

PEACE CORPS PREP STUDENT GUIDE

The Peace Corps Prep program will prepare you for international development fieldwork and potential Peace Corps service. To accomplish this, you'll build four core competencies through interrelated coursework, hands-on experience, and professional development support. These four competencies are the following:

1. Training and experience in a work sector
2. Foreign language skills
3. Intercultural competence
4. Professional and leadership development

This document explains each of these requirements in detail. ***Use this guide to map out your Peace Corps Prep course of study.*** In particular, refer to this when completing your PC Prep application, where you'll need to document how you plan to fulfill each requirement. **This guide aligns point-by-point with each section of the application!**

1. Training *and* experience in a specific work sector

3 courses + 50 hours related experience

Leveraging concrete knowledge and skills is central to on-the-ground international development work. Through this PC Prep program, you will begin to build a professional specialty, which should serve your career well whether or not you become a Peace Corps Volunteer.

For PC Prep, you need to complete at least **3 courses** that align with a specific work sector (they can but do not need to come from your academic major or minor). You also must accumulate **a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer or work experience in that same sector**, preferably in a teaching or outreach capacity.

Peace
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Tip!

If you intend to apply to the Peace Corps, the best way to assure that you will be a strong candidate is to explore Peace Corps' openings and identify the [type of assignments](#) in which you'd like to serve (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/ways-to-serve/service-assignments/browse-opportunities>), then review the positions' required and desired qualifications and build them up accordingly. In the process, you should fulfill these PC Prep experiential requirements!

There are [six sectors](https://www.peacecorps.gov/ways-to-serve/our-work-sectors/) (https://www.peacecorps.gov/ways-to-serve/our-work-sectors/) in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve—detailed below. **Choose one sector to focus on** then complete at least 3 courses + 50 hours of related experience in that sector.

Note: Actual Peace Corps assignments are based on local needs, and thus may or may not align seamlessly with your qualifications. Flexibility is central to the Peace Corps experience!

1. EDUCATION



Teach lessons that last a lifetime. Education is the Peace Corp's largest program area. Volunteers play an important role in creating links among schools, parents, and communities by working in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools as math, science, conversational English, and resource teachers or as early grade reading and literacy teacher trainers. Volunteers also develop libraries and technology resource centers.

If you choose Education, take 3 courses from one of the following areas:

- Education
- English
- Math
- Computer Science
- Psychology
- Physics
- Biology
- Theater
- History

Recommended courses:

- EDUC 1000 Human Development in Cross-Cultural Perspective
- PSYC 3120 Learning
- ENGL 1000 Interpretation

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Teaching in one of these or a similar form: in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or in a formal tutoring capacity
- Reservoir YMCA - paid and volunteer opportunities in childcare and recreation
- SR1 - science education internship
- Camp Akeela summer camp jobs (Vermont)
- Jackson Public Schools summer internship
- Flowood YMCA childcare job
- Two Mississippi Museums summer camp jobs
- Mississippi Museum of Art internship
- Institute of Reading Development summer jobs

2. HEALTH



Serve on the front lines of global health. Health Volunteers work within their communities to promote important topics such as nutrition, maternal and child health, basic hygiene, and water sanitation. Volunteers also work in HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs to train youth as peer educators, develop appropriate education strategies, provide support to children orphaned by the pandemic, and create programs that provide emotional and financial support to families and communities affected by the disease.

If you choose Health, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Biology
- Biochemistry
- Environmental Science
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Philosophy

- Public Health

Recommended courses:

- BIOL 2300 Nutrition
- SOAN 3300 Health and Illness
- PHMR 3053 Public Health Economics
- PSYC 3170 Health Psychology

And build 50 hours of *related* field experience through an activity such as:

- Volunteer or work experience in such areas as HIV/AIDS outreach, hospice, family planning counseling, emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, maternal health, and hands-on caregiving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting
- Counseling or teaching in health subjects
- Working as a resident advisor in a dormitory, as a peer nutritionist, or as a sexually transmitted infections counselor
- Fieldwork in community health among the Maya at our biocultural reserve in Yucatán, Mexico
- Volunteer at University of Mississippi Medical Center in any department
- Volunteer at Evers-Care Clinic (a healthcare disparities resource center)
- Volunteer at Project Horseshoe summer camps

3. ENVIRONMENT



Help forge a global movement to protect our planet. Volunteers lead grassroots efforts in their communities to protect the environment and strengthen understanding of environmental issues. They teach environmental awareness in elementary and secondary schools and to youth groups and community organizations, empowering communities to make their own decisions about how to protect and conserve the local environment. Volunteers also address environmental degradation by promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

If you choose *Environment*, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Environmental Science
- Biology
- Economics
- Geoscience
- History
- Physics
- Philosophy

