program Overview .................................. 4
- History of IRSEP .................................. 5
- Terms of Participation ............................. 6

**Practical & Program Information** ............. 7
- Safety Precautions ................................. 7
- Emergency Procedures ............................. 7
- Passport & Visa ................................... 7

**Academics** ........................................ 8
- Coursework ......................................... 8
- Courseload ........................................... 8
- Academic Planning ................................. 9

**IRSEP Participant Responsibilities** .......... 10
- Before Departure .................................. 10
- While Overseas ..................................... 10
- Upon Return ......................................... 11

**The Final Report** ................................. 12

**Selection Process** ................................. 12
- Selection Committee Procedures ............... 12
- Application Review and Pre-screening .......... 13
- Interviews ............................................ 13

**Concluding Remarks** ............................. 13

**Appendix** .......................................... 14
- Packing .............................................. 14
- Checklist ............................................. 14
- Reading List .......................................... 14
- Ten Things To Remember .......................... 15

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*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 International Reciprocal Scholarship Exchange Program! You are about to embark upon a life changing experience.

IRSEP offers a full scholarship for selected University of Minnesota students to attend one of five 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 and leadership of students in IRSEP is the hallmark of this scholarship exchange program.

In the words of past IRSEP participants…

“To come into such close contact with an entirely new culture was amazing in the ways it affected me, in the way it morphed my views, and in the way it changed my lifestyle and daily habits. But leaving an even deeper impact were the glimpses I had into peoples’ lives, into living conditions, into worlds absolutely and entirely removed from what I knew growing up.”

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 IRSEP and must return to the University of Minnesota following their exchange in order to recruit, select, and orient the next year’s student.

IRSEP 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 exchanges enable students to pursue independent projects and internships in addition to coursework. This must be arranged with your host-country institution.

History of IRSEP

IRSEP began in the 1950s 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. Similarly, the Freie University of Berlin agreed to provide a scholarship for a Minnesota student. This agreement became the model for subsequent IRSEP exchanges.

From the very beginning, students actively participated in many aspects of IRSEP. Because the program offered a full scholarship and was considered to be a student development experience, students were selected for an approximate two-and-a-half year commitment. Each host country had its own selection committee, composed of students, faculty and staff, to select scholarship recipients. This model of student involvement still continues to this day. Even IRSEP alumni continue to contribute to the program years after their IRSEP experience.
After graduating from the University of Minnesota, many IRSEP students have gone on to pursue prominent careers in international education and other related fields. Former scholarship recipients are now administrators in international education, university faculty, and active in private industry.

**China**

**Nankai University, Tianjin**

Tianjin, China’s third largest city, offers the chance to experience one of the world’s oldest continuous civilizations. Tianjin has been Beijing’s principal port since the 1200s, and in the past the city has seen British, Italian, and French influences. Today, it reflects some of the modern character of China. In addition to the University, the city is enriched by temples and museums as well as the restored old town.

The IRSEP China exchange with Nankai University in Tianjin began in 1983 and is funded by a grant from the Minneapolis Foundation.

**Ecuador**

**Universidad San Francisco de Quito**

This full scholarship exchange provides a unique opportunity to integrate fully into Ecuadorian academic and cultural life. Students live with a host family and study in Quito, the exciting capital city located in the Andes.

The IRSEP Ecuador exchange with the Universidad San Francisco de Quito began in 2008 and is funded by the William Dawson Endowment Fund.

**Iceland**

**University of Iceland, Reykjavik**

Iceland’s historically rich culture and many geological features give the island its character. For students interested in linguistics or medieval studies, the academic program provides a unique opportunity to study the well-preserved Icelandic language. Opportunities for geology and history majors also abound.

The IRSEP Iceland exchange with the University of Iceland in Reykjavik began in 1983 and is supported by funds from the Val Bjornnson Fund.

**Germany**

**Freie University of Berlin**

Berlin is the vibrant, culture-rich capital of Germany. Blending old and new, the city offers numerous cultural activities, an active theater scene, concerts, museums, parks, and diverse neighborhoods. Excellent and extensive public transportation provides convenient access to all areas of this unique city, and the Freie University of Berlin offers a rich academic experience.

The IRSEP Germany exchange with the Freie University of Berlin began in 1952 and is funded by the Office of International Programs.
Malaysia

University Sains Malaysia, Penang

Known as the “Pearl of the Orient,” Penang lies on the northwestern coast of Malaysia. With a diverse, multi-racial population, Penang offers a wide variety of cultural attractions.

