

# NATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE (NSE) HANDBOOK

HOW BIG IS  
**YOUR**  
WORLD?

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## **Introduction to National Student Exchange Program (NSE)**

- Are you a self-starting student with a drive for academic enrichment and exploration?
- Are you interested in experiencing the culture, diversity, and awe-inspiring sites of the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S Virgin Islands and Canada?
- Are you ready to take your collegiate journey to the next level?

If so, the National Student Exchange is for you! This non-traditional collegiate study away program offers a variety of personal, academic, and professional enrichment opportunities tailored to students like you.

### **What is NSE?**

The National Student Exchange provides accessible collegiate study away to undergraduate students at member colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The program is comprised of a network of over 170 universities, all of which offer students unique insights into new and astonishing cultural, geographical, academic, and social experiences.

### **Why NSE?**

Students participate in the NSE Program to access new courses, search for graduate schools or full employment, acquire life skills, and broaden their personal and educational perspectives.

#### **Academic Benefits**

- Take courses not offered at our Towson University campus
- Study with new professors, faculty, and experts in your field
- Broaden your educational perspective
- Pursue research, field study, and internship opportunities
- Consider graduate schools and other higher education programs

#### **Personal Benefits**

- Gain independence and experience outlets for personal growth
- Live in a different geographic or cultural setting
- Further develop your international and/or intercultural understanding
- Explore and appreciate the historical and cultural composition of the United States and Canada
- Break out of your comfort zone

#### **Professional Benefits**

- Develop your professional network by making connections in a new job market
- Hone practical professional skills
- Prepare to live, work, and thrive in a culturally diverse society

### **NSE Quick FAQs**

#### **1. Where can I travel as a student in the NSE Program?**

As a student participating in the National Student Exchange Program, you have the

opportunity to travel and study in:

- over 48 states across the United States
- Puerto Rico
- Guam
- The U.S. Virgin Islands
- And numerous Canadian provinces

2. **How can I practice my foreign language proficiency while studying in the NSE Program?**

There are many opportunities for students to practice or fulfill their foreign language requirements while participating in the NSE Program!

- Spanish majors, minors, and other interested students can enhance their language skills by studying with NSE partner colleges and universities in Puerto Rico.
- French majors, minors, and other interested students can enhance their language skills by studying with NSE partner colleges and universities in French-speaking Quebec.

3. **Are there any additional tuition costs for students who participate in the NSE Program?**

TU students will pay their normal tuition and fees to Towson University.

- Institutional scholarships and other financial aid will apply!

Additional fees for the NSE Program include:

- Room and Board
- Activity fees, host institution fees
- Books
- Transportation Costs

4. **How can I apply?**

Student should complete [the online application](#) in Horizons. The TU Study Abroad Office and NSE coordinator Katie Villamar will then assist students with the program preparation process and authorize them to apply directly to the NSE.

5. **Will course credits earned through the NSE Program transfer back to TU?**

TU students who participate in NSE will have their course credits and grades sent to Towson University and added to their official transcript. While participants complete courses at a partner college or university, they are still considered a TU student! Grades earned during your study away will factor into your TU GPA.

6. **What is the typical duration for an NSE Program?**

NSE Programs can range in duration depending upon student interest and program parameters.

- Students can participate in a semester or academic year exchange at a single partner college or university.
- With planning and coordination with the TU Study Abroad Office and NSE coordinator, students can even spend multiple semesters with multiple partner colleges or universities.

## **NSE Program Eligibility**

Student eligibility for the NSE Program is dependent upon a basic framework of policies developed for all member institutions, host colleges/universities, and individual participants. Eligibility is based on the following guidelines, all of which must be strictly adhered to and maintained upon:

- the official submission of the student NSE application,
- throughout the semester proceeding a scheduled student exchange,
- and for the full duration of the exchange

**NOTE:** If at any time during the exchange process, a student is not in accordance with the following set of policies, either Towson University or the host institution may reserve the right to:

1. implement restricted NSE Program conditions
2. or terminate a student exchange

## **General Eligibility Requirements**

All participating NSE students must:

1. be a full-time undergraduate degree candidate
2. have completed at least one term of full-time attendance (i.e., 12+ credit semester) at Towson University prior to submitting an application \*
3. have completed one academic year (i.e., 24+ credits) prior to exchange \*
4. have a minimum cumulative Towson University grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) \*
5. be in good academic standing at Towson University
6. have no incomplete grades from previous academic terms
7. no outstanding financial obligations to Towson University
8. no current or pending campus probationary status and/or disciplinary action due to academic dishonesty, civil, or criminal misconduct
9. no current or pending non-campus related probationary status and/or disciplinary action due to civil or criminal misconduct

\* If you are a first-semester freshman or transfer student at Towson University, **you may still apply to the NSE**. Placement is subject to first-semester average GPA and credit hours.

