

Study Abroad Course Equivalencies (SPACE Agreement): Guide for Academic Advisors

Ball State students studying abroad complete a **Study Plan and Course Equivalency (SPACE) Agreement** before departure. The SPACE Agreement serves two related purposes:

1. It documents how courses taken abroad will return to Ball State as approved course equivalencies.
2. It establishes a study plan so the student and academic advisor understand how the student's anticipated study abroad coursework fits into their overall degree plan.

As an academic advisor, **you are an important part of the SPACE process—but you are not responsible for determining equivalencies for courses offered by Ball State academic departments.** Your primary role is to help the student understand how their anticipated coursework abroad fits into their degree plan and to provide oversight as they obtain the appropriate course-equivalency approvals.

What is my role in the SPACE process?

The student is responsible for completing the SPACE Agreement and obtaining the necessary course-equivalency approvals. Students are instructed to identify potential host courses, compare them with Ball State offerings, and seek approval from the appropriate academic unit or designated approver.

As the student's academic advisor, your role is to:

- Help the student identify the degree requirements they should prioritize while abroad.
- Review the student's proposed study abroad courses in the context of their overall degree plan.
- Help the student understand where approved equivalencies will apply within their degree requirements.
- Provide guidance if the proposed coursework could affect sequencing, prerequisites, graduation timing, or other elements of the student's academic plan.
- Provide oversight as the student obtains the appropriate equivalency approvals.
- Review the completed SPACE Agreement and sign it once you are comfortable with the student's study plan.

Who approves course equivalencies?

For major and minor coursework, **the academic unit responsible for the BSU course determines whether a host course is an appropriate equivalent.** The Study Abroad Office maintains a list of designated equivalency approvers for academic units and helps students and advisors identify the appropriate person.

Students are responsible for contacting the appropriate approvers and documenting the approvals they receive.

If you or the student aren't sure who is authorized to approve a particular course equivalency, just ask us. You can email studyabroad@bsu.edu or connect directly with **Annika Vinje** via Teams, email, or phone at **5-2132**. We'll help identify the correct approver.

Generally, approvals are handled as follows:

- **Major or minor coursework:** The academic unit responsible for the BSU course.
- **Foreign language coursework:** The designated faculty approver in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures; the designee varies by language.
- **University Core Curriculum coursework:** The relevant academic department when an appropriate BSU course exists. When one is not available, approval may come from the Director of the University Core Curriculum as INSA 400 with a manual UCC exemption.
- **Honors coursework:** Honors College Dean's Designee.
- **General elective credit:** Academic advisors may approve the course as INSA 400 for Study Abroad.

What should I discuss with the student?

The SPACE Agreement is more than a collection of course approvals. It is also an opportunity to make sure the student has a workable academic plan for their time abroad.

When reviewing the SPACE Agreement with a student, consider questions such as:

- How many credits does the student plan to complete abroad?
- Which remaining degree requirements could the student satisfy while abroad?
- How will the approved equivalencies apply in the student's degree plan?
- Is the student relying on a particular course to satisfy an important requirement or prerequisite?
- Does the student have enough approved alternatives if a host course is unavailable, cancelled, or creates a schedule conflict?

- Will the study abroad coursework affect course sequencing or the student's academic plan for the following semester?

Students are specifically encouraged to obtain approval for **more courses than they ultimately expect to take**, since host course availability and schedules may change.

What am I actually signing?

Your signature does **not** mean that you personally evaluated and approved the academic content of every host course. Instead, your signature indicates that:

- You have reviewed the student's anticipated study abroad coursework as part of their overall academic plan.
- You have provided appropriate advising about how that coursework fits into the student's degree progress.
- You have provided oversight of the student's process of obtaining the necessary course-equivalency approvals.
- You approve the study plan reflected on the SPACE Agreement.

That is the role assigned to the academic advisor on the SPACE Agreement itself.

What if the student doesn't have an equivalency for a course?

Not every course taken abroad needs to have a direct Ball State course equivalent. When no specific BSU equivalency is established, a study abroad course can generally return as **INSA 400 – International Study Abroad**, which provides general elective credit toward graduation. Academic advisors may approve INSA 400 equivalencies when general elective credit is appropriate for the student's degree plan. If the student needs the course to fulfill a specific major, minor, UCC, Honors, or other degree requirement, however, the appropriate approval should be established **before the student relies on that course to meet the requirement**.

What happens after I sign the SPACE Agreement?

Once the student's equivalencies have been established and you have reviewed and approved the study plan, sign the SPACE Agreement and indicate the **number of courses approved** in the appropriate field. The form includes fields for the academic advisor's name, signature, date, and number of courses approved.

The completed SPACE Agreement should then be submitted to the Study Abroad Office. It may be submitted through the student's application portal or emailed to studyabroad@bsu.edu.

If additional courses are approved later, another SPACE Agreement may be submitted as an **addendum** rather than replacing the original agreement.

At the conclusion of the program, the SPACE Agreement provides the Study Abroad Office with the record of approved BSU equivalents to use when the student's study abroad transcript is received.

Do all students studying abroad need a SPACE Agreement?

No. Some students studying abroad do not need a SPACE Agreement at all. It depends on how their courses are offered and registered.

The SPACE Agreement is needed when a student takes coursework through a host institution or study abroad provider that must later be recorded at Ball State using a placeholder course and/or converted to the appropriate BSU course equivalencies. Students participating in many **faculty-led study abroad programs do not need a SPACE Agreement** because they are taking regular Ball State courses taught by Ball State faculty. The student registers directly for the BSU course just as they would for a course taught on campus—the course simply happens to be taught abroad. There is no host course to evaluate, no transfer of academic credit, and no course equivalency to establish.

This is common for: Short-term faculty-led study abroad programs, Many BSU-in programs, College-in programs, Summer-in programs, and other programs in which the student is enrolled exclusively in BSU courses taught by BSU faculty. Some programs may include **both BSU-taught courses and host-institution coursework**. In those cases, a SPACE Agreement may still be required for the host coursework.

Questions?

Please ask us! We're happy to help identify the correct equivalency approver, troubleshoot an unusual course or credit situation, or talk through questions about the SPACE process.

Study Abroad Advisor Annika Vinje annika.vinje@bsu.edu or on Teams

285-2132