The IRSEP Malaysia exchange with the University Sains Malaysia began in the late 1970s and is funded by the Minneapolis Foundation.

Terms of Participation

Exchange Benefits

- 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 outlined 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 covering 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 between 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.

Exchangee Responsibilities

As an IRSEP Exchange Student, it is your responsibility to:

- Arrange and pay for your own transportation to and from the receiving institution.

- Pay for all personal expenses and any costs beyond those for tuition and fees covered by the scholarship.

- Maintain 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.

- Submit a written final report and one page summary upon your return to the University of Minnesota.

- Complete all items on the “To Do Checklist” and complete any paperwork and/or procedures required by the Office of Student Finance prior to your departure for the exchange period abroad.

- Return with appropriate academic documentation if you wish coursework undertaken at the receiving institution to be considered for degree requirements at the University of Minnesota.

- Work with the receiving institution to be sure that all requirements are met and that a transcript has been sent to the University of Minnesota prior to departing the receiving institution.

- Notify the Learning Abroad Center and your specific program of any change of student status (e.g., 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 to ensure that your learning goals match IRSEP’s philosophy. Consider these statements and reflect on your own goals for the program.

IRSEP requires independence.

IRSEP scholarship students are often the only University of Minnesota students at the host campus, though there are many other international students. As a result, you may not receive the attention that you would on a group study abroad program or here at the University of Minnesota. It is important to understand that IRSEP is an independent program, and that you are responsible for yourself and must be willing to ask questions when needed.

IRSEP requires a real sense of commitment.

Your regular attendance at classes is expected. While in most countries, attendance is not taken, missing class may negatively affect your grades. It will also reflect poorly on you as a University of Minnesota student. Recreational travel should never interfere with academic commitments. Most IRSEP universities have holidays and breaks during the semesters and
between semesters, and these times are ideal for travel. Weekend travel is sometimes feasible, as long as you are caught up on your coursework. Schedule friends and family visits only during university breaks so as not to disrupt your studies.

**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. Be prepared to adapt to the host culture; don’t expect it to adjust to you.

It is recommended that you do as much research as possible before you study abroad so that you will be informed about your host country and culture. The returned IRSEP students are great resources – be sure to ask them lots of questions.

**IRSEP presents challenges to women.**

For some, the feelings engendered by being female in what may seem an anti-feminist society are painful and distracting. This varies by IRSEP country but is a reality that you may face. While striving to remain culturally sensitive, women have experienced incidents of harassment, 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. Gender defines social roles in many cultures. As a result, you may elicit negative reactions if you do not follow the gender norms of your host country. However, you may also experience harassment even if you do follow societal norms. Be aware that your values may be challenged daily.

**IRSEP will change you.**

As the student quotes on page 3 indicate, IRSEP scholarship recipients repeatedly return from this program feeling transformed. You will learn astonishing things about yourself, acquire invaluable skills, and return to the US questioning your own society and your own values.

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**Preparation & Planning**

**Safety Precautions**

It is important to consider safety issues while overseas. You are urged to discuss safety with your returned IRSEP student, and consult the Emergency and Safety Precautions section of this guide. You should also consult the US State Department of Travel advisories (http://travel.state.gov) for up-to-date information on travel precautions.

**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. You are subject to the laws of your host country; however, the consulate can assist you in contacting a lawyer if necessary. For further information on emergency precautions, please see the Health & Safety website at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/healthSafety/index.html.

**Passport & Visa**

A passport is required to study abroad and some IRSEP countries also require a student visa. 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 about passport applications at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/travel/travdocuments. Refer to the Final Report of your IRSEP country for details on your program’s visa requirements. Typically you will have to send a completed student visa application along with other application materials to the embassy of your host country in the US prior to departure. You will generally have to complete paperwork, sometimes including a medical exam and proof of financial resources, or in rare cases an FBI background check, 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 for advice and assistance with the visa process (312.372.2703).

As an IRSEP student, you will take responsibility for most of your predeparture preparation. You will need to book your own flights to and from your host country. STA Travel (http://www.statravel.com) and other agencies offer low-cost student tickets with minimal change fees. Please note: you are required to purchase roundtrip tickets; one-way tickets will create difficulties when applying for a student visa.

