

Course Substitutions and Internship Information for International Relations (IR) majors

Course Substitutions are rare in the IR major, but they are allowed under a few, limited circumstances. All substitutions must be approved by the IR Coordinator, and they are entered on a student's record by the Academic Advisement Office at the Kennedy Center. Any questions about substitutions should be directed to the IR Coordinator

1. A maximum of one course substitution is allowed to the four-course specialization in the IR major. Such a substitution can only be done once, and it is only allowed in the following circumstances:

A. The content of the substitution is consistent with the content of the specialization. The vast majority (e.g. 80%) of the content of the substituting course must be the same as the specialization. For example, a student with an emphasis in Latin American history and politics who does an internship at the Office of the US Trade Representative in Washington DC and works on several different trade issues, about half of which involve trade disputes with countries in Latin America would not be able to substitute that internship for the Latin American emphasis because only about half of the work at the internship was relevant to Latin America. The internship would, however, count towards the International Politics emphasis and likely the Political Economy emphasis.

B. The rigor of the substituting course must be equivalent to the rigor of a typical BYU upper-division course. Most internships meet this requirement. Doing two semesters of MUN meets this requirement. Some study abroad courses may not meet this requirement. For example, the Jerusalem Center courses can not be used towards the Middle East emphasis of the IR major. The IR coordinator may ask to review the syllabus of the course to see if the rigor requirement is met.

C. Regular courses at BYU are not eligible for substitution credit. This may seem like an odd requirement, but it is in place to prevent the IR major from becoming a grab bag of any and all courses that have something international in them. It is true that many courses taught at BYU are relevant to the IR major or to the emphases in the IR major, but if those courses are not already allowed to count towards the IR major, they can not count towards the IR major. There might be an excellent history course that is relevant to your emphasis, but even so, it will not be allowed to substitute as a course for the IR major.

D. Substitutions are not allowed for courses in the IR major other than the four-course specialization of the IR major. Your internship will not count towards any of the other required courses of the IR major, other than as one of the four-course specialization of the major.

2. We also allow students in a few circumstances to substitute experiential learning credit (e.g. an internship) for the capstone course requirement of the IR major. This substitution can be done in addition to the one course substitution that is allowed to the four-course specialization. It is allowed only in the following circumstances:

A. At the time of the substitution credit, the student has completed all or nearly all of the courses required for the IR major

B. The student writes a capstone quality research paper as part of the experiential learning credit.

C. The topic of the capstone paper is congruent with the topic of international relations (a pretty broad topic)

When doing this substitution, students should be aware that they will not get GE advanced writing credit (typically IR students meet this GE requirement by taking Political Science 200 and a Political Science Capstone course). Thus, this substitution only helps students towards graduation if they already have met or will meet this GE requirement.

In addition, when doing such a substitution, the IR coordinator will evaluate (or rely on a faculty evaluation from the faculty member directing the experiential learning course) that the research paper meets the passing grade requirement of a typical capstone class. This substitution is not for course credit, it simply waives the IR major requirement of a capstone class, so no grade is given (a grade is likely given in the experiential learning course, but not for the substitution into the IR major). Thus, the IR coordinator simply verifies (or receives verification from the faculty director of the experiential learning program) that the paper written is the equivalent of a passing paper in a typical capstone class.

3. Transfer credits

Credits from equivalent coursework at other universities can transfer in as credit towards the IR major if the following requirements are met:

A. The amount of work in the transfer course is equivalent to the course work required for the BYU course in the IR major

B. BYU has accepted the course for transfer credit (a separate evaluation by BYU's transfer evaluation office)

C. The course content is substantially the same as the required course in the IR major

D. The transfer course is at the same level as the intended substitution course.

Introductory IR courses, for example, can't be used, even as a transfer course, to substitute for an upper division IR course

Typically the IR coordinator has to see a syllabus from the course to make this evaluation. There are no limits on the number of transfer courses that can be used for the IR major other than BYU's general limits on transfer credit and requirements of a minimum number of BYU hours for a BYU graduation.

4. Double Counting of Courses

The IR major allows only 1 course to double count between the IR major and another major or minor. An exception to this rule is made for language majors and minors. More than one language class may double count between the IR major and another language major or language minor. In addition, double counting is not allowed within the IR major (unless specifically designated as being allowed for a specific requirement). Many IR courses fill more than one requirement for the IR major. Nevertheless, each course can only be used to fulfill one requirement of the major.

