

Slippery Rock University

International Services Program: Operational Policies

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline policy and procedural structure for the International Services Program at Slippery Rock University.

Objectives

The objectives of this document are:

- to define the multiple functions of the International Services Office;
- to detail program requirement; and
- to document current practice.

Introduction

The Vision of Slippery Rock University is to “excel as a caring community of lifelong learners connecting with the world.” The University Mission notes that our perspectives are “contemporary and futuristic, national and international.” This recognition of the importance of internationalization of programs and services for students, faculty and staff serves as the basis for the International Services Office.

In support of this vision and perspective, the International Services Office is charged with the development and support of opportunities for international students coming to our campus as well as for domestic students, faculty, and staff in the pursuit of their own international education. Such international activities both on campus and abroad have an integral role in enhancing the University’s reputation, both academically and culturally. Driving this endeavor are the Vision, Mission and Goals of the International Services Program.

Vision, Mission, and Goals for the International Services Office

The **vision** of the International Services Office is to integrate internationalism on the SRU campus through the promotion of global perspectives, development of cross-cultural competencies, and encouragement of positive international relationships for all members of the Slippery Rock University community. We will work to become recognized as the leader in international services within the PaSSHE.

In supporting our vision, the **mission** of the International Services Office is to provide international experiences for SRU students and staff in pursuit of academic and cultural exploration and growth.

The strategic **goals**, to successfully support our mission and accomplish our vision, are to:

- Promote educational and cultural exchange, by bringing international students and faculty to the SRU campus and by sending our students and staff overseas.
 - We will work to provide direct and indirect benefits to as many members of our campus community as possible.
 - We will increase our international student enrollments on campus as well as the number of students and staff who participate in an international experience.
 - We will improve programming and support for international students to successfully navigate the university and community as well as to graduate.
 - We will seek to expand international opportunities for students, with particular attention to semester and year-long opportunities, collaborative work, and practical experiences such as student teaching and internships.
- Foster positive international relationships between individuals, institutions, and countries, in order to move beyond the surface of simply acknowledging cultural differences.
 - We will encourage and foster exploration of commonalities, differences, and collaborative endeavors.
 - We will provide student-focused service, in order to meet the diverse nature and needs of our students.
 - We will consider the nature of our students and their needs in our overall operational decisions.
- Ensure the sustainability of the International Services Office
 - We will operate all programs in a fiscally responsible manner.
 - We will support the professional development of students and staff members.
 - We will continue to nurture relationships with alumni, to eventually gain a return on investment as evidenced by service to the University.
- Support and identify international activities for faculty and staff, in acknowledgement that the vitality of all international programs is dependent upon the involvement of faculty.
 - We will continue to pursue and financially support international opportunities for our faculty and staff.

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Note: Policies approved prior to the compilation of this document (such as International Student Tuition Waiver and Faculty Exchange) are identified but not reprinted here. Please refer to the original source for detailed information.

Slippery Rock University International Services Program: Operational Policies

1. Reporting Structure

The International Services Program is aligned within the Division of Academic Affairs, reporting directly to the Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Staffing consists of Director (Management), International Student Advisor (SUA 2), one full-time and one part-time clerical position (Clerk 2's), one GA, and student worker positions (three during the academic year: clerical, student recruitment, webmaster; additional staff hired during orientation programs).

2. Exchange Programs

Formal exchange programs between Slippery Rock University and foreign educational institutions are maintained via the International Services Office. This includes but is not limited to negotiation of exchange principles, preparation and renewal of exchange agreement documents, selection of student participants, student advisement, program evaluation, etc. These programs are to be mutually beneficial for international student recruitment as well as study abroad opportunities for SRU students and when possible faculty participation. A balance between sending and receiving students is to be maintained as best possible. When appropriate, variations to the exchange model, such as direct enrollment programs with cost reductions or other concessions, may be approved. All agreements, whether exchange or otherwise, will follow guidelines from PaSSHE, including as appropriate, approval of Legal Counsel.

Further information follows in the respective sections for international students, study abroad, and faculty.

3. International Student Program

3.1 Definition: Slippery Rock University defines international students as those who do not hold US citizenship, US permanent residency, or refugee status. By default, if a student is eligible for federal financial aid, they are not under the auspices of the International Services Office.

