



The English-Speaking Union
Secondary School Exchange

HANDBOOK 2020 - 2021

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Section I - General Information

A. ESU – Secondary School Exchange History and Background

At 90 years old, the Secondary School Exchange (SSE) has a rich history dating back to 1928 when the International Schoolboy Fellowship was begun to bring British boys to the United States. Since 1936 there has been a reciprocal exchange of boys from participating American independent secondary schools and British schools. The Isabel Carden Griffin Exchange was established in 1955 as a memorial to the wife of a former President of the ESU, making the opportunity available to girls. To date, more than 2,000 American and British students have been able to live and study in the opposite country through the SSE program.

B. Terminology

The ESU Secondary School Exchange Committee is comprised of ESU staff that handles the applications and administrative support, SSE school representatives and SSE alumni.

C. School Membership

1. Participation

Schools wishing to participate in the exchange are asked to write to the ESU SSE Committee member of their region, or to the Education Department of ESU at sse@esuus.org.

2. Requirements for Membership

Each participating boarding school will provide tuition, board, normal fees and all required expenses per semester/term for one British student selected by the Committees of the ESU at the following specified intervals unless exempted by the US ESU SSE Committee.

Each participating day school will provide tuition, normal fees and all required expenses for one British student selected by the ESU Committees according to the schedule given above for boarding schools. In addition, day schools will arrange for their British student to live with a host family.

Schools are expected to offer the required number of places, However, as the pool of applicants fluctuates, there will not always be a sufficient number of applications to fill all openings with qualified candidates.

3. Annual Dues

Each participating school will pay annual membership dues of \$250, invoiced each fall.

D. Authorization to Issue I-20 Forms

All schools must complete I-20s online through SEVP (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) (school must be registered with SEVP to issue I-20s). The SEVP procedure is a step-by-step process which is self-explanatory online. It is important to print the I-20 and send it to the student as they will need a printed and signed I-20 to take to the American Embassy. They should also keep the I-20 with them throughout their time in the US.

E. ESU Education

Member schools are encouraged to form a relationship with ESU Education. This vibrant volunteer community coordinates local high school ESU National Shakespeare Competitions, organizes international travel-study opportunities, sponsors teacher scholarships, and other educational programs.

Section II – Program for United States-based Students

A. Information for Potential Applicants

Please refer to the general information pages located in Appendix IV. It is essential to provide both parents and students with the Guide to Program Costs. In addition, schools are encouraged to refer interested students to school alumni who have participated in the SSE program.

B. Application Procedure for Students

1. Students obtain application forms from their school or they can be downloaded from ESU's website: www.esuus.org. The application consists of four parts: student application, parent/guardian application, school form (to be completed by head of school, college counselor, or academic advisor), and medical form. The completed application packet must be accompanied by a check for the application fee (\$100, payable to The English-Speaking Union of the United States).

2. The student should submit the complete application directly to the ESU. The completed application packet must be accompanied by a check for the application fee (\$100, payable to The English-Speaking Union of the United States). It is the student's responsibility to ensure all components of their application are at the ESU or en route by the national deadline (**January 21, 2020**). (If any materials will be delayed, notify the ESU as soon as possible.)

C. School Screening of Applicants

1. Eligibility

The program is designed to provide the opportunity for American students to spend a post-high school gap year in a British school. Applicants need not be US citizens. However, command of the English language is necessary and the student must have been at the school for a minimum of one year prior to application.

It is expected that schools will not permit students to apply unless they are satisfied that they are well-qualified for a scholarship and prepared for the kind of experience offered by the exchange.

2. Financial Responsibility

Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are asked as a part of their applications to ensure sole responsibility for the cost of the year (outside of costs covered by the scholarship). Schools are also asked in their form to comment on the financial responsibility of the student and their family. It is important in fostering the relationships between the ESU and the British schools to be able to offer scholarships in the future that students and their families understand they are responsible for any debts incurred while attending school in the UK.