## **Additional Towson University Requirements**

1. Towson University requires that all participating NSE students abide by the policies and procedures of the host institution
2. All students participating in an exchange must forward all contact information and related coursework from the host institution to Towson University for record keeping  
**NOTE:** Term transcripts from the host institution must be sent to Towson University promptly for processing, otherwise exchange students will be unable to obtain TU course credit.

## Exchange Credits and Grades

All credits completed throughout the NSE Program will be transferred back to Towson University as TU credits. **If coordinated with the Towson University Study Abroad Office, students may even complete their final 30 credits while participating in NSE.** Once a student is placed at a member institution and has accepted that placement, they will be receiving the National Student Exchange Transfer Petition to complete for each course they plan to take during their semester or year away.

Following the completion of a term during the exchange, a participating NSE student must promptly forward a completed host institution transcript to Towson University. Once received, the transcript and all relevant course credits will be included within a student's official Towson University transcript.

Term grades will be recorded on a student's official Towson University transcript as they appear on the exchange transcript. For example, any failing grades will be included on a student's official Towson University transcript, and thus denoted with an 'F' for each failed course. All finalized grades received by Towson University during a student exchange are factored into their cumulative GPA.

**NOTE:** If a student intended to complete a course during the NSE Program to satisfy a Major, Core Curriculum, or final credit requirement, **they must make arrangements with Towson University prior to the exchange** in order to ensure proper transfer of credits.

## Planning Your Exchange

Begin your NSE journey by following this simple step-by-step guide through the preliminary research, application, and placement process!

### Step One: Research

- Utilize the official National Student Exchange website ([www.nse.org](http://www.nse.org)) to access a full data-base of member institutions, colleges, and universities
  - Start reading through the database, noting any schools and/or programs of interest throughout your research
    - Remember to make sure [the institution accepts “home pay” or “plan b”](#) (this means you pay your tuition and fees to TU, not the host campus)
    - Search [unique and notable programs](#) for your field of study
    - Utilize the [category search](#) function on the website
  - Most host schools list online catalogs and other information pertaining to offered programs and courses on their respective website or profile on the NSE database
  - Develop a list of potential schools that you would be interested in attending during your exchange! Be sure to note important information about each host college/university, such as cost of room and board, housing availability, housing contract obligations, duration of academic terms, and restricted academic programs

**TIP:** Do not choose an exchange school based on assumptions you may have about a school or

part of the country! You might miss fascinating courses, professional network building, and other once in a lifetime opportunities! By beginning your research early, you may find surprising information, fun facts, and intriguing statistics that could lead you to your perfect NSE program.

## **Step Two: Mapping Out Your Exchange**

Using your list of potential schools, begin to narrow down your program options by outlining the exchange duration, possible limitations, and costs of your NSE Program.

### **Exchange Duration**

- All participating students must follow the duration restrictions that are listed on the campus profile page for each host college/university on the NSE database.  
**NOTE:** There are a few schools that require a *full-year exchange*!
- Member host colleges/universities on the NSE database are typically broken up into two main categories:
  1. *Semester Schools*
    - a. Where students can participate in an exchange for the Fall and/or Spring semester
    - b. However, some schools will not accept Mid-Year placements
  2. *Quarter Schools*
    - a. Where students are advised to participate in an exchange throughout the Winter and Spring semester or a full-academic year

### **Possible Limitations**

- NOTE:** Some schools have limitations beyond those listed on their NSE campus profile page! Be sure to keep this in mind as you research host institutions and programs.
- Some of these potential limitations could include:
    - A highly competitive application process
    - A cap on the number of NSE students that can be accepted into their program
    - And application deferral due to limited campus space for NSE students
  - To better prepare for these potential limitations, schedule a meeting with our Towson University NSE advisor, Katie Villamar, to further discuss program options (see the NSE Advisor section for more information)

### **Costs**

In mapping out your NSE options, be sure to account for general and specific program costs. This information can be key in deciding on a host college/university, exchange duration, and/or program to participate in.

