Penn State Education Abroad Exchange Programs Fact Sheet

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**Campus information**

**Getting International Students Involved at Penn State**

**Academic Calendar** *(semesters)*
Academic Year, August – May
Fall Semester, August – December
Spring Semester, January – May

**Language of instruction**
English

**Proof of English Proficiency**
International students whose native language is not English must submit proof of English language proficiency.
- TOEFL *(Test of English as a Foreign Language)* minimum score of 80 on internet-based or 550 on paper exam
- IELTS *(International English Language Testing System)* minimum score of 6.5 on the academic test

**Course Schedule**
- Course descriptions, pre-requisites and credits can be found in Penn State’s [Undergraduate Degree Programs Bulletin](#)
- Courses listed in the Bulletin are not offered every semester. Penn State’s [Schedule of Courses](#) indicates course availability for a specific semester.
- Exchange students will finalize their schedule of courses after arriving on campus and in consultation with an assigned academic adviser.

**Course Restrictions**
Some colleges and academic departments at Penn State restrict enrollment in specific courses. The departments/colleges listed below may not be able to accommodate students’ requests. In many cases, level of ability in the area of study needs to be determined in person. Whether you can add these courses may not be known until students arrive and talk to the instructor/adviser.
**College of Arts and Architecture**
- Spaces in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Graphic Design studio courses are limited.
- Spaces in Music, Theatre, and Dance performance courses are limited.
- Musical Theater courses are not available.

**College of Business, Smeal**
- Students must be business majors to take business courses at Penn State.
- The college guarantees each exchange student two business courses each semester. The rest of the courses selected must be from other colleges/disciplines.
- Refer to the material “Courses for Exchange Business Majors” for a list of the courses students may select from. Business courses outside of this list cannot be selected; requests will be denied.

**College of Communications**
- Studio and production courses are not available.

**College of Education**
- Not available unless specified in the exchange agreement.

**College of Engineering**
- Mechanical Engineering courses can be difficult to schedule. Students need to have back-up options.

**College of Health and Human Development**
- Kinesiology courses are very limited.
- Nursing courses are not available unless specified in the exchange agreement.

**College of the Liberal Arts**
- Courses in Political Science and History fill quickly.
- It is not advisable to schedule more than two 400 level courses in Political Science (PL SC). Students should not select writing intensive ("W") courses in PL SC.

**Department of Economics**
- Students must be economics majors to take economics courses at Penn State.
- It is not recommended to take ECON 302 and ECON 304 in the same semester.
- Refer to the material “Courses for Exchange Economics Majors” for a list of the courses students may select from. Economics courses outside of this list cannot be selected; requests will be denied.

**Housing**
- On-campus housing is available for exchange students.
- Exchange application materials include a Campus Housing Intention Form. Applicants planning to apply for University housing will create a [Friends of Penn State Account](https://www.psu.edu/friends) (FPS) and include the FPS on their Campus Housing Intent form.
- When all exchange application materials are approved, the Housing Assignments Office will send an on-line housing contract to the FPS account for the applicant’s review and acceptance. The housing contract is a legally binding agreement.
- Details about housing and meal plans, including cost, are available on the [Housing website](https://housing.psu.edu/).
Application timeline for exchanges

Academic Year and Fall semester

- Nomination roster sent in January, due March 1.
- Students’ online applications open March 1 with a deadline of April 1.
- Decision date is June 1 – course schedules and coverage letters sent at this time.

Spring semester

- Nomination roster sent in July, due September 1.
- Students’ online applications open September 1 with a deadline of October 1.
- Decision date is December 1 – course schedules and coverage letters sent at this time.

Application items for exchanges

Items include Non-degree Undergraduate Enrollment Form, Application for Visa Document, Financial Guarantee, Campus Housing Intention, Evidence of Language Proficiency, Advanced Course Registration Form, Academic Record/Transcript, and. Nominated students complete these items online.

Financial Guarantee

Students must provide an official letter from a bank, in English and in U.S. dollars, verifying possession of the money to pay for the portion of their educational and personal expenses not covered by the exchange agreement based on the intended duration of study. Parents and guardians who will financially support a student must also write a letter stating that they intend to use their finances towards the student’s expenses. Verification of financial support from the home university or home government is also acceptable.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory while at Penn State. Students who do not have a comparable health insurance plan may purchase the Penn State Student Health Insurance Plan or buy other coverage that meets established waiver criteria.

Pre-Arrival information

The Directorate of International Student and Scholar Advising (DISSA) provides services in pre-arrival immigration documents, immigration advising, general advising including cultural and social advising, and administration of grants and loans for international students. Document check-in is required for new exchange students.

Orientation

International Student Orientation for incoming exchange students is offered at the beginning of each semester. Orientation is generally 1-2 weeks prior to the start of classes.

Academic Transcripts

Official academic transcripts will be sent to partners within six weeks of the program ending (from last day of finals). Students are able to order official copies for their records through the Registrar's Office at a cost of $10 per copy.