

All about the Exchange Student Application Process



**Sending Students and Their Applications to
Illinois State University
2011-2012**

Office of International Studies and Programs
Normal, Illinois
U.S.A.



Illinois State University is pleased to partner with your university to exchange students! This guide provides instructions and information to help your students apply to ISU. Please contact Stephanie Gonzalez at sgonzal@ilstu.edu or 309-438-5112. Stephanie is the Exchange Student Coordinator for students coming to ISU.

Here Are the 7 Items to Include in Students' Applications

❶ **ISU Application Form**

You may download the application at: http://www.admissions.ilstu.edu/downloads/undergraduate_application.pdf
Be sure that each student signs Page 2. Exchange students do NOT need to pay an application fee.

❷ **Letter from Your University about Academic Good Standing and English Proficiency**

All students must satisfy all ISU admissions requirements. Your university must write a letter for each student that includes:

- The students' name and how many semesters s/he will study at ISU;
- Your confirmation that the student is in good academic standing at home
- Your verification of the student's English Proficiency and that you believe s/he has the necessary skills to be a successful student at ISU.

❸ **More about English Proficiency**

All students must satisfy all ISU admissions requirements, including proof of English Proficiency. Instructors *expect international students to function at a level equal to or similar to that of American students*, so **please be sure that the student's ability to understand and communicate in English is strong enough to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom.**

Students who are not native English speakers must take either the [Test of English as a Foreign Language \(TOEFL\)](#) or the [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#).

We require the following minimum TOEFL scores:

- Paper-based: 550
- Computer-based: 213
- Internet-based (iBT): 79

For TOEFL scores, the institution code for Illinois State University is 1319.

For IELTS, a minimum overall band score of 6.5 is required.

Please be sure to provide a copy of the administering organization's test scores with the student's application.

❹ **Declaration of Finances Form**

Every international student must prove they will have enough funds to pay for all academic and non-academic related expenses while in the United States. The enclosed "Declaration of Finances Form" can be used to prove funding. It should be signed, stamped and dated by the student's (or parent's) bank, and attached with any appropriate bank statements or letters. The amount of a student's funding should be equal to or greater than the amounts shown on the Exchange Budget Estimates for 2010-2011 (see enclosed for a sample budget).

5 Course Request Form

Students should write the names of ISU courses that they would like to take on a “Course Request Form” and submit it with their application. Please be sure to advise students of the following:

- Students should list as many course possibilities as they can.
- It is not possible to guarantee courses for students, so they should plan to be flexible about their studies at ISU.
- We encourage them to share their course ideas with advisors at home.
- Students can view courses on offer by visiting the Undergraduate Course catalog at <http://www.ilstu.edu/home/catalog/undergraduate/>

6 Academic Transcripts (in English please)

Please include students' past university transcripts with their application. Transcripts are required by the International Admissions Office, and for class registration purposes. (Academic advisors ask to see students' transcripts. This helps them decide whether or not a student is eligible for a class they are requesting.)

7 Photocopy of Passport's Photo ID Page

When to Send Applications

The University has changed its application deadlines. They are earlier than in the past. While we allow flexibility for our exchange partners, we recommend that students' applications arrive as close to the deadlines as possible. The earlier we receive applications, the earlier we may begin negotiating courses for students.

- For Students Planning to Attend in the Fall, the application deadline is March 1.
- For Students Planning to Attend in the Spring, the deadline is September 1.
- For Students Attending in the Summer, the application deadline is March 1.

Where to Send Applications

All completed applications should be sent directly to the following address:



Attn: Stephanie Gonzalez
Office of International Studies and Programs
Illinois State University
308 Fell Hall, Campus Box 6120
Normal, IL 61790-6120
U.S.A.

Where to Find the Application

http://admissions.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/undergraduate_application.pdf

Contacting International Studies

Stephanie Gonzalez is the Exchange Student and Scholar Advisor at Illinois State. She assists students with immigration, cultural, academic and social matters. Stephanie may be reached at sgonzal@ilstu.edu or at our main office phone: **001-309-438-5276** (international dialing codes included).

When Semesters Begin and End

- For the **Fall 2011** semester, classes begin on August 22 and end on December 16. Orientation Week begins on August 15.
- For the **Spring 2012** semester, classes begin on January 10 and end on May 11. Orientation Week begins on January 9.

To Find Application Info on Our Website

<http://internationalstudies.illinoisstate.edu/students/exchange/partners.shtml>

Courses

Stephanie Gonzalez, Exchange Student and Scholar Advisor, will assist students with registering for classes.

