

Experimental Sites Initiative

General Experimental Sites Initiative Questions (ESI) QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ESI-Q1. Is it possible for schools participating under Provisional Certification to participate in ESI?

ESI-A1. In selecting schools for participation, the Department will consider a Provisional Certification status with consideration of the reasons for that status, along with the school's other performance and compliance history. A Provisional Approval would not automatically make a school ineligible for the experiment. [Guidance Issued: 5/7/15]

ESI-Q2. Are funds available to help institutions pay for the administration of their participation in the experiments?

ESI-A2. No. The statutory authority for experimental sites does not permit providing any additional federal funding to support the administrative expenses associated with an institution's participation in an experiment. [Guidance Issued: 5/7/15]

ESI-Q3. Once a school submits a letter of interest to participate in an experiment, how long is the approval process?

ESI-A3. The Department will move as quickly as possible to select schools for participation in the experiments. [Guidance Issued: 5/7/15]

ESI-Q4. When are institutions required to begin participation in experiments once selected?

ESI-A4. While the Department expects that schools will begin participation as soon as possible after approval, we recognize that there are various constraints on when participation can begin for each school (e.g., academic calendars, systems changes, need for program approvals). [Guidance Issued: 5/7/15]

ESI-Q5. How long will the experiments last?

ESI-A5. The length of time for an experiment will be partially dependent on the nature of the experiment. That said, we expect that any experiment will be in place for a minimum of 2 award years. [Guidance Issued: 5/7/15]

ESI Reporting:

ESI-Q6. Will reporting be annually or more frequently?

ESI-A6. Reporting will be done annually, but we might request data from you periodically to see how the experiment is going. [Guidance issued 7/30/2012]

ESI-Q7. Is the comparison group the same from year to year, or does it change?

ESI-A7. The comparison will be the group before treatment was applied. Therefore the comparison group is 2011-12, and you will compare against the 2011-12 group throughout the experiment. [Guidance issued 7/30/2012]

ESI-Q8. Anticipating some push back from those students who are not randomly selected for the treatment, has ED determined the criteria that will be used to randomly select students?

ESI-A8. ED will not use any criteria to select students. The selection process is truly random. Students not selected are simply unlucky. [Guidance issued 7/20/2012]

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Consumer Information:

ESI-Q9. Are schools allowed to come up with their own consumer information literature concerning this experiment? Does the Department have something to send to schools relating to the experiments?

ESI-A9. In terms of how to inform students about the features of the experiments, who and which programs can qualify, and what students need to do to put their name into the lottery, FSA will leave up to you. However, ED will provide information specifically about the evaluation, including the consent process, random assignment, what data will be collected, and how it will be analyzed and used. It will be important that both your staff and the potential participants

fully understand what the experiments and evaluation are about. [Guidance issued 7/20/2012]

For schools participating in *both* Experiments 4 (Study Abroad – Early Disbursement) and 5 (Unequal Disbursements):

ESI-Q10. For study abroad students, can a school combine unequal disbursements and early disbursements?

ESI-A10. Yes, but you will report on each experiment separately. FSA will help schools by providing guidance on how to indicate when this crossover occurs. [Guidance issued 7/30/2012]