D. Application Procedure

Students should work with the SSE Coordinator at their school (see Appendix III) to develop and complete materials. Students will submit their own applications directly to the ESU. Applications should be submitted with the application fees on/by **January 21, 2020**. Interviews will be conducted regionally or via phone/Skype call in mid-February. Please refer to the Calendar of Application in Appendix I and Flow Chart of Selection Process in Appendix II.

E. Selection of Applicants

1. The American ESU SSE Committee notifies applicants in March if they have been recommended to the UK as finalists or if they have been placed on a waitlist. Alternate candidates may indeed receive an award, either by the withdrawal of a finalist or because additional school places become available.

2. ESU Staff sends finalists' applications to the British ESU SSE Committee for further consideration. This is the last stage in the selection process. Because there are limited places available in the UK, the British SSE Committee tries to place each selected American finalist at the best school available to match their talents and skills.
3. The ESU Staff sends a letter announcing placements to the students in April with copies to parents and schools.
4. The ESU Staff also notifies students who have not been matched to a school of their status. These students should continue pursuing alternate post-secondary endeavors.

F. Travel and Other Information

In addition to notification of placement, the students and/or their parents receive information from the ESU regarding student visas, orientation information and travel suggestions. Students should also be in contact with their British school upon placement to arrange travel and matriculation.

G. Guardianship

Many British schools require international students to secure a UK-based guardian for the duration of their time at the British school. Students participating in the program should be aware of these requirements; scholars may be able to enlist family or friends in the UK to serve as a guardian if available. Otherwise, scholars may have to use the services of a guardianship agency, whose fees can be around \$1,000.

H. Visas

In order to study in the UK as an SSE Scholar, students will need to acquire a Tier 4 (general) student visa, unless they hold British or European citizenship (pending current UK Home Office restrictions). In 2018 the fees associated with acquiring a Tier 4 visa were around \$1,000. The ESU recommends the services of a visa expeditor who can help with the process, The ESU cannot answer any questions or handle student visa applications.

Section III – Program for British Students in the United States

A. Program

British students may apply to spend a full year (“three-term;” September-June) or half-year (“two-term;” January-June, arriving following winter break) at an American school.

B. Selection of Applicants

The international students are recommended by their schools and each applicant is interviewed by the British ESU SSE Committee.

The applications of international students who will spend a full academic year in the US are usually sent to the American ESU SSE Committee and subsequently their American schools in April of the previous academic year. The applications of half-year students are sent to their American schools in October/November, two months prior to arrival.

C. Travel Arrangements

Because of varying start dates, students usually do not travel in groups, but will arrive on the date requested by the school.

D. Financial Provisions

1. American boarding schools offer full scholarships including tuition, room, board and fees. American day schools or boarding schools accepting British students as day students offer a scholarship for tuition and fees and find an American family (or families) with whom the student will live.
2. If it is not feasible for one family to host an international student during their entire stay, it is acceptable for the student to be lodged with more than one family. Schools finding host families should strive for no more than three separate placements for the students; experience has shown that more than three moves tend to be disruptive and unsettling for the British students. Please see the following Section H for more information.
3. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of international students are responsible for transatlantic and domestic transportation, incidental expenses and support during vacations.

E. Insurance Coverage

All foreign students are required to obtain sickness and accident insurance for the entire period of their stay in the US before they depart their country. In order to accept a SSE scholarship placement, all foreign students and their families must agree to the American host school’s insurance requirements including purchasing the school’s health insurance plan, if required. Health insurance must be purchased no later than one month prior to the start of school and copies of the policy sent directly to the school.

F. Immigration Regulations

Students are required to follow the rules outlined on their visa and, where applicable, by the international coordinator at their American school.

Students who successfully complete the program have 60 days after the date of graduation to remain in the US before they must return to their country. If a student wishes to stay in US beyond the 60-day period, they must request a change of status and obtain another class of visa.

Any student who withdraws early from the program is required to notify the ESU in writing and return home immediately. Schools are also asked to inform the ESU in writing of any early withdrawal.

Any student who is asked by their school to leave early must depart the country within 48 hours.

G. Student Welfare

1. Schools are asked to contact the ESU as soon as possible if the student is experiencing significant academic and/or emotional difficulties during the course of the year.

2. If a student departs the school early for whatever reason, the student and the school should notify the ESU immediately.