3.2 Recruitment & Admission: The recruitment and admission of international students is coordinated at three levels: undergraduate, graduate and post-baccalaureate. Both undergraduate and post-bac admissions are the responsibility

of the International Student Advisor. Graduate admissions are coordinated via the Graduate Admission Office, with assistance from the International Services Office to document equivalence of foreign education, English language proficiency, and financial support. Decisions regarding the admission of graduate students remain with the respective academic department.

In accordance with US Citizenship and Immigration Services, admission is based upon:

- Written application for admission
- Academic preparedness, as equivalent to US standards, and documented by the submission of academic transcripts, standardized test results, etc.
- English language proficiency (see below)
- Ability to finance one's education, as evidenced by the submission of a Financial Support Statement and original bank statement or approved alternative.

Minimum English language proficiency at Slippery Rock University is determined by the following standards:

- TOEFL
 - Undergraduate:
 - Paper based = 500
 - Internet based = 61
 - Computer based = 173
 - Graduate:
 - Paper based = 550
 - Internet based = 80
 - Computer based = 213
- IELTS
 - Undergraduate = 6.5
 - Graduate = 7
- ELS Score
 - Undergraduate = 112
 - Graduate = 112
- Applicants with at least one year of recent education within the US, or from countries where English is the dominant language, may be granted a waiver of standardized English language testing for admission purposes.

International students are admitted to the University for fall and spring semesters; no students are admitted to begin studies in summer, due to reduced support available at that time.

Exceptions to any stated admission procedure and/or requirement, as well as the possible implementation of numerical limits by country if required to maintain a balanced representation of foreign countries remain the prerogative of the International Services Office.

3.3 Application Fee Waiver: In an effort to encourage students to apply for admission, the application fee is waived for all international applicants. This is intended to present SRU as welcoming to international students as well as to ease the burden for students in obtaining a check in US dollars for a relatively small amount of money and in which the service charge most likely meets or exceeds the value of the check.

3.4 Recruitment Agents: When 3rd party recruitment agents are utilized, all financial transactions between student and agent, and between SRU and agent, will be officially documented in writing and in advance of such a transaction. Costs must be reasonable and no more than the usual and customary practice within the US for public higher education. Under no circumstances will there be a direct or indirect financial benefit to SRU other than the enrollment of international students and their subsequent tuition and fee payments.

3.5 Advising: Recognizing the extensive and specialized needs of international students, the advising services of an International Student Advisor are made available with respect to basic personal counseling, emergency needs, and institutional policies.

Specific support includes:

- International student orientation program, at the start of each semester
- Personal, social, economic, cultural advisement
- Liaison between international students and the University community
- Facilitation of US Citizenship and Immigration Services requirements, by advising students of the privileges and responsibilities as well as limitations placed upon activities by US regulation; issuance of I-20 and DS-2019 forms; and processing of other paperwork in accordance with federal law. Only federally approved Designated School Officials (DSO) and Responsible Officers (RO) may process immigration related paperwork, including all SEVIS compliance issues. Professional staff within the International Services Office serve as DSO's and RO's.

3.6 Health Insurance: Health insurance is required of all international students and visiting international faculty. The University offers a mandatory student policy; however if a student can document proof of equal or better coverage prior to the start of classes each semester, the International Services Office can approve a waiver. Incoming students pay a pre-enrollment deposit to cover the approximate cost of one semester of insurance. Thereafter, the charge is added to each student's university account unless waived as above. Policy details and assistance with pre-certifications, claims, etc. are available at the Student Health Center.

3.7 On-Campus Housing: Due to the a tight student housing market, lack of public transportation in Slippery Rock, proximity to campus support services, and increased opportunities for assimilation into US culture, on-campus housing is

required for all new undergraduate and post-bac international students. For those beginning in the fall semester, this requirement holds for one academic year; for students enrolling in the spring semester, this requirement is for one semester. Students are encouraged to remain on campus for further semesters to take advantage of programs, support, and opportunities to integrate into US university culture. Requests for exception must be submitted in writing to the International Student Advisor, and must include the reason for the request as well as documented proof of alternate housing arrangements.