- Students will pay tuition and fees to Towson University
  - Specifically, students must pay a \$250 NSE application fee to Towson

- University upon the submission of their application
    - This \$250 fee funds the University's membership in the NSE program
- Students will be required to submit other payments, such as room and board to the host institution
- Students may be responsible for paying additional fees to the host campus upon acceptance into an NSE program

### **Step Three: Understanding Financial Obligations**

Now that you have narrowed down your NSE search using research and mapping tools, you are ready to decide on a program! Student should carefully walk through their financial obligations prior beginning their application process. Review the financial guidelines below prior to beginning your application process.

#### **Financial Aid**

- If a student receives assistance through the Towson University Financial Aid Office, payments and fees associated with NSE should be thoroughly discussed and negotiated with a Financial Aid Adviser prior to submitting an application
- If a student receives financial aid, it will first be applied to Towson University tuition and fees. A student may apply additional funding toward NSE room and board if available.
  - **NOTE:** A host institution may opt to require the submission of all relevant payments prior to the awarding of additional funding from the Towson University Financial Aid Office. All participating NSE students must communicate with their host institution and determine whether payment extension opportunities will be granted.
  - The Towson University Financial Aid Office is available to assist students in navigating financial aid, awards, and borrowing options

#### **Federal Work Study**

- If a student has been granted Federal Work Study, it is important to note that this award letter is non-transferable. Therefore, if a student under Federal Work Study were to participate in NSE, they would be required by law to decline the Federal Work Study award for the duration of the exchange.

#### **Additional Fees**

- If a student is to participate in the NSE, they must be aware and prepared for any additional host institution payments, such as activities and service fees.
- If a student is to participate in the NSE, they must pay host institution payments for housing and/or meal plans either in full or in part (i.e., via a deposit) in advance
- If a student is to participate in the NSE, they must be prepared to have a reliable source of financing throughout their exchange to cover additional costs, such as textbooks, housing, and entertainment

**If a student is to participate in the NSE, they should plan and prepare for Towson University, NSE, and program related financial obligations!**

## Step Four: Application Procedures

Having completed your research, mapping, and review of your financial obligations, you are now ready to apply to the NSE program! **Utilizing the section below and the National Student Exchange checklist** (found on page 10), you may begin your application process.

### Deadlines

Exchange Term	Application Deadline
Fall Exchange Applications	February 21 <sup>st</sup>
Full Academic Year Applications	February 21 <sup>st</sup>
Spring Exchange Applications	September 30 <sup>th</sup>

\*\*\* Be sure to complete your application with all relevant deadlines in mind! \*\*\*

### Meeting with an NSE Advisor

Scheduling a meeting with our NSE Program Advisor is a required component of the Towson University NSE application. These brief interviews will give you the opportunity to further personalize your experience, receive programming guidance, and enhance your application. To schedule an appointment, email [nse@towson.edu](mailto:nse@towson.edu) with your availability. The meeting should not last more than 30 minutes.

### Accessing your Application

Once you have met with our NSE Program Advisor, you will complete the [online application in Horizons](#).

- Please utilize the National Student Exchange Program Checklist found on page 10 of the National Student Exchange handbook for more information.
- For more information about the application process and other required materials, please visit the Towson University NSE website ([www.towson.edu/nse](http://www.towson.edu/nse))

### Application Fee Refund Policy

The required \$250 application fee paid to Towson University is a non-refundable.

### **Step Five: Program Placement**

Congratulations! You have officially submitted an application for the NSE program of your choosing! Now, it is time for your program placement.

Program placement for students typically occurs throughout the annual NSE Placement Conference held in mid-March.

### Program Ranking

If multiple Towson University students were to select the same host college or university, the applicants will be ranked according to several factors, including but not limited to:

- Cumulative GPA

- Date of Application Submission
- Information gathered during the NSE Advisor Meeting

This rank order system is developed to ensure that all student applicants are fairly offered placement ranking due to their academic history and involvement in the application process.