H. Host Families

It is the responsibility of the host school to find adequate accommodations for the visiting scholar in their school community. Schools should strive for no more than three separate placements for the students.

Host families are expected to welcome the visiting student in to their home as any other family member, providing the appropriate emotional support, in addition to the basic three meals a day, transportation to and from school, and a room with a bed (not convertible or inflatable). Rooms may be shared with family members of the same gender so long as they are approximately the same age as the student.

Appendices

Appendix I – Calendar for SSE Application and Notification

For SSE Scholarships for the 2020-2021 Academic Year in the UK

September 2019	ESU sends application forms and information on program to school SSE Coordinators. All materials are posted online (www.esuus.org).
December 2019	ESU sends interview materials to Regional Chairs.
January 21, 2020	Deadline for applicants to submit all materials to the ESU. ESU sends applications to appropriate Regional Chairs.
February 4-18, 2020	Regional interviews (conducted in-person or digitally).
February 21, 2020	Date for Regional Chairs to submit evaluations and ratings to ESU SSE Committee.
Mid-March 2020	ESU notifies finalists, alternate candidates, their schools, and families of their status.
Mid-April 2020	ESU notifies successful students of placement in a British school.
Late April 2020	\$2,000 non-refundable administrative program fee is due to ESU National upon receipt of invoice.
Summer 2020	Obtain student visa and plane tickets. SSE Orientation in New York City.
September 2020	School starts in the United Kingdom.

Appendix II – Flow Chart of Application Process

1. Student completes application and submits directly to the ESU by **January 21, 2020**.
 - Student Application
 - Parent/Guardian Application
 - School Form (to be sent directly to the ESU by the referrer)
 - Medical Form
 - \$100 Application Fee (check)
2. ESU Staff shares applications with Regional Chairs.
3. Regional Chairs conduct interviews **February 4-18, 2020** (individual dates to be set).
4. Regional Chairs submit interview evaluations to ESU Staff/SSE Committee by **February 21, 2020**.
5. American ESU SSE Committee selects finalists, who are notified **mid-March 2020** of their status.
6. British ESU SSE Committee places American students at schools in the UK.
7. Finalists are notified of their placements in the UK in **mid-April 2020**.

Appendix III – SSE Coordinators

School	Coordinators <i>for outgoing students</i>
Avon Old Farms <i>Avon, CT</i>	Arthur Custer , Director of Curriculum Development and Instruction Kenneth LaRocque , Headmaster
Culver Academies <i>Culver, IN</i>	Stephanie Hall , Associate Director of College Advising
Emma Willard School <i>Troy, NY</i>	Kent Jones , Director of College Counseling
Ethel Walker School <i>Simsbury, CT</i>	Clarissa Basch , Director of College Counseling
The Governor's Academy <i>Byfield, MA</i>	Mike Kinnealey , Director of Admission
Hutchison School <i>Memphis, TN</i>	Katy Nair , Upper School Assistant Head Kristen Ring , Head of School
Kent School <i>Kent, CT</i>	Shawn Rousseau , Director of College Counseling Richardson Schell , Headmaster
Lawrenceville School <i>Lawrenceville, NJ</i>	Chris Cull , Director of Theater
Rabun Gap-Nacooche School <i>Rabun Gap, GA</i>	David Landis , Associate Head for Academic Affairs
Ravenscroft School <i>Raleigh, NC</i>	David Kates , Director of International Education
The Stony Brook School <i>Stony Brook, NY</i>	Christine Loo , Director of College Counseling
Westminster School <i>Simsbury, CT</i>	Kimberly Pope , Associate Director of Admissions
Western Reserve Academy <i>Hudson, OH</i>	Chris Burner , Head of School Eugene Thomas , SSE Alum
Woodberry Forest School <i>Woodberry, VA</i>	Robert Kendall , History Department

Personnel at schools are always subject to change; if you are unsure of who to contact at your school, email sse@esuus.org.

Appendix IV – The English-Speaking Union Secondary School Exchange General Information

Eligibility

The program is designed to provide the opportunity for American students to spend a post high school year in a British secondary school.