3.8 Host Family Program: To assist in the adjustment and support of international students a host-family program is offered. These placements provide occasional opportunities to integrate with US family life through events such as occasional meals, holiday celebrations, shopping trips, and local travel; it is not an extended home-stay program. The International Student Advisor coordinates the program and a host family can be requested at any time. While some placements are done via local churches, the program prohibits proselytizing and recruitment. Invitations to attend a church service or program are acceptable provided that the student is not penalized for opting out.

3.9 College Writing Program: While all international students must document English language proficiency prior to admission, many still require additional language assistance in one form or another. Because an ESL program is not offered at the University, a unique program is offered via the English Department, whereby special sections of College Writing I have an approximate 1/3 of their seats reserved for international students. Faculty members in these sections have experience in teaching English as a Second Language, and are thus able to offer additional support. The presence of other international students in these sections increases their comfort level, while also encouraging domestic students to explore diverse cultures. All new degree-seeking international students as well as exchange and sponsored students from non-English speaking countries are required to enroll in this program unless transferring in College Writing credit from another US institution.

3.10 Tuition Waiver: As permissible via PaSSHE administrative directive, a tuition waiver program is available for international students. SRU's policy was revised and approved in 2001 and is available for review in the Academic Affairs and International Services Offices.

3.11 International Dinner: The most visible celebration of the international student program on the SRU campus is the International Dinner, held annually on the second Saturday of November since 1974. All international students are expected to participate in this program by preparing food from their home country or region and/or providing post-dinner entertainment. Additional cultural events are held during Internations Week, immediately preceding the dinner.

3.12 International Alumni Program: All former SRU international students, whether degree recipients or otherwise, are considered international alumni for the purposes of the International Services Office. Support includes a list-serv and semi-annual newsletter, as well as meetings and reunions when possible. Collaboration with the SRU Alumni Association is also supported.

4. Study Abroad Program

4.1 Eligibility: In general, semester and academic year programs require a minimum of sophomore standing, a cumulative 2.5 QPA and approval of the academic advisor. For language, summer and seminar programs, exceptions to the class standing and QPA are at the discretion of the faculty program leader, though under no circumstances may a student on academic probation participate. Academic majors may have additional restrictions related to course requirements and sequencing. Host institutions may establish differing requirements such as a higher QPA. Final approval for semester and academic year programs remains with the host institution.

4.2 Application Process: Students participating in any international experience under the auspices of the University, whether for credit or not, must complete the SRU study abroad application form. A \$130.00 program deposit is required and payable at the Student Accounts Office. In addition, students must purchase an International Student ID Card via the International Services Office at the cost of \$22.00; additional coverage is available for an increased cost. For semester and academic year programs, a Transient Clearance Form must be submitted and the host institution may also require an application form and other documentation. The International Services Office provides a tentative approval for programs, but a student is not considered approved for study abroad until the host institution provides documentation of acceptance. The deadline for fall and summer programs is March 15 and for spring programs is October 15. The deadline for spring break seminar programs is the last day of spring semester pre-registration.

4.3 Health Insurance: All study abroad participants are required to provide their own health insurance coverage for the duration of their program. It is their responsibility to understand how to utilize the policy overseas. Supplemental insurance as well as medical evacuation and repatriation are available via the International Student ID Card, which is required for all program participants.

4.4 Travel Stipend: Through the generosity of private donors as well as the University, international travel for SRU students is subsidized. Participants in semester, academic year, internship and student teaching programs receive a travel reimbursement of \$700.00 for programs to Asia and Australia or \$400.00 for programs to Europe and Latin American. Summer program and seminar participants receive a similar subsidy calculated within the total program cost, as airfares are typically included in the package price.

4.5 Student Teaching: The international student teaching programs are coordinated jointly between the College of Education and the International Services Office. A \$300.00 administrative fee is charged to all students; this is used to cover the costs of the supervising professors who accompany the group overseas as well as for support-services at the host schools. A minimum of 50% of the student teaching must be done in the US, followed by the international component. In the event that concerns arise during the US placement regarding a student's ability to successfully perform in the international setting, approval to student teach overseas may be rescinded by the College of Education.

4.6 Internships: International internships follow the same protocol as those taking place within the US. When possible, the International Services Office can offer assistance with site selection, travel, accommodations, etc.