When students apply to ISU, they should also submit a **“Course Request Form.”** This form tells **International Studies which courses the student hopes to take here.** Stephanie will then negotiate with course advisors around campus to see what may be possible.

Important! Sometimes students expect to take specific classes here that will help them to graduate when they return home. While we certainly understand and do our best to help, we cannot guarantee that they will be able to have every class they request. There are many factors that can influence whether or not a student can get into a particular class:

- A class may already be full, or cancelled;
- It may be limited to degree-seeking students and those who are graduating from Illinois State soon; or
- Permission from academic advisors or professors is required to allow special access into a class. (This is very common.)

Please ask students to list as many options as possible on their Course Request Form. They can even write on the back of the form if they wish.

How Many Classes to Take?

International students are often surprised to learn that the amount of homework, tests, reports and group projects for each class can be greater here than at home. They may also find studying and communicating in English more challenging and time consuming than expected, and that it also takes time to adjust to the American Education System.

This is why we suggest that exchange students take 12 credit hours in their 1st semester (15 hours maximum). Twelve hours equals about 4 classes and is the same number that most American students take.

How Many Hours Is Too Many? Students sometimes worry that taking 12 hours per semester is not enough for their programs at home and they ask to take more hours, like 18 or 20! Please advise them that this makes for an incredibly demanding and unreasonable schedule -- one

that very, very few native-English speakers are able to take. A 12-15 hour schedule is much more appropriate. (Fifteen hours is also the maximum that the tuition waiver from ISU covers.)

Selecting Classes

The numbering system at Illinois State is different from most other American universities. At Illinois State, courses are numbered with the following system:

<p>100-Level Courses Are for 1st and 2nd year students</p>
<p>200-Level Courses Are for 3rd and 4th year students</p>
<p>300- and 400-level Courses Are for 3rd and 4th year students and graduate students (Graduate students have already completed a bachelor's degree)</p>

Prerequisites

A “prerequisite” is a course that must be taken before another course may be taken. Most exchange students take 100-level courses, but sometimes they ask to take a 200- or 300-level class. With such requests, students must be able to show that they have taken a class/or classes at home that satisfy the **prerequisite requirement** here. For example, if a student asks to take “Auditing 200,” he should have studied a class like “Auditing 100” at home, and be able to show this on his transcript.

Academic advisors in the College of Business and Communication areas are especially rigorous about verifying whether students have met the necessary prerequisite requirements. Please ask students to be ready to provide course descriptions or syllabi (from courses taken at home) in case they are asked to provide more information.

Financial Matters

Proof of Funding and ISU Bills

The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services requires students to prove that they will have enough funding to pay for all expenses while in the United States. **Please see the enclosed “Exchange Budget Sheet” for ISU estimated expenses for 2011-2012.** (Actual costs are not yet available.)



Students may use the enclosed “Declaration of Finances” Form as a convenient way to prove funding to ISU. They may also provide official bank statements or letters from banks verifying that their funding is equal to or greater than the amount shown on the exchange budget (depending on how long they will study here).

Our office will be able to create students’ DS2019 Immigration papers only after they have proven adequate funding.

Billing Statements from ISU

Your students may receive bills before they actually arrive at ISU. If so, they will see that ISU has not yet discounted the amount for tuition that International Studies will pay, and their bills will appear too high. Students should not be concerned about this. **Payments will be made by our office after students arrive.**

Students will learn about ISU bills during Orientation and when they meet with Stephanie Gonzalez during their first weeks.

The declaration of finances form may be found at:

http://www.admissions.ilstu.edu/downloads/declaration_finances.pdf

Welcome Packets

After students are admitted to ISU, our office will mail them welcome packets which will include:

- A set of “DS2019” Immigration forms to apply for the “J-1” visa with instructions about applying
- Information on traveling to Illinois State
- A housing brochure
- A budget of estimated expenses
- An Enrollment/Housing/Transportation Form

Students should complete this form and return it to our office before they arrive so we can make appropriate housing and arrival plans for them. This form is enclosed.

- Information about Orientation Week
- A health history report form required by our Student Health Office

The Health History Report asks students to provide their medical and immunization histories. This is required by the university.

Students may mail their health history reports to Illinois State before they arrive, OR they may give them to Student Health Services when they arrive.

- TB Test: As in the past, all international students are required to take a tuberculosis test upon arrival to ISU. The cost of this test will be approximately \$60 for each student. There may also be additional small charges for immunizations, medications or other services.

