Berkeley International Study Program (BISP)
Application Process – Independent Students

The following information about applying to the Berkeley International Study Program (BISP) is only for students who do not attend one of our partner universities, and would like to apply as an independent student to our program. If you attend one of our partner universities, please go here for application instructions.

If you believe you are a good candidate considering the qualifications below, please complete the information requested on the Inquiry Form. We will screen and select a limited number of students who qualify to join our program as an independent student. Please pay attention to the deadlines listed below under What to Expect Next.

We are looking to invite students from different parts of the world, who are passionate about studying at a top-ranked university in California and interested in taking courses in the Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities, of which there are over 50 departments offering courses. We have students from many disciplines taking courses in this area, not only from traditional subjects such as sociology, anthropology, English, and political science but also from multidisciplinary subjects in business, media, health, languages, international relations, cultural and global studies to name a few.

Qualifications for Applying to BISP as an Independent Student

1) Academic Interest in Social Sciences or Arts and Humanities:

Students should have an interest in taking courses from one or more of the following academic departments in the Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities. You do not need to have a major in one of these fields, and in fact many of our students are studying in different fields but have an interest in taking related courses for general elective requirements at their home institution. Many humanities and social science departments have courses that are related to other majors.

Please let us know your subject and course interest areas in the Inquiry Form.

2) Academic Accomplishments:

We are looking for students who have taken at least 1 year, preferably 2 years, of academic courses at an accredited university before studying abroad at UC Berkeley.
When we invite you to apply, we will request a copy of your current transcript. Students with high marks or grades will be given priority consideration, generally equivalent to a U.S. grading system between 3.0 (B) and 4.0 (A).

In some cases we will be looking for basic prerequisite courses in the field of study you would like to take courses in at UC Berkeley.

3) English Language Proficiency
Visiting international students from non-English speaking universities must meet a minimum score on an English Language Proficiency exam, such as: TOEFL: score of 90 (iBT) or IELTS Academic Format: score of 7.0. If you have taken another type of English Language exam, please let us know in the Inquiry Form so we can let you know if this alternate exam is acceptable and what the score requirement is.

It is very important that the students we select have an excellent command of the English language including skills in reading, writing, listening, and conversation. We want you to succeed in your courses here, and be able to participate fully with other students in your classes. Students with the appropriate minimum or above scores will be considered. For many we will also invite you to engage in an online interview language assessment with us. Please take this into consideration when you apply to our program.

What to Expect Next
After completing the Inquiry Form you will receive a response back from one of our Program Advisors, letting you know if you’re eligible to officially apply to our BISP program as an independent student and what the next steps are. If you are invited to apply, we will let you know what documents you will need to provide to us and the deadlines for the semester you plan to study abroad in our program. The inquiry application periods and deadlines are generally the following:

Fall Semester start: February 1 – June 15
Spring Semester start: July 15 - November 1

We encourage you to apply as soon as possible so we can communicate with you about your plans. We will select students on a rolling basis during the application period, until we have reached capacity. If we reach our limit before the last day of the application period, we will post this news on the BISP website.