4.7 Non-SRU Programs: For semester, year, and summer programs, students are eligible to participate in pre-approved study abroad programs managed by other colleges/universities or 3rd party providers. Pre-approval comes from the academic advisor and International Services Office, via the standard SRU Transient Clearance Form process. Affiliation with 3rd party providers is done with the intention of offering programs in locations where SRU does not offer programs, securing reduced program rates, enhancing support for SRU students, and reducing liability. Any other benefit must be of a broad enough nature to help both students and the SRU study abroad program over and above the affiliation (such as a general marketing stipend) and cannot be intended to secure preferential advising or placement.

5. Faculty/Staff Opportunities

5.1 Travel Policy: All international travel under the auspices of the University must adhere to SRU and PaSSHE travel regulations. Of special note, Travel Request Forms for international travel require the signature of the University president and appropriate vice president, in addition to departmental approval, no later than 30 days prior to departure.

5.2 Professional Development: Support for faculty and staff international professional development will be provided whenever possible. At a minimum, up to ten \$1,000.00 President's International Professional Development Grants are awarded each spring, for use within that calendar year. The International Services Advisory Committee reviews proposals and the University president grants final approval. Proposals are judged upon their international nature; professional merit; and relevance to applicant's profession and SRU. Preference is given to junior faculty/staff; those who have not received this award in the previous five years; and for research or performance/papers accepted for presentation. Financial support for opportunities not funded by the grant program is provided when institutional approval is documented and funding is available.

5.3 Faculty Exchange: Slippery Rock University and APSCUF seek to support the International Faculty Exchange Program. The program should provide an international exchange opportunity for SRU faculty, enhancing the learning environment. The purpose of an exchange, compared to a sabbatical or faculty leave is to promote international faculty development opportunities, to enrich and enhance the global cultural diversity of the SRU community, and to foster collegial relations with global colleagues. Current guidelines are available in the International Services, Academic Affairs, and APSCUF offices, as well as on the International Services website.

5.4 Program Leadership: Faculty may participate internationally as program leaders. For seminar and summer courses, approval is granted each spring semester via a written application form for programs in the following academic year. Approval of department chairperson and dean is required on the application form. Minimum participation levels are required and vary by program; participants receiving tuition waivers cannot be counted to meet target enrollments. Details on all requirements are provided at the time of application and subsequent program planning meetings. For supervision of language programs, the Modern Language Department selects faculty members. These programs also require a minimum level of participation for final faculty travel approval. Faculty are responsible for the recruitment and supervision of students. The International Services Office offers support and logistics.

5.5 International Faculty ID Card: All faculty traveling internationally are encouraged to purchase an International Faculty ID Card via the International Services Office. In addition to travel discounts, the card offers supplemental health insurance as well as medical evacuation and repatriation for \$22.00.

5.6 Family Participants: For liability reasons, family members are highly discouraged from participating in international programs when faculty/staff have student supervisory responsibilities.

5.7 Visiting Faculty Program: Coordination of the visiting faculty program for international faculty members coming via exchange agreement, grant funding, or other independent arrangements, is based within the International Services Office. This includes communication between institutions, visa paperwork, lodging, and general support. Eligibility for teaching requires approval of the respective academic department and dean, APSCUF, Provost and President.

6. Advisory Groups:

6.1 Internal Advisory Committee: A campus based International Services Advisory Committee works cooperatively to support the International Services program. In addition, they review applications and recommend recipients for the President's International Professional Development Grant. Members include two

faculty members per college, one faculty member from academic programs not falling under a college (such as Bailey Library, Academic Support Services, etc.), President of the Internations Club, two student service professional staff members, International Student Advisor, and Director of International Services. Faculty representatives are elected via APSCUF and serve a two-year term. Student service professionals are appointed by the Provost. The committee meets a minimum of three times each semester.

6.2 External Advisory Council: Representatives from educational, cultural, business, law and service organizations provide their expertise and outside perspective to guide the programs and services of the International Services Office. Representation also includes an international alumnus, a study abroad alumnus, International Student Advisor, and Director of International Services. Selection of members is at the discretion of the International Services Office. Members serve as long as their interest and professional commitments allow and the Council meets once per semester.

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