Specialization - Frequently Asked Questions

Section I. Definition of Specialization

What is Specialization? Specialization consists of 24 quarter credits of primarily upper division coursework related to your career interest.

What is FW 307 Specialization Development? FW 307 is a required, one-credit course in which you identify courses related to your career interest. It is part of the professional series offered to Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences majors, which includes FW 107 Orientation to Fisheries and Wildlife and FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences.

Is the 24-credit Specialization part of the credits required for the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences degree program? Yes, whether you are a first degree student or a post baccalaureate student, the 24 credits are part of your degree program – the courses that encompass these credits will be chosen by you in FW 307. It is important to note that the list of specialization courses will not be visible in your MyDegrees Checklist until you successfully complete FW 307.

Section II. Timing of Specialization

When should I take FW 307 Specialization Development? You should take FW 307 after you successfully complete FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife, and around the time you take BI 370 Ecology and Statistics (ST 351/352). You must successfully complete each course in the general biology series with a C- or better before taking FW 307 Specialization Development.

What are the prerequisites for FW 307 Specialization Development? FW 209 Career Skills in Fisheries and Wildlife should be completed prior to taking FW 307 Specialization Development. Department approval is required to register for FW 307; if you are working with your advisor, this will be done for you. If you have completed the prerequisites and receive an error message when registering for FW 307, contact your advisor.

I planned ahead and know what courses I want for my specialization. Can I submit these prior to taking FW 307? Although it’s always a good idea to discuss potential courses and career options with your advisor, there is a process for devising your specialization, which you will learn about in the FW 307; specialization courses are reviewed by the FW 307 instructor, then reviewed and approved by either your faculty (Corvallis Campus) or academic (Ecampus) advisor. At the end of the FW 307, the courses are incorporated into your degree program and visible as a block of courses in the MyDegrees Checklist titled, “Student Program of Study.”
Section III. Appearance of Specialization

Where does Specialization appear in the MyDegrees Checklist? Prior to taking FW 307, Specialization is indicated above the Baccalaureate Core section, with the words, “Specialization (24 credits)” and a block titled, “Program of Study”:

At the end of FW 307, you will enter your courses in MyDegrees under a new plan, which will be uploaded by your advisor and become a block titled “Student Program of Study”. This block will appear above the “Baccalaureate Core” section, and replace the “Program of Study” block shown above:

Once uploaded, specialization courses are degree requirements, and courses in the newly created block must be successfully completed in order to graduate.
Will Specialization appear on my transcript? No, specialization courses will appear on your official transcript as electives. They will NOT appear with a title or as a block of courses as they appear in your MyDegrees Checklist.

Section IV. Specialization Themes

What are some examples of past specializations? General themes include: Fish Conservation and Management, Marine Ecology, Wildlife Conservation and Management, Law Enforcement/Park Ranger, Habitat Restoration/Conservation Ecology, and Animal Care/Rehabilitation. Specific examples of specialization topics and relevant courses are provided in FW 307.

I have many interests and don’t want to focus on one area of study for my specialization. Do I need to specialize in one area? No. The courses you add to your specialization can be broad or specific in their scope. There are no prescribed courses and every student has a unique specialization.

What if I am not sure what my career interest is when I enroll in FW 307? That’s ok! You may or may not have an idea of what your career interest is when you take this course. FW 307 will give you an opportunity to explore different careers and develop your interest, but it is not necessary to know exactly what you want to do.

Section V. Applicable Courses

What kind of courses can I put in my specialization? Generally speaking, upper division (300-400 level) courses related to your career goals or interest. You are also allowed up to four (4) lower division credits in specialization. Many students take Animal Sciences (ANS), Botany (BOT), Forest Ecosystems and Society (FES), Biology (BI), or Geography (GEOG) classes for Specialization.

Can I apply courses from other FW degree requirements to my specialization? Specialization courses CANNOT appear anywhere else in your degree program, except for your WIC (see next question).

Can I include my Writing Intensive Course (WIC) in my specialization? Your WIC can be included in your specialization as long as it is NOT being used to satisfy another degree requirement, such as an "Advanced Core" or "Human Dimensions" requirement.

Can I put transfer coursework in my specialization? If you are a first degree student, one upper division (300-400 level) course and up to four (4) lower division transfer credits may be used, as long as they are relevant to career interests and approved by your advisor. If you are a post baccalaureate student you may use up to 12 credits from your previous degree in Specialization, as long as they are related to your career interest and approved by your advisor.
Can coursework from a minor, double degree, or certificate program be added to my specialization? First degree students may use a maximum of 12 credits that are also being used to fulfill requirements toward a minor, (double) major, or certificate. However, rules established by the department offering the minor/(double) major/certificate may supersede this; check with an advisor in the department offering the minor/certificate to find out if “double counting” is allowed.

Can research, study abroad, or internship credit be included in my specialization? A maximum of 12 credit hours, in any combination, of FW 401 (research), study abroad, or FW 410 (International Internship) may be applied to Specialization, with advisor approval. FW 410 credits derived from a second domestic internship may be applied if you have completed the first FW 410 domestic internship, and only if it has been approved by the Internship Coordinator. Non-credit bearing experiences (e.g., private field courses) and/or courses not affiliated with university credit are not allowed.

Can graduate courses (500-level) be included in my specialization? Yes, but keep in mind the higher cost per credit when taking graduate courses. There is an important caveat: if graduate level courses are used to meet a degree requirement such as specialization, they CANNOT be used toward a graduate degree in the future.

Can I include courses in my specialization that were taken prior to taking FW 307 Specialization Development? Yes, but you need to get pre-approval from your advisor before you enroll in the courses. You may take up to two courses, prior to completing FW 307. A note visible at the bottom of your MyDegrees from your advisor should indicate the courses you plan to use for Specialization.

Section VI. Approval process

What is the process for getting my specialization courses approved? In FW 307, you will write a specialization proposal and a develop a list of courses (24-credit minimum), and the term you plan to take the courses. These will be reviewed by the FW 307 instructor, then reviewed and approved by either your faculty (Corvallis Campus) or academic (Ecampus) advisor. Once approved, there is a process for entering courses in MyDegrees.

Can I make changes to my specialization after completing the course? Your degree plan should be as complete as possible by the end of Specialization. However, change may be necessary. Minor changes (1-2 course changes) can be made by emailing the request to your advisor. Significant changes (> 2 courses) will require updating and resubmitting your specialization form.

What if a course in my specialization is no longer offered when I am ready to take it? If a course you picked for your specialization is no longer offered, consult with your advisor about selecting a different course.