Specialization Guidelines for Faculty Advisors, 
Academic Advisors, and Students

Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences 
Oregon State University

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I. Introduction

In FW 307 Specialization Development (FW 307), students in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences (Department, FWCS) at Oregon State University (Oregon State) identify courses to build their knowledge, skills, and abilities to help make them more competitive for employment. They accomplish this by researching job postings, learning about professional certifications and programs, and consulting with advisors, faculty, and professionals in their field of interest.

FW 307 registration requires departmental approval. Students are eligible to register after successfully completing FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences, and around the time they take BI 370 Ecology and Statistics (ST 351/352). They must have successfully completed the general biology series with a C- or better before registering for FW 307.

By the final weeks of the course, students will have developed a specialization plan – a minimum of 24 quarter (term) credits of primarily upper division coursework tailored toward their career interests. Once the plan is approved, specialization coursework is incorporated into the student’s degree program and visible as a new block of courses in their MyDegrees Checklist titled, “Student Program of Study.”
II. Specialization themes

There are six broad areas (themes) for Specialization: Fish Conservation and Management, Marine Ecology, Wildlife Conservation and Management, Law Enforcement/Park Ranger, Habitat Restoration/Conservation Ecology, Animal Care/Rehabilitation, and Individualized Specialization. The student comes up with their “Specialization Topic,” essentially a title that best describes the courses in their Specialization.

III. Specialization criteria

In FW 307, students submit a 1-2 page proposal and a list of courses for meeting their professional goals. All courses for Specialization must be approved by an advisor (faculty advisor or academic advisor).

A. Specialization is comprised of:

- a minimum of 24 quarter credit hours¹ (credits) relevant to career goals.
- a maximum of four lower division (100-200 level) quarter credits.
- courses that have not been used to fulfill any other FWCS or Oregon State degree requirement, other than the Writing Intensive Course.

B. Specialization MAY contain:

- one Writing Intensive Course (WIC) if it is NOT being used to fulfill another degree requirement, such as one under “Advanced Core” or “Human Dimensions.”
- a maximum of 12 credits, in any combination, of FW 401 (research) and FW 410 Internship (international or domestic), or as part of an Oregon State Study Abroad program. A student may receive a maximum of 8 credits of FW 410 by completing a second domestic FW 410 intensive and/or exploratory internship, if the following are true:
  - the student has completed their first FW410 domestic exploratory or intensive internship;
  - the additional exploratory or intensive internship is significantly different from the first completed internship (e.g., different conference, project, employer, or skillset gained);
  - the student presents a strong case as to why more internship credits are needed, and;
  - it has been approved by the Internship Coordinator.
- graduate (500-level) course or courses. If graduate level courses are used to meet a degree requirement, they CANNOT be used toward a graduate degree in the future.

¹ Conversion semester to quarter credit hours: 1 semester hours = 1.5 quarter hours
C. Criteria based on student population:

- **First degree students** may apply a maximum of 12 credits from their minor, double degree, or certificate program to their specialization. Students should check with an advisor in the department offering the minor/double degree/certificate program as their rules may supersede this.
- **Transfer students** may apply a maximum of one upper division transfer course and a maximum of four lower division transfer credits to their specialization.
- **Postbaccalaureate students** may apply a maximum of 12 credits from their first degree toward specialization, with advisor approval.

IV. Specialization courses

Students will identify courses for their specialization by reviewing desirable employment positions from different sources. Oregon State, other institutions, and international opportunities provide a wide range of choices to satisfy student interests. These include, but are not limited to the USAJobs website, agency/organization/company websites, job boards and listservs (e.g., Texas A&M, the Department, local universities, etc.) and certification programs such as American Fisheries Society, The Wildlife Society, and Ecological Society of America.

A. Oregon State courses

1. The Department offers courses suitable for Specialization, located in the FWCS Advising Guide. This same list may be found on the Curricula and Course Offerings” page under “FW Course List”: [https://fw.oregonstate.edu/fw/curricula-course-offerings](https://fw.oregonstate.edu/fw/curricula-course-offerings).

2. For students with a marine interest, the Department offers a [Marine Mammal and Conservation Minor](https://www.oregonstate.edu/colleges/wcfs/minors). Hatfield Marine Science Center located on the Oregon Coast has a multitude of field courses on fascinating subjects: [https://hmsc.oregonstate.edu/academics](https://hmsc.oregonstate.edu/academics)

3. FW 401 Research provides students a venue for demonstrating their research experience to future employers and graduate schools. Taking research credits reduces the traditional course load and can be associated with other benefits including gaining research experience with a dedicated supervisor.

4. FW 410 credits derived from an additional exploratory or intensive domestic internship may be applied if the student has completed the first FW 410 domestic internship, and only if it has been approved by the internship coordinator (See IIIIB above).

5. Minor, double degree, and certificate programs popular with FWCS students include, but are not limited to, Geology, Sustainability Minor, Sustainability Double Degree, Spanish Minor, and the Geographic Information Science Certificate.
6. Individual courses outside of the Department, can be found in the Oregon State Academic Catalog, Schedule of Classes by filtering by “Any Subject” (e.g., GEOG, BOT) and “Any Campus” (e.g., Corvallis, Ecampus). Ecampus Schedule of Classes is also a great resource for Ecampus students or those students wanting to take Ecampus courses.

B. Courses offered by other institutions.

Note: students should consult with their advisor to determine Department approval and verify Oregon State acceptance of credits.

1. Local institutions higher learning may offer applicable courses that are unavailable through Oregon State or via Ecampus. In some cases, students may prefer to take a course in person, rather than online.