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**Practical & Program Information**

You should review your host country’s university website, as well as use all the Learning Abroad Center’s international resources to thoroughly prepare yourself before going abroad. 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 only for exchange students are provided. In China, for example, you will take classes 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 to be few assignments or quizzes during the semester. Instead, one final exam at the end of the semester or 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. Faculty members are often pleased to have international students in their classrooms.

It is usually not possible to guarantee certain courses prior to your departure. You must be flexible with regard to the courses you are able to take since exchange programs usually involve integrated coursework.

China
You will take courses for international students in modern Chinese language. In rare cases, linguistically advanced students may take Nankai University courses. An intensive summer language program is available though not included in the exchange benefits. Instruction is in Chinese.

Sample courses:
- Chinese Language
- Chinese Calligraphy
- Peking Opera

Ecuador
Immerse yourself in Ecuadorian academics at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. You will have the opportunity to choose from courses across the university and take Spanish language classes. Instruction is in Spanish.

Sample courses:
- Plantas Medicinales
- Ecuadorian Latin American Film
- Arqueología Andina
- Política Ecuatoriana y su Pensamiento

Germany
You will take two semesters of integrated study. German as a foreign language course is offered as a supplement to regular coursework. Instruction is in German.

Sample courses:
- Germany in Nationalsozialism
- Cultural History of Berlin
- German Language and Grammar

Iceland
Courses in English include Icelandic studies, literature, political science, philosophy, and geology. You are required to begin your program on-site with Icelandic language study and encouraged to continue in the spring. While the Icelandic culture and language courses are offered each semester, you may enter the beginning intensive Icelandic course only in the fall. Icelandic pre-session courses for beginning and intermediate students are also offered in August but are not included in the exchange benefits. Instruction is in English and Icelandic.

Sample courses:
- Glaciology
- Volcanology
- Exploration Geophysics
- Intro to Icelandic Geology and Geography

Malaysia
You can choose from a variety of courses offered in English. Language study in the University Sains Malaysia’s Bahasa Malaysia program is required for at least one semester and encouraged in both. Independent study courses can often be arranged and it is also possible to conduct research or an independent project while taking classes. Instruction is in English and Malay.

Sample courses:
- Contemporary Malaysia
- Economic Transformation in Southeast Asia
- Cultures of the Nusantara

Courseload
You are required to enroll in a full-time course of study while overseas. A full-time course load is at least 13 U.S. credits per semester. If you are receiving financial aid, you may be required to take more. Consult with the on-site staff and Learning Abroad Center about any questions you may have. The Learning Abroad Center and past participants will provide details on your country’s specific requirements. Be sure to consult with the on-site staff during registration each semester.
ECTS Credits and Transfer Credit

Many European institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) of standard credits. Two ECTS credits are approximately equal to one University of Minnesota credit. For example, 24–30 ECTS credits per semester equals 12–15 credits at the University of Minnesota. Some departments at the Freie University offer ECTS, however, the University of Minnesota has asked that all transcripts provide German credits rather than ECTS.

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 to ensure that 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 well before the semester begins. This way, you have enough time to work out any credit configuration problems before you begin attending class.

Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future

This optional, 1-credit online course will provide opportunities for you to “make meaning” of your learning abroad experience and prepare you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond the borders of your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a multicultural setting and to succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans. The course is taught on-line with University of Minnesota instructors. Registration information will be provided with the program pre-departure orientation materials. The cost of the course is included as part of the program fee.

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 that you received at your First Step Meeting. The APSA form will help you to receive academic credit for your overseas studies, and to decide how these credits fit into your academic goals at the University of Minnesota.

To complete the APSA form, you will need to meet with your academic adviser and any other required faculty. You must submit a copy of the completed academic planning form to the Learning Abroad Center. Keep the original form in a safe place.

Registration

You will have two registrations, a University of Minnesota registration that takes place prior to departure and another registration 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 placeholder credit registration must be completed to maintain your University of Minnesota student status and to release your financial aid (if applicable). Failure to complete this registration on time may result in a late fee charged to your student account. Complete failure to register may cause you to lose your student status, may prevent the release of financial aid, and/or may result in you receiving no credit for your study abroad program.

In addition to this registration process, you will most likely complete a different registration to actually sign-up for courses once you arrive on site. This process differs in each country but is outlined in the final report of previous students.

