

Rotary Youth Exchange – District 5020 Frequently Asked Question

The following are some of the most frequently asked questions we get from students especially for our Long Term Exchange Scholarship Program. Many of your questions can be answered by visiting the Youth Exchange website at: www.rye502.org.

Most of the questions regarding the Short Term Exchange Program (STEP) are in the Student Guide General Information which can be found on the website under Program Links and Forms. Exceptions to that are noted below under each question.

How old must I be?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: The year you leave on exchange you must be at least 16 years old by September 30 and cannot turn 18 before September 30.

How are students selected for the RYE program?

Students for both programs are interviewed by members of a sponsoring local Rotary club. This is an information session and interview (in late September or early October) that involves the student and parents. If successful, a student will be proposed by the Rotary club. At this point the full application is then completed and given to the Youth Exchange Officer.

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: Once proposed by a sponsoring Rotary Club, the student moves to the next level of District Interviews hosted in Victoria, B.C. during the first weekend of December. Parent(s) and the student must attend. This interview usually involves a small group of Rotarians, Rotary Youth Exchange Rebound (former RYE students), and/or community members. There is also an information session. If successful, a student will be assigned to a country which will be communicated by a District Country Officer during the week following interviews.

For the Short Term Program: These students are selected by clubs at the local or club level and after the home inspection and application is completed.

How can I prepare for the interviews?

For both programs, your host club may provide some suggested guidelines to 'think about' prior to your initial club interview. Information is also available on the RYE 5020 website.

First impressions are important. Attire and conduct should convey an image that is positive and professional. Consider this an important interview in your life.

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: The District Interview is actually a 'getting to know you' process that poses several life situations to draw from your background experience. Rotary is looking for adaptable, grounded, caring individuals who value the Rotary's mandate of 'Service Above Self'. As it can be a year of dramatic change (and growth) students are reminded of the need to be flexible and open minded to fully immerse themselves in a new language and culture.

What are the costs and who pays for this?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: Costs will vary depending upon the country that you are placed in (aka Host Country) Hosting Rotary Clubs are responsible for school tuition, accommodation and food, and a modest monthly allowance (generally around \$100/month).

Families are responsible for insurance, airfare, passport, Outbound Fee, visa and other incidentals. An estimated \$7,000 and \$10,000 for the year. Families should anticipate 'reduced' costs while a student is away. Things like food, activity fees, car insurance, etc. will not be incurred while you are gone.

It is important to note that after the December interviews families will be asked to forward a cheque/check in the amount of \$2,800 in the first week of January. This fee enables the District Committee to address routine costs including Outbound Student Insurance (as required), Outbound Orientation (typically in March), and basic regalia/supplies (business cards, patches, etc.) and Rebound Weekend (the summer you return). This is the only fee collected by the district.

Our district does have an endowment fund available for the long term program only. To learn more about this please visit: www.leebelas.com

How is country placement determined?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: Students complete a Country Choice form and submit with the application. All the potential countries we exchange with are listed on this form. Following the December Interviews the District YE Committee meets to review feedback from the interviews. This feedback along with the preferences of the students helps in the placement process. In most instances we have one placement per country. Once placements have been made, the appropriate Country Officer will contact the student to determine whether he/she will accept the placement. Students are only placed in pre-arranged countries determined by our country partnerships.

What if a student chooses not to accept the placement?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: Students are accepted to the Rotary Youth Exchange program, not to a placement in a specific country. We recognize that some students may not receive the choice they would most like. Efforts are certainly made to place a student in one of the countries indicated on the 'Country Choice Form'. However, if a student chooses not to participate in the program based upon the country placement offered, they are declining to participate in the program and another student who participated in the interviews will be offered that country instead. There is no negotiating your country placement once the committee has made an assignment.

When will I know which community and Rotary club is sponsoring me?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: This varies from country to country. Generally does not occur before April and may be as late as June. Applications are forwarded to the hosting district in each country partner. Once all relevant documents are completed, they will be returned to the Country Officer who in turn forwards them to the student. It is at this point that the student will have the needed documentation to apply for a travel visa.

How can I prepare before receiving my documents?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: Here is list of several things you can to do make your experience go smoother and be better:

- Do not wait to start gathering all the documents you need for your visa. Have a current passport whose expiry date is at least six months after your anticipated return from your year abroad. This way once your documents arrive you can apply for your visa. Remember some visas take 12 weeks to get, so having all of your documents completed well in advance is crucial.
- Make arrangements to learn as much language as you can. This may be through courses, online program, or a local resource person who is eager to tutor you. Language ability has a huge impact on the success of your exchange. We provide an online language course to accepted applicants.
- You will receive a number of e-mails / notices from your Country Officer. Deal with them in a timely manner as they are essential to receiving your documents. For example, you will be asked to input information in the YEAH data base for RYE students.
- As questions emerge, ask your Rotary Club YEO or your Country Officer.
- You will be assigned a research project by your Country Officer to learn about new host country and your own country. You will be asked to share some of what you have learned at Outbound Orientation.
- You may also wish to begin preparation of a PowerPoint or other presentation that will be shared with your sponsoring Rotary club and future host Rotary club.

When will I leave/return?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: This depends on the country your host country. Most LTEP students leave in Aug. and return the following June.

For the Short Term Program: STEP students typically are busy June-Aug. Because of this having a summer job is not allowed.

Will I get school credit?

For the Long Term Scholarship Program: This varies from district to district and sometimes school to school. Meet with your school counselor. Determine which current courses you will complete this year and which courses you anticipate you will take upon return. Get this in writing (memories do fade!). Do not expect to receive credits for courses taken while on exchange, however, conversations with your school counselor may determine whether some credits might be assigned upon return. Again, get as much as this in writing from your school counselor or appropriate school official.