

Study Abroad Course Approval Process: FAQs

How many classes should I have signed off on the Overseas Course Approval Form (Academic Planning Form)?

As many as possible. There is no limit. Students are encouraged to get as many courses signed off or approved as possible. Having a class signed off does not mean you have to take the class. However, if you do take it, then you know how it will be applied to your degree at SF State.

What do I need to do to have the class approved for study abroad?

Your departments are wonderful and supportive of study abroad, but they do not remember where to find classes or the class descriptions. It is your responsibility to have a list of potential classes and their course descriptions before contacting the department chair for a meeting.

You should send a simple email requesting a meeting. Do not email them asking to approve classes via email if you have not yet spoken to them. This is only something you should do after your first meeting.

If you have any issues with getting classes approved, please let one of the SF State Abroad Advisors know right away.

How do I find out the DPR required number/line number?

This box should be completed by your department advisor. Let them know it is the same information that they provide for an Advisor Request (ARS) for the Registrar's Office.

What should be listed in the degree requirement section?

This box should be completed by your department advisor. It is to assist the Graduation Team in the Registrar's Office so they know how to mark your Degree Progress Report (DPR). Ask your advisor to be very specific. If unclear, it will not make it onto your DPR.

How and when do I get my major or minor classes approved?

Once you have a list of potential courses abroad and their course descriptions, please email your department chair to request a meeting. You should send a simple email requesting a meeting. Do not email them asking to approve classes via email if you have not yet spoken to them. This is only something you should do after your first meeting.

This should be done mid-semester or as soon as you know that you will be participating in study abroad. Waiting until the end of the semester or over the winter/summer break can cause significant delays and stress for students as faculty do not always respond to requests made close to finals or over the breaks.

What is the difference in getting a core versus elective major/minor class approved?

Major/Minor Cores: To see what classes are required and are cores, review the SF State [Academic Bulletin](#). Then, look at what classes are offered abroad. If you have trouble finding the classes abroad, please speak with an SF State Abroad advisor.

When comparing the core class at SF State and the one abroad the course title does not need to match. You are looking at the course description. Most departments only require about a 60 to 70 percent alignment, but there are a few that require it to match very closely. It is up to the department chair.

Elective classes are very flexible and do not need to match at all. Your department may approve any class in your field of study as an elective.

How and when do I get my general education (GE) classes approved?

Approval for GE classes comes once you are actually enrolling in the class abroad. Then, you will work with the [Undergraduate Advising Center](#).

When you return from abroad and the classes have been placed on your unofficial transcript in Gateway you will once again coordinate with your advisor in the [Undergraduate Advising Center](#) to complete a GE petition to formalize the completion of the GE class abroad. You will need to wait until the coursework appears on your unofficial transcript in Gateway.

How can I tell if a class is upper or lower division abroad?

Upper and lower division is an American construct and does not exist abroad. Therefore, your departments can complete authority to determine whether a class should be counted as upper or lower division based upon the course description. They are welcome to consult with SF State Abroad for recommendations. If the class is not signed off as upper or lower division, then the SF State Abroad will determine so that the class can be added to the student's transcript and Degree Progress Report (DPR).

Does the department chair need to sign the form?

Yes. If you submit the form, then your department chair must sign it. We can take their signature or an email from the department chair approving the class. If you are obtaining approval via email, please schedule a meeting with them either in person or via Zoom before asking them to approve any classes over email. Email approvals should be a follow-up after an initial conversation. Some departments are using DocuSign to sign the form, which we are very happy to accept as well.

Students planning on taking BECA, DES (School of Design), and/or Social Work classes abroad should first meet with their department-appointed faculty to have the classes approved. Their names and contact information are linked below:

- BECA: [Dr. Camacho](#)
- DES: [Dr. Gomes](#)
- Social Work: [Dr. Hermoso](#)

Who is my department chair?

Google it! The department chair changes every 3 years. You can find the current chair by googling 'sfsu' and your department/major/minor. Then, click on 'people.' Next, look for someone with the title of 'chair' or 'director' near their name. You can email department chairs directly and request a meeting.

It is highly recommended that you ask for a meeting (in-person or over Zoom) to begin the conversation. Do not write them a long email asking them to approve the classes. It is better to have a conversation first and share your screen to show them the courses and course descriptions before asking for approval.

Where can I find information about units?

SF State Exchange Programs: Information about units can be found on the program pages of the [SF State Abroad Database](#) under the 'Academics' section.

CSU IP Programs: Check out the program pages of the [CSU IP portal](#). Also, the [CSU IP Academic Bulletin](#) has information on units, grades, as well as what numbers are upper or lower division at SF State. The [CSU IP Academic Bulletin](#) translates everything into the CSU system. The link above will take you to the overview page for all Academic Bulletins. Bulletins are divided by country. Click the country your program is located in to find more information about course listings.

Will my classes be added to my Degree Progress Report (DPR)?

All classes taken abroad (regardless of whether they are signed off or not) will fully appear on the student's SF State transcript. However, classes will only appear in the DPR if they have been signed off by the department before the end of the semester abroad and you submit a required number/line number. If you do not do so before you study abroad, your academic advisor may submit an Advisor Request (ARS) to have the coursework added to your DPR when you return. Make sure that you see your study abroad classes on your unofficial transcript in Gateway BEFORE you contact your academic advisor.

Will failed classes abroad appear on my SF State transcript?

Yes. Taking classes abroad is the same as taking them at SF State. Everything you do will fully appear on your SF State transcript.

Will my classes come back as letter grades or for credit?

All classes come back as letter grades, unless you request it to be take credit/no credit. Only one class per semester should be taken for credit. It is your responsibility to ensure that taking the class for credit will not impact your degree progress, as some requirements must be taken for a letter grade.

If you have any questions about this, please speak with an SF State Abroad Advisor and not the partner university.

I am going to the UK and they have classes worth 5 SF State units (or 20 British credits), what should I do?

While there is nothing wrong with having a 5-unit class on your transcript, you may prefer to have that one class signed off for more than 1 requirement to fully use those units. For example, if you take European History abroad, you could have that class signed off for HIST 395: International History 1814-1918 (Units: 3). Then, you could have the remaining 2 units applied towards your History Elective.

I am going to a program that has classes worth 1 and 2 SF State units, what should I do?

Your department can either ask you to make up the units elsewhere or have you take two classes abroad to fill one-degree requirement at SF State so that the class has sufficient units.

For example, you might take Japanese Pop Culture (Units: 2) and Japanese Society (Units: 2) to be signed off as JAPN 401: Topics in Japanese Culture (Units: 3) at SF State. The SF State course would then become worth 4 units.

Where can I get more information if I still have questions?

The [Making Degree Progress page](#) of the [SF State Abroad website](#) has information on getting major, minor, and GE classes approved for study abroad.

If you still have questions, please email studyabroad@sfsu.edu or sign in for study abroad advising.