Prior to departure, all students will register for a block of University of Minnesota foreign studies credits, and have the option of enrolling in the Global Identity course at the University of Minnesota.

Transcripts

After you return from your exchange and the Learning Abroad Center receives an official transcript from the overseas institution. We will then work with the University of Minnesota Office of Admissions to post the credits to your University of Minnesota transcript as foreign transfer credits. Your transfer credit does NOT count toward your University of Minnesota GPA. Only the number of credits transferred and the host university 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 to verify that your overseas coursework applies toward specific University of Minnesota degree requirements, as you planned prior to departure.

Please Note:

- Before leaving your host university, request that your transcript be sent to the Learning Abroad Center. You are responsible for doing this.
- Be aware that it can take from three to twelve months after you complete your program for the University of Minnesota to receive your official transcript from the overseas institution.
- If possible, bring a copy of your transcript with you or ask that one be sent to you.
- If you receive a transcript directly from your overseas institution, 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.

• Be sure to bring all course materials back with you. This information is sometimes requested by advisers to fulfill certain CLA or major and/or minor requirements. For the China program, please be sure to get both the Chinese and English translations of your transcript. For the Germany program, it is your responsibility to get schein for all the courses you take.

• For more information regarding transfer credit, refer to the Undergraduate Transfer Credit FAQ at www.UM-abroad.umn.edu/academic/ungradTransferCredit.

Registration Upon Return
You will 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. It is your responsibility to register for the courses that 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 status upon their return.

IRSEP Participant Responsibilities

Selected participants should be certain that they are able to complete all IRSEP participation responsibilities. These 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 periodic reports (the IRSEP staff will provide you with the necessary information); complete the online Global Identity course (optional); represent the University of Minnesota and the IRSEP program with dignity.

• **Upon Return**: Participate in the Global Ambassador Internship program; 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.

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

Responsibilities: Before Departure

IRSEP is unique in that student participants are responsible for most of their predeparture preparation. In taking responsibility for your own predeparture plans, you are one step closer to becoming the independent student that you will need to be abroad. The Learning Abroad Center and IRSEP program staff are available to answer any questions you may have, to guide your predeparture process, and to assist you with academic and financial planning.

Prior to Departure

**January–May**

- Attend required orientations
- Meet and/or be in contact with the IRSEP returnee and current international student to learn about your host country
- Inform yourself about political, economic, social and educational issues of the host country
- Complete all Learning Abroad Center and host university requirements including: host university application and University of Minnesota registration
- Make preparations for departure (e.g., passport, visa, flight, etc.)
- Complete the action items on the confirmation checklist, pre-departure checklist and financial aid checklist

**June–September**

- Make final preparations for departure
- Complete all remaining pre-departure checklists

Responsibilities: While Overseas

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. You will, however, 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 that you may need to set and determine how to realize your own goals to maximize your experience overseas.

Your main contact will be the host institution staff. **You should be certain to maintain contact with them throughout your stay**, as well as to seek their guidance on important program matters. You should also keep them informed of any changes that you make regarding academics, housing, vacation, travel, and other important areas.
IRSEP expects that you will abide by the laws and cultural norms of your host country, (e.g., appropriate dress and behavior), and that you will comply with regulations within the host country regarding housing and university requirements. 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, such as photos, maps, and books to use for these purposes. 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

- Inform the Learning Abroad Center IRSEP staff of your overseas address, email, and phone number
- Fulfill the academic responsibilities of the exchange program
- Complete periodic assignments sent by the Learning Abroad Center IRSEP team
- Complete the optional online *Global Identity* course
- Maintain a detailed record of information on the exchange to include in your final report for next year's candidate
- Gather promotional materials and artifacts to use in future Learning Abroad fairs, classroom visits and orientations
- 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 on-site 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 and how to reach you in case of an emergency
- Assume responsibility for communicating concerns that you may have about the exchange

### 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

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 1)

#### August

- Inform the Learning Abroad Center when you return to Minnesota and provide an updated telephone number and address
- Inform the Learning Abroad Center by August 15 if you are able to pick up the incoming IRSEP student(s) at the airport
- Submit your final report by August 1

#### September

- Attend the IRSEP welcome reception
- Organize and staff the IRSEP table for your site at the Learning Abroad Fair in September
- Post IRSEP promotion flyers, which the Learning Abroad Center will provide you, around campus.
- Participate in the Global Ambassador Internship programs. For more information on this internship, visit: [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/returnedstudents/globalAmbassadors.html](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/returnedstudents/globalAmbassadors.html)
- Be in contact with the IRSEP international student to answer questions and to assist with his/her adjustment to campus and US life
- Begin to update the Learning Abroad Center website for your IRSEP country
- Attend the MN Coming Home conference (optional)

