Advising FAQ
Frequently Asked Questions - ENVS Advising

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**Answers**

1. What do I do if I am having difficulty getting classes I need?

   a. Follow the registration guidelines, and register as early as you can.

   b. **Plan ahead!** Check the advising grid for your degree/emphasis to learn which classes are offered frequently and which classes are offered only rarely (F=Fall, S=Spring, E=Every, R=Rare). Take rarely offered classes opportunistically as you discover that they are offered. For example, if you want the Biology of Fungi and see it on the schedule that it is being offered, grab it, because it is not offered every year.

   c. **Don’t wait until your junior year to start taking major courses** - mix GE requirements with major requirements early on. (For example, NRMC majors should try to take Bio 230 and 240 along with lower-division GE.) And while we recommend that you complete 15 units of major requirements before beginning your emphasis electives, this is not set in stone. Some required lower division courses are offered at community colleges; use [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org) to be sure the community college course is an exact equivalent. Community college tuition is lower than it is at SFSU.

   d. **Try to get your prerequisites out of the way early on**, so that you can register for a larger range of courses and won’t get stuck waiting to get a course until you complete the prerequisites. For example, B.A. students should try to take CHEM 115 or 180 in their first or second year because one or the other is a prerequisite for ENVS/CHEM 380. NRMC majors should take BIOL 230 and 240 early because they are prerequisites for many upper-division required biology courses. ([Click here for information about taking BIO 230 and 240 at a community college](https://www.assist.org)).

   e. **If you don’t get into a class you want, put your name on the waiting list, attend the first week of class meetings and ask the instructor (politely) to be admitted.** Sending him/her an e-mail is a good idea. Explain why you’re making the request: it’s a major requirement; it’s a prerequisite for another course; not taking it this semester will delay your graduation, etc.

   f. If you are close to graduation but haven’t been able to get necessary courses, you have a couple of options. You can speak with an advisor and propose a substitute course. This is appropriate if you have tried once or twice to get into the required course without success. Ask an advisor beforehand about a substitution: don’t just take a course and assume that your substitute is okay, whether it’s a major course or an elective. After you and your advisor have agreed on a substitution, please fill out a course substitution form, available at this link: [https://registrar.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/Major%20Course%20Substitution%20Form.pdf](https://registrar.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/Major%20Course%20Substitution%20Form.pdf).

   If a substitute is not the best solution or no appropriate substitute is available, you may be able to take an equivalent or a suitable substitute at another campus - one of the many nearby community colleges, or even UC Berkeley. Course equivalency can be checked out at [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org). In many cases, the major will accept courses that are not exact equivalents, but are similar or are otherwise suitable substitutes. Again, ask an advisor beforehand.
2. How do I get academic advising for the major?

First, check our website; some of your questions may be answered there. For advising, see the “Advising” page of the ENVS website to figure out the person you should see (you may not have the same advisor every semester: a faculty member may teach half time, go on sabbatical, etc.). Contact information for faculty can be found on the Advising page of the website or on the bulletin board next to HSS 332.

3. What is the Complementary Studies requirement, and does it apply to me?

If you’re completing a B.A. (any emphasis) in ENVS, the university’s Complementary Studies requirement does apply to you; B.S. students are exempt from this requirement. ENVS students may complete their Complementary Studies requirement in one of two ways:

a. By completing, or completing 12 units toward, any SFSU minor, including a language minor.

b. By choosing, in consultation with your advisor, 12 units that will enhance, deepen, or fit well with your ENVS program. These 12 units cannot carry an ENVS prefix or be cross-listed with ENVS, and they cannot be double-counted with major courses; they are additional to the courses required for the major.

4. Can I double-count courses?

You can never double count units, and you can’t double-count courses within the major. For example, if you’re in the ESSJ emphasis, you will see that ENVS 570, Local Sustainability, appears in two places on the grid: It can be used to satisfy the “Sustainability and Social Justice” requirement in the ENVS core—but if you use it that way, you can’t use the course in the ESSJ “short list of electives.”