5. Obtaining Course Credit for Independent Internships

Many internships have an instructor and course titles built into that internship program. For example, the Washington Seminar program has internship and course credit built into the program, with a faculty member that reviews student work for the internship credit and assigns a

grade. If you are going on such an internship program, just earn the credit that is part of the program. Nothing special needs to be done to make the program compatible to the IR major. The internship can only count towards the IR major if it meets the requirements listed above in item 1. If it meets those requirements, it doesn't matter that the internship credit was listed under Poli 399R or IAS 399r or any other course listing.

It becomes more difficult when a student does an independent internship. This is an internship that isn't part of a BYU program, or if it is part of a BYU program, the internship course credit and instructor for that credit isn't set up as part of the program. There are several issues that a student needs to deal with to get course credit for such an internship experience.

First, the student needs to find a faculty member here on campus who is willing to supervise the course credit. It usually helps to find a faculty member that (1) you already know (you have been in that person's class or classes) and (2) has at least a passing amount of expertise in the area that you will be doing your internship. For example, if you are doing an internship with a business in Peru, maybe find a faculty member in the relevant language department or perhaps a faculty member who teaches Latin American history or politics. Another possible source for a faculty member might be someone that you know that teaches courses generally on economics or business. When you approach the faculty member you need to explain that you are doing an independent internship and there are no designated faculty mentors for your program. Explain that you are asking this faculty member to supervise your internship because they already know you and they have at least a slight level of expertise in the area of your internship. You should tell them that any other faculty options that you have would be of people who have even less to do with your area of the world/area of expertise. If you try and are unable to find any faculty willing to supervise your internship, please visit with the IR coordinator.

Second, you need to set up a syllabus for the course credit that you will earn with this faculty member. There are various internship syllabi available, and the IR website has a sample syllabus posted there, but I encourage you to set up a simplified syllabus, after consulting with your faculty mentor. I would set up a paper requirement that varied in length by the number of credits for the course (e.g. a 20 page research paper for a 3 credit class; a 6 page research paper for a 1 credit internship class), and I would make that paper the only requirement of the syllabus. Set up deadlines and late penalty requirements. Specify the topic and the type/amount of research that is expected for the paper. If you explain this to a potential faculty mentor, most faculty will agree to supervise your internship if they only have to read and grade a research paper (usually done on a topic that is relevant to your internship).

Third, you have to sign up for credit for the internship. If your internship is outside of the United States, you do this with the International Studies Programs (ISP) Office at the Kennedy Center. If your internship is located within the United States, you arrange for course credit with the Academic Advisement Office of the Kennedy Center. I don't know the specific processes for either office, but ask the specialists in those offices what you need to do to get credit for an independent internship. The paperwork may require the signature of the internship coordinator. If so, please bring it by the IR coordinator's office to get the required signature. Typically the course will be set up as IAS 399R.

Finally, if you want to get lots of internship credit for your experience, you can, but you will need to adjust the course requirements accordingly to reflect the number of credits that you want to earn. However, remember that only one course substitution is allowed in the IR major.

Even if you earn 12 credits of internship coursework, the maximum that can count towards the IR major is only 3 credits, and that only can occur if the conditions outlined in section 1 are met.

6. Finding International Internships

Occasionally students are sent to my office by advisors and internship supervisors to ask me where to find international internships. I am not much help with this. The problem for me is that IR majors do all different kinds of internships in the United States and in every country of the world. It is impossible for me to be informed on every international internship opportunity, both at BYU and at other places. Here, though, are some suggestions or where to start looking:

A. The ISP office and website (International Studies Program, Kennedy Center). All BYU-run, international programs will be listed here. The problem is that independent internships are not listed here (or anywhere else)

B. The Washington Seminar program. If you are interested in an internship that is located in the Washington DC area, this is the place to start looking.

C. The internship coordinator at the Kennedy Center Advisement Office. She is likely to know of domestic internships that IR majors have done in previous semesters

D. Organization internships. The State Department, the CIA, the FBI, government embassies, etc., all run internship programs. Go to their websites and see what you need to do to apply.

E. Talk to faculty in specific areas if you are interested in internships in that area. For example, if you want to do an internship in East Asia, maybe talk to the faculty member in charge of the Asian Studies program or faculty in one of the languages to see what they know of internships or other programs in that area of the world.