



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](#)
 - i. [Education](#)
 - ii. [Health](#)
 - iii. [Environment](#)
 - iv. [Agriculture](#)
 - v. [Youth in Development](#)
 - vi. [Community Economic Development](#)
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!**

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. 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 Corps 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 (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/volunteer-openings), 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](#) (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/what-volunteers-do/) 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.

#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:

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|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Art Education | <input type="radio"/> English or Linguistics | <input type="radio"/> Music Education |
| <input type="radio"/> Computer Science | <input type="radio"/> Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science (HPEX) | <input type="radio"/> Any Physical or Biological Science |
| <input type="radio"/> Elementary, Secondary or Special Education | <input type="radio"/> Math (w/ Edu focus) | <input type="radio"/> Social Work |
| | | <input type="radio"/> TEFL/TESL |

Recommended courses (reach out to Coordinator if you need assistance finding coursework for this sector!)

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| ● EDUS 300 | ● MUED 350 | ● INTL 327 |
| ● EDUS 301 | ● ENGL 363 | ● INTL 454 |
| ● EDUS 304 | ● ENGL 392 | |
| ● ARTE 301 | ● INTL 101 | ● SOCY 315 |
| ● ARTE 310 | ● INTL 295 | ● WRLD 230 |

- WRLD 302

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

- Teaching in one of these settings or a similar form: in a classroom, with a community outreach organization (teaching, mentoring, tutoring), or in a formal tutoring/TA capacity at VCU
- On campus opportunities: [Academic Peer Mentor](#), [Global Buddy](#), [Teaching Assistant](#), [SI leader](#), [Campus Learning Center tutor](#),
- Community opportunities: [Henrico Adult Education](#), [Sacred Heart Center](#), [Peter Paul Development Center](#), [YMCAs](#), K-12 settings

#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:

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|-------------------------------|---|
| ○ Allied Health Professions | ○ Forensic Science |
| ○ Biology | ○ Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science |
| ○ Biomedical Engineering | ○ Nursing |
| ○ Chemistry | ○ Pre-health programs |
| ○ Clinical Laboratory Science | |

Recommended courses (reach out to Coordinator if you need assistance finding coursework for this sector!)

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| ● BIOL 103 | ● Global Health coursework | |
| ● BIOL 335 | ● ANY NURS, AHLP coursework | ● POLI 382 |
| ● BIOL 459 | | ● HPEX 445 |
| ● CLLS 202 | | |
| ● CLLS 300 | | |

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

- Volunteer or work experience in areas such as health education/outreach, emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, hands-on caregiving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting
- Counseling or teaching of health subjects/health education
- Community opportunities: Volunteering with local health clinics or other health-focused community partners
- Campus opportunities: Volunteering with Humphrey Fellows (contact GEO), VCU health clinics, working with RecWell as a peer nutritionist, etc.

#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:

- Biochemistry
- Environmental Science or related field
- Natural Resources Conservation
- Biology, Botany, or Ecology
- Forestry
- Wildlife Biology
- Urban Planning

Recommended courses:

- ENVS 101
- ENVS 265
- ENVS 311
- ENVS 332
- BIOL 103
- BIOL 317
- BIOL 332
- BIOL 401
- BIOL 431
- INTL 325

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

#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 Studies
- Agricultural Science
- Business or economics
- Botany
- Agribusiness
- Biology
- Entomology
- Agricultural Economics

Recommended courses:

- ENVS 101
- ENVS 311
- ENVS 314
- ENVS 430
- ENVS 461
- INTL 455
- URSP 102
- URSP 204
- URSP 303
- URSP 316
- URSP 332
- POLI 311

- POLI 359

- POLI 386

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

#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:

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|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| ○ Social Work | ○ Developmental Psychology | ○ Education |
| ○ Counseling | | |
| ○ Community Development | ○ Human Development | |

Recommended courses:

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|------------|------------|------------|
| ● PSYC 301 | ● SOCY 304 | ● WRLD 302 |
| ● PSYC 302 | ● SOCY 319 | ● HPEX 330 |
| ● PSYC 304 | ● SOCY 330 | ● HPEX 351 |
| ● PSYC 335 | ● INTL 101 | ● HPEX 353 |
| ● PSYC 412 | ● INTL 295 | |

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

- Teaching or counseling experience with youth
- 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
- Volunteering in the local schools or YMCA/after school programs
- Serving as a camp counselor or mentor

#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 Dev., take three courses from one of the following areas:

- Business or Public Administration
- Nonprofit Management
- Accounting, Banking or Finance
- Computer Science and related majors
- Graphic Design
- Mass Communications
- International Business
- Global Education
- Engineering

Recommended courses:

- BUSN 205
- BUSN 329
- ECON 300
- ECON 315
- ECON 329
- MASC 210
- MASC 251
- MGMT 418
- INTL 101
- INTL 315
- INTL 327
- INTL 329
- INTL 455
- WRLD 230
- WRLD 302
- CMSC 340

*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
- Volunteering at Sacred Heart Community Center, ReEstablish Richmond, or other community organizations

***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 placement region

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 should still be 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 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'll take at least 1 of these core courses:

- INTL 101, 105, 201, 202, 203, 303, 307, 327, 328, 330, 341, 345, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 362, 364, 368, 381, 420, 449, 457
- POLI 105, 109, 318, 329, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 365, 366, 367, 368, 380, 382, 383, 388
- WRLD 230, 302, 430
- ANTH coursework
- TEDU coursework related to teaching second language learners

And choose 2 additional electives from the above list or one of the opportunities below:

- **Studying or volunteering abroad on an approved program**
 - Studying/volunteering abroad may substitute for one course.
 - Experiences that last a full semester may substitute for both electives.

- **Other intercultural experiences**, such as helping new immigrants/refugees acculturate to the U.S. or volunteering in diverse schools, may also count. Feel encouraged to highlight relevant opportunities here. 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 forty hours may substitute for one elective

Peace Corps Tip! *Prolonged intercultural experiences—such as studying or volunteering abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees acculturating 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 staff in the VCU Career Services Office (make an appointment through Navigate!)
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** or a **mock interview** with VCU Career Services
3. Develop at least one significant **leadership experience** and be prepared to discuss it thoughtfully. For example, organizing a campus event, leading a work or volunteer project, working as a Resident Assistant (RA), volunteering to be an orientation leader, or serving on the executive board of a student organization.