#### October

- Continue to participate in Global Ambassador Internship activities
- Serve as an information resource for interested applicants
- Communicate with IRSEP student(s) abroad

#### November

- IRSEP application deadline will be between November 20–22 (varies each year)
- Organize the interview committee for your country and coordinate members’ review of the applications
- Attend selection process meeting
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 early December).
- Call the selected candidate no later than three days after interviews. Provide the IRSEP staff with the Chair’s completed review forms, which state reasons for the selection/non-selection of each candidate.

January
- Serve as contact person for the selected outgoing student
- Begin conducting your spring classroom visits

February
- Work with the newly selected exchangee for informal orientation
- Attend IRSEP exchange orientation and potluck dinner

March–May
- Continue preparation with newly selected students
- Continue promoting IRSEP
- Complete Global Ambassador internship requirements

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

The Final Report
After concluding your study abroad experience, you will be required to submit a final report. This report will be given to next year’s candidates so that they can learn as much as possible about their future host country. The Learning Abroad Center encourages you to use the previous IRSEP exchange students’ final reports—which you received before going abroad—as an example. Reports are due August 1, 2011, upon completion of your IRSEP year abroad.

In your Final Report, 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
IRSEP is the only University of Minnesota program that offers a full academic scholarship overseas. 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. Recruitment may continue beyond November in the event that a suitable candidate has not been found by the November deadline.

To begin the selection process, you will first need to form your committee. Identify at least one person, other than yourself and the international exchange student to serve on the selection committee for your site. Ideally, you should have a relevant faculty member serve on your committee to develop faculty awareness of the IRSEP program. In addition, the committee should always include an odd number of people to avoid an impasse.

The Learning Abroad Center will assist you as you work to build your committee. Past IRSEP Committee Chairs have consulted the following people/offices in their search for committee members:

- **China**: China Center staff and Chair of Asian Languages & Literature
- **Germany**: Chair of German, Scandinavian and Dutch Department, German teaching assistants from Freie University
- **Iceland**: Minneapolis Icelandic Committee, and Chair of German Scandinavian and Dutch Department
Provide the Learning Abroad Center IRSEP staff with a list of committee members by the November deadline.

Meet with your 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 committee’s assistance.

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 and complete the application review sheets by their deadline. You are responsible for making sure committee members clearly understand the application review process.

Interviews

The Learning Abroad Center staff will reserve rooms for your use. A staff member will be on duty in the Learning Abroad Center while you conduct your interviews.

Before the Interviews

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

During the Interviews

Interviews typically last about 30 minutes. At the end of all the interviews the committee will discuss and choose the nominee and alternate.

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 time at the end of the interview process for questions that the applicant may have.

All interviews should be seen as an educational opportunity. 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 the interviews.

• All candidates must be asked the same set of questions.

As Committee Chair, you will be in charge of the entire interview process. The Learning Abroad Center will help to prepare you prior to the start of interviews.

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/train stations. Only take as much as you can easily carry 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 find that too difficult, you may want to re-evaluate what you have 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 climate where you are studying.

- 10 or more pairs of underwear
- 10 or more pairs of socks
- 1 pair of pajamas
- Slippers
- 2 pairs of jeans
- 2 sweaters
- 3 dress shirts
- 1 skirt/sportcoat
- 1 nice outfit
- Comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- 1 jacket for cold weather
- Walking shoes/hiking boots
- 1 swim suit

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

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 (e.g., 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 areas of intercultural communications.


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

To Hell with Good Intentions, by Ivan Illich. Illich discusses the dangers of paternalistic feelings that are part of any volunteer activity, but especially international service. He argues that individuals should travel to enjoy, explore, and learn, but not with the attitude of helping those with whom they come in contact.

Entering into the Realm of “The Other”: A New Philosophy for Crossing Boundaries of Human Difference, by Juan C. Moreno. Moreno discusses how individuals can prepare themselves to interact in an increasingly global society. He recommends that they leave prior judgments behind them and approach every cultural interaction armed, among other things, with adaptability, tolerance, and an open mind.

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.
10 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 not to 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.