2. Field courses offered by partnering programs from other institutions can broaden experiential learning opportunities. Only regionally accredited programs and institutions allow Oregon State Admissions to accept transferred student work. A general list of the 7 regional accrediting bodies Oregon State recognizes can be found here https://www.chea.org/regional-accrediting-organizations. Some international schools also have accreditation through these agencies, but if they do not, they will need to be checked with INTO, as they are able to better determine the transferability of credits from those programs.

C. International opportunities

1. FW 410 International Internships
The Department has a list of external providers with international programs approved by Oregon State. With prior approval from the internship coordinator and FWCS advisors, FWCS students may be able to use some of these credits to meet the internship requirement and/or the specialization requirement.

2. Study Abroad courses Oregon State has many opportunities for international study. A complete list of all of Oregon State’s education abroad offerings can be found by visiting Office of Global Opportunities. For specific programs related to this field learn more about going abroad with FWCS.

V. Specialization review process

The first half of FW 307 is dedicated to the selection of specialization courses. In the second half, specializations are reviewed and approved.

In Week 7, the FW 307 instructor will review initial drafts of the student’s specialization proposal and form. The student will then make any necessary changes before submitting it to
their respective advisor in **Week 8**, allowing one week for their advisor to comment. If needed, an appointment should be made with the advisor. After advisor review, the specialization is finalized and submitted in **Week 9**.

**Corvallis Campus students:** After *faculty advisor* approval of specialization courses, the student enters courses in a new plan in their MyDegrees Planner, per course instructions. The new plan titled, “Specialization,” is subsequently uploaded by the *Head Advisor* and the list of specialization courses will appear below the Major Block under “Student Program of Study.” The plan will be locked so that no changes can be made without consultation with the *faculty advisor*.

**Ecampus students:** After *academic advisor* approval of specialization courses, the student enters courses as a new plan in their MyDegrees Planner, per course instructions. The new plan titled, “Specialization,” is subsequently uploaded by the *advisor* and the list of specialization courses will appear below the Major Block under “Student Program of Study.” The plan will be locked so that no changes can be made without consultation with the *advisor*.

### VI. Appearance of Specialization

**A. MyDegrees**

In the MyDegrees Degree Checklist, prior to taking FW 307, Specialization is shown above the Baccalaureate Core (Bacc Core) section, with the words, “Specialization (24 credits).” For postbaccalaureate students, there is no Bacc Core section, as these requirements were completed under a previous degree program.

1. **Appearance of Specialization prior to FW 307 in MyDegrees Degree Checklist:**

   ![Specialization Checklist](image)

   At the end of FW 307, the student enters their specialization courses as a new plan in the MyDegrees
Planer, which is then uploaded by the student’s advisor and becomes a separate block titled “Study Program of Study”. Specific instructions for this process are provided in FW 307. Once uploaded, specialization courses are degree requirements, and courses in the newly created block must be successfully completed to graduate.

2. Appearance of Specialization in MyDegrees Degree Checklist after FW 307 has been successfully completed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Program of Study</th>
<th>INCOMPLETE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecosystem Services</td>
<td>FW 462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife in Agric Ecosystems</td>
<td>FW 435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Physiology</td>
<td>BOT 331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues in Natural Res Conserv</td>
<td>FES 565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Assessment</td>
<td>Still needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS, Geo Info Syst. &amp; Theory</td>
<td>Still needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intl. Environmental Politics</td>
<td>Still needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Transcripts**

Specialization is NOT transcript-visible. Specialization courses will appear on the student’s official transcript as electives. There will be no title or as a block of courses as they appear in the MyDegrees Degree Checklist.

**VII. Post- FW 307 Specialization Development**

In FW 307, students will carefully consider the courses that best serve their career interests, by strengthening the student’s knowledge, skills, and abilities. At the end of the FW 307, students should not be lax in their degree planning; in fact, just the opposite. To better ensure students fulfill the coursework they want and need, there is more work to be done.

**A. Create a “Plan through Graduation”**

After the Specialization Block has been uploaded and visible in the MyDegrees Degree Checklist, students should create a “Plan through Graduation” in their MyDegrees Planner and enter their remaining coursework accurately in the appropriate terms. Planning through graduation is highly recommended; some courses are offered only one quarter per academic year, or in alternate years. The student who plans accurately and registers on time has the greatest chance of 1) getting into the courses they want; 2) getting into the courses they need (e.g., prerequisites for upper division courses); and 3) graduating in a timely manner.
B. **MyDegrees Planner Limitations**  
Student should **NOT** rely on the MyDegrees Planner when entering courses through graduation. The Planner does not distinguish campus and term availability for individual courses. Students should consult the Oregon State Academic Catalog, Schedule of Classes, or Ecampus Schedule of Classes, to determine term and campus availability. Students should review their degree plans every two terms for accuracy as course offerings can change from year to year, and revisions may be necessary.

C. **Specialization Revisions**  
With careful planning, there should be little need for revision. However, there are circumstances, some beyond a student’s control, that warrant changes to Specialization. If changes affect a student’s specialization, they may modify their specialization plan.

1) **Corvallis Campus students:** Small changes (1-2 course substitutions) can be made during an advising session or in consultation with the **Head Advisor**. Multiple course substitutions to the plan requires submission of a new specialization form and statement of reasons for the change to the **faculty advisor**. Once approved, submit form to the **Head Advisor** who will revise the plan in MyDegrees.

2) **Ecampus Students:** Small changes (1-2 course substitutions) can be made during an advising session with **advisor**. Multiple course substitutions to the plan requires submission of a new specialization form and statement of reasons for the change to the **advisor**. After the changes are reviewed and approved the **advisor** will update the plan in MyDegrees.