### **NSE Conference Placement Procedure**

#### **1.) First Round Placement**

- Limited to first choice host college or university applications only
- An exchange host college or university may have a limited number of students it can accept into the NSE Program, and will therefore prioritize applicants from institutions that have hosted their students in the past

**NOTE:** If placement at your first-choice host **institution is unsuccessful**, then the placement process will defer to your second-choice host institution

#### **2.) Second Round Placement**

- If a student does not receive their first-choice host college or university placement, then the placement process will defer them to their second or third-choice options
- Includes a variety of placement options based on host institution preference and student applications
- We will work diligently to find you the right match for your NSE Program!

### **Placement Notification**

- Upon successful placement, an NSE Coordinator will notify you following the Placement Conference
- All students must accept or decline placement as soon as possible to ensure that they are approved for their NSE Program. You will be required to sign a Student Agreement Form upon placement. It's important to discuss your plans with your parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/loved ones before completing this form.
- Once approved, host colleges and universities will directly send newly accepted students important information pertaining to:
  - Housing
  - Registration
  - Meal Plans
  - Etc.

**NOTE:** If a student has difficulty obtaining this information from the host institution, they must contact their host college or university NSE Coordinator for more information. Contact information for all NSE Coordinators is available via the Towson University Study Abroad Office.

- All accepted Towson University students ***MUST*** complete a National Student Exchange Transfer Credit Petition Form for all courses enrolled in at the host

college or university. Students must complete this form for all enrolled courses **AND** planned courses. This is shared with students after placement.

### **Step Five: After Placement**

#### **Outgoing Orientation**

- Towson University will hold a mandatory Outgoing Orientation for all NSE participants prior to program departure
- This Outgoing Orientation will offer students a myriad of detailed information pertaining to:
  - Maintaining TU student status and eligibility requirements while on an exchange
  - Sending completed transcripts
  - Words of wisdom, and other helpful tips
  - Preparing for a once in a lifetime exchange

#### **Post-Conference Placement**

- After all regular application students have been placed in their respective NSE Program, there is potential for a Post-Conference Placement
- Post-Conference Placement occurs when some host colleges or universities have additional slots for student applicants
- The Towson University Study Abroad Office will provide further details pertaining to these Post-Conference Placements and other options if applicable

### **Welcome Back: Post-Exchange**

Welcome back to Towson University! Now that you have successfully completed your NSE Program, it is time for your reinstatement process.

- Reinstatement at Towson University is typically an automatic procedure that takes place following the completion of an NSE Program and return of an exchange student
- Certain circumstances that could interfere with a students' automatic reinstatement and transfer of credits include, but are not limited to:
  - A failure to complete the National Student Exchange Transfer Petition
  - A failure to notify the Towson University Study Abroad Office in writing of program cancellation
  - Withdrawal from a host institution regardless of reasoning, program duration, or credits completed
  - Unpaid bills to TU or your host institution

**NOTE: Keep in close contact with the Towson University Study Abroad Office throughout the NSE Program to minimize any potential issues with reinstatement or transfer of credits**

### **Liability and Agreements**

- Towson University is not liable for accidents or injuries sustained in transit to the host institution or during the exchange program. Access to adequate medical insurance

coverage prior to departure is highly encouraged.

- Towson University is not liable for dissatisfaction with an exchange placement or experience.

## NATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE (NSE) PROGRAM CHECKLIST

Be sure to refer to the following checklist throughout the application process and following your NSE Program acceptance!

PRE - ACCEPTANCE TASKS	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review the NSE Student Handbook
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research the National Student Exchange to identify 3-5 institutions of interest
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss course recommendations with your Academic Advisor and review your academic requirements report
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with TU NSE Advisor Katie Villamar to begin the application process
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss your program options and goals with your family
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the TU NSE application and submit the \$250 application fee online
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the NSE online application once you receive the invitation via email

\* REMINDER \*

Fall/Full Year Exchange Applications due **February 21st**

Spring Exchange Applications due **September 30th**

POST - ACCEPTANCE TASKS	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accept exchange placement by completing and signing the Placement Acceptance Form (PAF)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the National Student Exchange Transfer Petition for all courses you plan to enroll in while away
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend NSE Orientation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit any additional payments required by the host institution
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make housing arrangements at the direction of your host institution
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make travel arrangements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare for the experience of a lifetime!