Students should not receive a TB vaccination at home because it must be done on the ISU campus.

Housing International House

So that exchange students have the full experience of being part of the campus community, we recommend that they live in our "International House" which is in Manchester Hall at the university.

The International Studies Office will automatically reserve a space for each student in advance. When possible, we room exchange students with Americans, or students from other countries.



When students arrive at Orientation, they will sign housing contracts, select meal plans, and pay a \$300 housing deposit. They do not need to sign or pay anything before they arrive.

When Students 1st Arrive



The residence halls do not open until the first day of orientation, so students have two options about where to stay until then. They can either:

- 1) Make hotel reservations in a local Bloomington-Normal hotel;

OR

- 2) Contact ISI Home Stay Coordinators to stay for 1 or 2 nights with an American family. Families will meet the students at our local bus or train stations or airport. Students interested in staying with an American family must contact the Home Stay Coordinators directly to sign up. More information about how to do this will be provided in students' pre-arrival packets from the International Studies Office.

Health Insurance J-1 Visa Holders

Exchange Visitors are required by the U.S. Department of State to have very specific types of medical insurance for the entire time of their stay. Since this is an Immigration law, all J-1 students must have the necessary insurance or they will not be allowed to attend their program. The insurance must include:

- **"Medical Evacuation" insurance up to \$10,000** (to pay for transportation back to home country, or elsewhere, in the event of serious illness or injury). \$10,000 is the minimum coverage allowed.
- **"Repatriation of Remains" insurance up to \$7,500** (to pay for transportation back to home country in the event of death). \$7,500 is the minimum coverage that students may have.
- At least \$50,000 coverage per accident or illness
- Deductible should not be more than \$500
- Insurance must covers any pre-existing conditions after a reasonable waiting period
- Co-payment that doesn't exceed 25% co-pay by the exchange visitor; does not exclude benefits for perils inherent to the activities of the exchange visitor's program; must be underwritten by an insurance company that meets the rating requirements of the USIA.



Buying Insurance from ISU

For the safety of our students and exchange program, we ask all exchange students to purchase Illinois State University's student health insurance. This plan meets all of the U.S. Department of State's mandatory insurance requirements for J-1 visa holders and is reported to be an excellent plan. In the past, we accepted students' health insurance plans from home, but given the increased scrutiny by Immigration, we now require all students to buy ISU insurance, and they will be unable to use insurance plans from home. This will help to ensure that both our university and exchange students are in compliance with Immigration important insurance law.

For your students' convenience, our office will automatically order their coverage and the fee will appear on their bill. In Fall 2010, the cost of this insurance was \$206 per semester and offered up to \$1 million of coverage. If you would like to read more about ISU insurance please visit:

www.shs.ilstu.edu/insurance/

Orientation

Orientation program is offered before the start of each semester for all new international students. Students can meet other students; become acquainted with places and services on campus and in the community; finalize class registration; go on shopping trips; receive a university ID and email account; buy books; and open bank accounts.

They also learn about Immigration, the American Education system, university health insurance, healthcare, campus facilities, residence halls, paying bills, managing money, finding employment, choosing courses, and other important information.

Fall Orientation	Spring Orientation
<p>Fall 2011 Semester: Orientation Week will be during the week of August 15.</p>	<p>Spring 2012 Semester: Orientation Week will be during the week of January 10.</p>



Attending Orientation is mandatory. Please make sure students arrange their flight plans to arrive on time.

When Students Arrive in Bloomington/Normal: We will greet them at our local airport, bus or train station and drive them to a hotel. Host family stays are also possible for students when they first arrive. Students interested in staying with an American family for their first night or two should contact Stephanie Gonzalez as soon as possible.

Money: It is recommended that students have access to about \$2,000 for their first weeks here. This is a large sum, but it should cover any unexpected hotel and food expenses caused by flight delays; pay for their housing deposit; and help them buy books, school supplies, and items for their room. (Students should expect to pay several hundred dollars each semester for books alone.) Students will also need to buy their first week's meals off campus, because the dining halls and campus-food services do not open until the end of Orientation Week.

Since it is not safe to carry such a large sum of money when traveling, students may find it helpful to have debit/ATM cards from home that allow them to withdraw money from their bank rather than carrying so much currency.

Temperatures/Weather: Students arriving in August are usually greeted by hot and humid weather with temperatures around 92 degrees Fahrenheit or 33 degrees Celcius. Lighter clothes are appropriate.