In other cases, however, you may be able to able to double-count; that is, use a single course to satisfy two requirements. For example, GEOG 101, Our Physical Environment: is a course and units that can fulfill the “Human Environment” section of major electives, and at the same time the course can fulfill a lower-division GE requirement.

5. How do I change my degree program (e.g., from an ENVS B.A. to B.S.?) or emphasis within the B.A.??

a. Changing from an ENVS B.A. to a B.S. (or vice versa) is the same as changing your major, so you have to apply to change your major online. This is a fairly simple process; after you apply, you’ll get an e-mail telling you to see the ENVS Program Coordinator for advising on your new program. After you’ve come in, the Program Coordinator will approve the change. Paper forms are no longer accepted for changes of major.

If you’ve completed more than 96 units, you and the Program Coordinator will figure out how many units and semesters you’ll need to complete the program, so that you’re fully informed about how your change of major will affect your graduation date.
To change from one B.A. emphasis to another, you don’t need to fill out the change of major form, but you should be sure to see your advisor so that you’re on track in your new emphasis.

6. How do I graduate?

A year before you think you want to graduate, fill out an advising grid and see a concentration advisor or major advisor to see how you are doing. To graduate, you need to fill out a graduation application, and get it signed first by your concentration advisor and then by the ENVS Program Coordinator. The applications are available online. List any non-SFSU courses that you’re using to fulfill major requirements with the original titles and course numbers rather than with the SFSU equivalents. Make sure to list any work-in-progress classes on the front page of the application. If you will be graduating in summer, list here any summer courses you will be taking. Once the application is complete with signatures, take it to the Bursar’s office and pay a filing fee (currently $100), and then hand it in to the Student Services building. Deadlines for submitting graduation applications are typically around the third week of the semester in which you want to graduate – late September for fall graduation, and late February for spring and summer graduation. Note: there is no Fall graduation ceremony. If you graduate in the Fall you may come back in the Spring for commencement. In May, the ENVS Program has its own celebration just for ENVS graduates – usually during the week before the campus-wide commencement.

Keep in mind that in addition to major requirements, you need to be sure that you’ve completed your lower- and upper-division GE, other SFSU requirements (see the SFSU Bulletin for these)—and, very important, you must have completed 120 units (total; includes units transferred from elsewhere) to graduate.

Keep an eye on your Degree Progress Report (DPR), which tracks all SFSU requirements and indicates which ones you’ve completed and which ones still have to be done.

7. Can I take a course Credit/No Credit?

Yes, except for ENVS 130 and ENVS 450, both of which require a grade of C. Otherwise, ENVS has no rules about whether or not a course is taken for a grade or CR/NC. However, SFSU has an overall limit on the number of courses taken CR/NC: No more than 30% of the units earned at this university and applied toward an undergraduate degree may be taken for CR grades. To earn credit you must receive a grade of C- or higher. See the SFSU bulletin for more info on the CR/NC grading option.

8. If I get a ‘D’ in a course, will it still count for credit in the major?

Starting with the Fall 2009 bulletin, majors are required to earn a grade of C or better in ENVS 300 and ENVS 450. You cannot continue in the major with a grade below a C in these courses. For all other courses the major has no minimum grade requirement. A grade of D- counts, but an F grade does not. University rules require that you earn an overall major GPA of 2.0 or better.

9. How do I find an internship?
ULink is the university’s internship portal. The first thing you should do is read the information on this page: https://icce.sfsu.edu/internships/students; the second thing you need to do is register with ULink (link is on the webpage above). Organizations offering internships are also required to register with ULink, and a number have done so. If you find an internship that’s already registered with ULink, that’s great.

But because new organizations and internship opportunities pop up all the time, and because it will take the ULink staff some time to register them, the internship you want may not be present on ULink. For instance, many students find internships by subscribing to the ENVS jobs and internships list here: https://gateway.sfsu.edu/distributionlists?subscription?q=distributionlists&mailmanuserviewmailinglist_form=Envs-jobs. The internships offered through this list may not be registered with ULink. In that case, the organization will need to contact ULink to initiate the registration process.