Recommended courses:

- ENVS 1100 Environmental Science
- BIOL 2200 Ecology with Lab
- BIOL 3350 Conservation with Lab
- HIST 3620 National Parks

And build 50 hours of *related* field experience through an activity such as:

- Educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, or working on environmental campaigns
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping

- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management
- Off-campus fieldwork in coastal Mississippi (wetland ecology) or in the American southwest (field arachnology)
- Off-campus fieldwork at Yellowstone, in the Pacific Northwest, or in Scotland (Geoscience)
- Off-campus fieldwork at our biocultural reserve in Yucatán, Mexico

4. AGRICULTURE



Lead grassroots efforts to fight hunger in a changing world. Agricultural Volunteers work with small-scale farmers and families to increase food security and production and adapt to climate change while promoting environmental conservation practices. They introduce farmers to techniques that prevent soil erosion, reduce the use of harmful pesticides, and replenish the soil. They work alongside farmers on integrated projects that often combine vegetable gardening, livestock management, agroforestry, and nutrition education.

If you choose Agriculture, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Environmental Science
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Economics

Recommended courses:

- CHEM 1750 Chemistry of Food
- BIOL 3320 BioTerrestrial Arthropod with Lab
- GEOL 2100 Hydrology

*And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as:*

- Working with a large-scale or family-run business involving vegetable gardening, farming, nursery work, tree planting or care, urban forestry, landscaping, livestock care and management, or fish cultivation and production
- Teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm
- Work throughout the year with local environment consultants
- Shadow and engage with petroleum geologists
- Oversee work being done with USGS – United States Geological Survey
- Engage in projects led by the State Office of Geology
- Volunteer at Eudora Welty House and Garden

5. YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT



Empower the next generation of changemakers. Volunteers work with youth in communities on projects that promote engagement and active citizenship, including gender awareness, employability, health and HIV/AIDS education, environmental awareness, sporting programs, and info technology.

If you choose Youth in Development, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Education
- Psychology
- Sociology

- Public Health
- Vocation, Ethics, and Society

Recommended courses:

- EDUC 1000 Human Development in Cross-Cultural Perspective
- PSYC 2150 Child Development
- VESO 1011 Introduction to Community Engagement
- PHMM 4110 Public Health Studies

And build 50 hours of *related field experience* through an activity such as:

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs
- Activities that involve planning, organizing, assessing community needs, counseling, and leadership, in areas such as education, youth development, health and HIV/AIDS, the environment, and/or business
- Volunteer at any of the following community partners:
 - *Operation Shoestring*- Operation Shoestring provides year-round academic, social and emotional support to children in central Jackson from pre-K – 12th grade, while supporting and providing resources to their families. The aim is to empower the children and families we serve to create their own success, and that of their community, so we all rise together.
 - *Grace Place*- Grace Place is a morning shelter, and place of respite, for the homeless and marginalized in our community. Grace Place recognizes the dignity of all persons by seeking authentic, grace-filled relationships, focusing on loving one another in the midst of difficult life challenges.
 - *Big House Books*-Big House Books is a non-profit, volunteer organization that sends free books by request to prisoners in Mississippi correctional facilities in order to promote literacy and be a vehicle of change for prison reform.
 - *Good Samaritan Center*- The Good Samaritan Center’s mission is to assist families and individuals in emergency situations and operates a food pantry, clothing closet, and community garden. Wellspringers assist staffers with gathering supplies and gardening.
 - *Canopy Children’s Solutions*- Canopy’s mission is to help children thrive and families overcome extraordinary challenges by providing a continuum of behavioral health, educational and family support solutions. Wellspringers will assist as needed in their residential care facility.

6. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Harness 21st-century tools to help communities lift themselves. Volunteers work with development banks, nongovernmental organizations, and municipalities to strengthen infrastructure and encourage economic opportunities in communities. They frequently teach in classroom settings and work with entrepreneurs and business owners to develop and market their products. Some Volunteers also teach basic computer skills and help communities take advantage of technologies such as e-commerce, distance learning, and more.