Students coming in January for the spring semester should expect cold temperatures around 32 degrees Fahrenheit or 0 degrees Celcius. They should bring warm clothes or be prepared to buy some when they get here.

Grade Reports

Our office will mail students' academic transcripts about 2 months after the end of each semester. Please note that it is university policy that we may not order transcripts until students have fully paid their accounts. Students' delays in paying their accounts in full can cause delays in being able to mail transcripts in a timely manner, so it is important that students pay any necessary expenses before they leave.

SAMPLE LETTER

As part of your students' applications to ISU, please write a letter for each student that includes:

- a) The students' name and how many semesters s/he will study at ISU;
- b) Your confirmation that the student is in good academic standing at home
- c) Your verification of the student's English Proficiency and that you believe s/he has the necessary skills to be a successful student at ISU.

For your convenience, you may refer to the sample wording below. *Please type your letter on your University's official paper.*

This is to verify that Student's Name has been selected to study as an exchange student at Illinois State University. We verify that s/he is in "Academic Good Standing" at our university and has the academic skills and grades to be a successful university student on this exchange. We also verify that his/her ability to communicate and study in English will allow him/her to be a successful student both inside and outside of the classroom.

*Student's Name will study at ISU for one/two semester(s), _____.
Please indicate Fall 2011 and/ or Spring 2012*

Your Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

ENROLLMENT/ HOUSING/ TRANSPORTATION FORM (to be completed by student)

Student: Mr./Ms. _____
Family name Given or First Name

Country: _____ Email address: _____

ATTENDANCE

- YES, I DO** plan to attend Illinois State in Fall 2011. **YES, I DO** plan to attend Illinois State in Spring 2012.

HOUSING

- I wish to live in the International House (in Manchester Hall). **This is recommended for all exchange students.**
- I would like to be on a waiting list for a single room and will pay the extra expense.
- I will find my own off-campus apartment when I arrive. I understand that apartments may not come with any furnishings.

HOST FAMILY OR HOTEL

- I would like to stay with an American Host Family for my 1st night or 2 when I arrive (before I-House opens).
- I prefer to stay in a Bloomington-Normal hotel before the residence hall opens. I understand that I must make these arrangements myself.

TRANSPORTATION

- I do not need any help with transportation when I arrive in Bloomington/Normal.
- Please arrange for someone to meet me in Bloomington/Normal.

I am arriving in Bloomington/Normal, Illinois by:

- 1) **AIR:** Name of Airline: _____ and Flight # _____ . I will arrive at the Central Illinois Regional Airport in Bloomington/Normal, ILLINOIS at this time _____.
- 2) **BUS:** I will ride the Peoria Charter Bus from Chicago O'Hare Airport, and arrive at the Bone Student Center in Normal, ILLINOIS at this time _____.
- 3) **TRAIN** I will ride the Train (Amtrak) and arrive in Normal, ILLINOIS at this time _____. (The Amtrak Train station is located near Illinois State University.)

Please send your Enrollment/Housing/Transportation information to Stephanie Gonzalez as soon as possible. You may mail it, email it or fax it.

Stephanie Gonzalez
International Studies Office, Illinois State University
309 Fell Hall, Campus Box 6120
Normal, IL 61761
sgonzal@ilstu.edu
Fax: (309) 438-3987

Course Request Form

Feel free to write on the back of this form if you need more space.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____
Last/Family First/Given Middle Month/Day/Year

Major: _____ Minor: _____

My email address is: _____

I will be studying at Illinois State for the Fall Semester only Spring Semester only Fall and Spring

Below please list the classes that you would be interested in taking at ISU. Your Exchange Student Advisor here will search for classes based on the choices you make. Please note that while we would like to give students every course they ask for, there are many factors that can influence your ability to get into a class. For instance: 1) The class may already be full or has been cancelled; 2) It may be limited to degree-seeking students and those who are graduating soon; or 3) You may not have the necessary background to qualify for a class. For these reasons, students should be flexible about their class schedules. Sometimes students also hope to take classes that will help them to graduate when they return home. While we can certainly understand this situation, and we do our best to help, we cannot guarantee that you will be able to take every class you need to graduate.

Please list your Top Choices Here

Department Name	Department Number	Class Number	Course Title
Example: <i>History</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>History of Illinois</i>

2nd Choices

Please list courses that you would be interested to take if your first choice classes are not available.

Department Name	Department Number	Course Number	Course Title

Student Signature _____ Date _____