1. Applicants must attend schools that participate in the Exchange.
2. Applicants must demonstrate a genuine interest in studying for a year at a British school.
3. Applicants must have a strong academic record and must be accepted to a college/university prior to embarking on the exchange.
4. Applicants should have good physical and mental health, emotional stability, and adaptability.

Application Procedure, Selection, and Notification

Candidates must apply through their schools. Application forms are available online in September and the student submits their application directly to the ESU.

The ESU then shares applications with Regional Chairs, who will interview applicants in February in person, via phone, or via Skype. Once selections are made at the American ESU SSE Committee meeting in March, applicants will be notified of the status of their application.

Successful candidates are assigned to British schools by the British ESU SSE Committee based on their knowledge of the schools and the recommendations of the American ESU SSE Committee to achieve the best possible placement for each student. Scholars are usually notified of their placement by the ESU in April.

Fees

An ESU application fee of \$100 must accompany each application. In addition, a non-refundable administrative program fee of \$2,000 must be submitted by each candidate who accepts a scholarship.

Students should be prepared to pay any visa fees imposed by the UK government, which in 2018 amounted to approximately \$1,000. The ESU also strongly recommends the use of a visa expeditor.

Please be aware that some British schools require international students to arrange for a **UK-based guardian**. Schools may work with guardian agencies; there may be fees (potentially \$1,000+) associated with obtaining these required services.

Terms of Award

Successful candidates must accept the placement at a British school arranged by the American and British ESU SSE Committees. They must be prepared to take a full course of study, to abide by all rules and regulations of the host school, complete A-level or IB examinations as required by their schools, and remain until the end of the term in July. Some British schools may not require the American SSE students to complete A-level or IB examinations.

Any student who leaves their British school before the end of the academic year, for any reason, must return immediately to the United States. Students are expected to return to the US at the conclusion of their exchange and to attend college or university the following autumn.

Financial Provisions

British boarding schools provide tuition, room, and board. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of American candidates are responsible for transatlantic transportation, incidental expenses, and support during

school vacations. It is estimated that a minimum of \$8,000 is needed to cover these expenses. British schools may require UK-based guardians for international students; parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to cover these costs as they are not necessarily covered by the SSE scholarship.

The British National Health Service (NHS) is available to students attending a full year program. Parents may want to provide insurance for private treatment of illness or injury which would also cover the student en route to/from the UK and during any possible vacation travel outside the UK.

Appendix V – Secondary School Exchange Guide to Program Costs

The SSE scholarship provides acceptance at a British boarding school which covers full tuition comparable to that of an American school. It does not cover any purchase of incidentals such as clothing, books, or food purchased at the school shop. Neither are such extras as instruction in a musical instrument, riding, etc. covered.

Bills for such items are sent to the parents of the scholars. Some schools require a deposit at the beginning of the year of up to £1,000 (apx. \$1,300) and others require a deposit payable at the beginning of each term to cover the cost of books, equipment, or personal expenses which the student may incur. Your UK school will inform you if that is the case. Some schools bill at the end of each term. You are expected to respect and abide by the schools payment requirements and procedure.

Pre-Program Costs

The SSE Application Form must be accompanied by a **\$100** application fee payable to the English-Speaking Union.

The SSE Acceptance Form must be accompanied by a **\$2,000** non-refundable administrative program fee.

The cost of a UK student visa is approximately **\$1,000** (plus apx. **\$600** for recommended submission via Passport/Visa Advisors expeditor service).

Guardianship service may be required by the British schools; fees may be **\$1,000+**.

Estimated cost of round trip airfare: approximately **\$1,000** from New York to London.

*Estimated Pre-Program Costs: **\$5,700***

Costs during Exchange in the UK

Estimated cost of incidentals while at school: **\$3,000**

Estimated additional spending money and travel: **\$5,000+**

(British schools have numerous vacations throughout the year – approximately ten-day breaks in October, February, and May/June, plus approximately three-week breaks in both December/January and March/April. Travel costs will vary per person but students should be aware that they typically will not be able to remain at their boarding school during these vacation periods.)

*Estimated additional costs: **\$8,000+***