If you choose Community Economic Development, take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Business Administration
- Management
- Accounting
- Finance
- Economics
- Entrepreneurship
- Computer Science
- Graphic Design
- Communications Studies

Recommended courses:

- ACCT 2000 Principles of Financial Accounting
- ENTR 3000 Entrepreneurship
- ADMN 4060 Management of Non-Profit Organization
- COMM 2000 Introduction to Communication Studies

And build 50 hours of **related field experience** through an activity such as:

- Working with businesses, organizations, or cooperatives in accounting, finance, microfinance, management, project management, budgeting, or marketing
- Starting and running your own business or other entrepreneurial activity
- Training others in computer literacy, maintenance, and repair
- Website design or online marketing
- Founding or leading a community- or school-based organization
- Off-campus fieldwork in international business at our Mérida (Mexico) facilities (International Business in Latin America)
- Off-campus fieldwork in business with our partners in the Business Association of Midtown, the Midtown Neighborhood Association through ELSEWORKS:
 - ELSEWORKS provides the following services to local businesses:
 - business consulting and strategy
 - business planning
 - financial proformas and accounting
 - market research and reporting
 - marketing and operations
 - community planning and events
 - ELSEWORKS partners include:
 - COFFEE PROSE
 - MIDTOWN DEPOT (Art Park & Beer Garden)
 - Northshore Coffee
 - Preserve culinary center
 - The Hangar
 - River Remedy

**Peace Corps
Tip!**

Nearly two-thirds of Peace Corps Volunteers serve in Education or Health. Coursework and meaningful experience in one of these areas—especially teaching English as a second/foreign language—produce some of the strongest candidates.

2. Foreign language skills

Requirements vary by region of interest

Most students must hone their capacity to interact professionally using a non-English language. Minimum course requirements vary by desired placement region.

- ❑ Latin America: Students indicating an intention to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must build strong intermediate proficiency, having completed two 200-level courses or learned Spanish through another medium.
- ❑ West Africa: Students indicating an intention to serve in French-speaking African countries must build proficiency in French or another Romance language, having completed one 200-level course or learned the language through another medium.
- ❑ Everywhere else: Students indicating an intention to serve anywhere else do not have explicit language requirements to complete the Program, but they are still encouraged to study a foreign language.

Note: If you are a strong native speaker and hope to serve in a country that speaks your same language, you can skip this requirement!

3. Intercultural competence

3 approved courses or 1-2 courses + substantive intercultural experience

Engaging thoughtfully and fluidly across cultures begins with one's own self-awareness. With this learning objective, you will deepen your cultural agility through **a mix of three introspective courses** in which you learn about others while reflecting upon your own self in relation to others. The goal is for you to build your capacity to shift perspective and behavior around relevant cultural differences. Some example courses:

You will take at least 1 of these core introspective diversity and inclusion courses:

- SOAN 1000 Introduction to Sociology
- SOAN 1100 Introduction to Anthropology
- GOVT 2350 Politics of Identity
- RLST 2000 Religions of the World
- PSYC 3020 Psychology and Diversity

And choose 2 additional electives from the above list or these below:

- SOAN 2120 The Many Dimensions of Poverty
- SOAN 3220 Class, Gender, Race
- SOAN 3600 African Americans and Latinos
- GOVT 2400 International Relations
- GOVT 3300 African Government & Politics
- GOVT 4400 Developing Nations
- HIST 3170 African-American Heritage
- LAST 2000 Latin American Cultures

Is there another course in the catalog that you feel meets this requirement? Please discuss it with your PC Prep Coordinator.

- **Studying or volunteering abroad** may count if it takes place in a country that is hosting Peace Corps Volunteers (see the list of current and past countries [here](https://www.peacecorps.gov/what-we-do/where-we-serve/) [https://www.peacecorps.gov/what-we-do/where-we-serve/]).
 - Studying/volunteering abroad in these countries from one week to a summer may substitute for one course.
 - Experiences that last a full semester may substitute for both electives.
- **Other immersive and reflective intercultural experiences**, such as helping new immigrants/refugees acculturate to the U.S. or volunteering in diverse schools, may also count. If they also align with one of Peace Corps' six sectors, these experiences may simultaneously count for that hands-on experiential requirement.
 - Each distinct intercultural experience lasting at least 40 hours may substitute for one elective.
 - Please contact your Program Specialist if you are unsure about how suitable an intercultural experience is for this requirement.

**Peace
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Tip!**

Prolonged intercultural experiences completed concurrently with your undergraduate studies—such as studying or volunteering abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees acculturate to the United States, or volunteering in diverse schools—would also strengthen your Peace Corps candidacy significantly.

4. Professional and leadership development

Resume and interview support + leadership experience

Peace Corps service and similar international development work opportunities are highly professional and selective. PC Prep requires **three specific activities** that will strengthen your candidacy for the Peace Corps (or any other professional endeavor):

1. Have your **resume** critiqued by someone in the Center for Career Education.
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** at the Center for Career Education.
3. Develop at least one significant **leadership experience** and be prepared to discuss it thoughtfully. For example, organize a campus event, lead a work or volunteer project, or serve on the executive board of a student organization.
 - a. Male Empowerment Network (M.E.N.)
 - b. Pan-African Student Alliance (PASA)
 - c. South Asian Cultural Association (SACA)
 - d. Student Body Association (SBA)
 - e. Christian Collective
 - f. Fraternity and Sorority Life