10. Can I do an internship in the summer?

Yes unless it’s an EPA internship (EPA internships are only offered during the regular academic year), you can do your internship service during the summer and take the internship course, ENVS 680, the following fall. Be aware that you need to do certain homework assignments for the internship course during the summer, so be sure to see the professor who’s teaching internship the following fall before the spring semester ends. You must get a signed work agreement from your supervisor and you must keep a log/journal while you’re doing your service (a total of 8-10 pages, single spaced); and if your internship ends during the summer you should have your supervisor complete an evaluation of your work.

11. Can I take CHEM 115 or another major course at a community college or elsewhere?

Yes, community colleges offer exact equivalents of some of the courses that are required for ENVS majors, and taking courses there is a good way to take classes that are difficult to get into at SF State. Check out www.assist.org for equivalent courses. NRMC majors wanting to take the BIO 230/240 sequence at a community college should read the document on the PACE/ENVS website titled BIO 230 240 at community college.pdf.

12. How do I get credit towards the major for coursework taken elsewhere?

If you have coursework from other colleges, there are two routes to getting it to count toward the major:

a. If you took equivalent courses at a California community college, CSU or UC these courses should show up on your transcript when you get your transfer evaluation. You can check www.assist.org to see course equivalents. Anything indicated as an equivalent to one of our major courses automatically can be used for the major. You do not need to see an advisor to get approval to count exact equivalent courses.
b. If you have non-equivalent courses that you believe are similar to major courses, you should see either the program coordinator (for major core and electives) or your concentration advisor (for concentration courses). In general the best way to proceed is to come to the advisor with a proposal in the form of “For course xxx in the major I would like to substitute course yyy taken at such and such school.” Have the course number and full title, along with how many units (semester or quarter). It is also helpful if you bring course descriptions for the courses taken elsewhere.

13 How do I get credit for study abroad courses?

The ENVS program coordinator can approve study abroad courses to be used to meet major requirements – that is, you can be exempted from a course requirement in the major based on your study abroad experience. Be sure to see the program coordinator before you go abroad to review the courses you plan to take. This does not mean you are granted SFSU “credit” for your study abroad work – if you want official SFSU credit you must go through the Office of International Programs.

14. What are my study abroad options?

Spending a semester or year abroad can be a wonderful, even life-changing experience that adds meaning to your time in college. Check out the Study Abroad page on the ENVS website. Several universities that work with SFSU offer courses that can fit into your ENVS degree program.

15. Where do I find information on scholarships?

All scholarships at SFSU, including the Feliz scholarship in Environmental Studies, are shown on the Academic Works website: https://sfsu.academicworks.com/. You’ll need to sign in in order to use the website. Feliz scholarship applications are accepted late in the fall semester through early in the spring semester (February). The amount offered varies each year, but it’s usually $700 or more.

16. What is the GWAR writing requirement?

Writing requirements have been integrated with content courses at SFSU. Each program has designated a course to serve as its writing course; for ENVS majors, the upper-division writing requirement is satisfied by completing ENVS 450: Environmental Law and Policy – GWAR with a grade of C or better. (Anything below a C is equivalent to “No Credit.”) This course teaches law and policy through intensive writing. We strongly encourage you to take ENVS 450-GWAR during your junior year. (Note that passing ENVS 130 (formerly ENVS 300) with a grade of C or better is now a prerequisite for ENVS 450).

17. How do I take a class at UC Berkeley or a semester at another CSU?

As an SFSU student you can cross-register for a class at UC Berkeley. There are also special arrangements to allow you to be a visiting student at another CSU campus for a semester. For more
18. How should I use Early Priority Registration?

This is a hard question to answer generally because it may change from semester to semester. Here are some rough guidelines: Definitely use early priority registration to get: ENVS 130 (formerly ENVS 300), USP 514 & 515, PLSI 354, BIOL 230 & 240, and CHEM 115 or 180. Possibly use early priority registration for: ENVS 450 and ENVS/CHEM 380. You definitely do not need priority registration for ENVS 680 or ENVS 690. Comments on these guidelines are always welcome – please send them to envs@sfsu.edu.