

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

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 you become a Peace Corps Volunteer or not.

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 position's 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.

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
- Linguistics
- Computer Science
- Chemistry

Recommended courses:

- *EDUC 371 & 373 - Language Development and Literacy Instruction: Primary/Intermediate*
- *EDUC 454 - The Teaching of Foreign Language*
- *EDUC 456 - The Teaching of Mathematics and Computer Science*
- *EDUC 458 - The Teaching of Sciences*
- *ENGL 399 - Community Service Learning*
- *LING 101 - Introduction to Linguistics*
- *LING 302 - Introduction to Sociolinguistics and Anthropological Linguistics*
- *CIST 301 - Business Information Systems*
- *CPSC 420 - Modeling and Simulation*
- *CHEM 105 & 106 - Chemistry and Society with Laboratory*
- *CHEM 493 - Chemical Outreach*

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

- Participating in one or more of several regional service opportunities such as (1) local programs for underserved populations at Stafford Junction, Heritage Park, or Bragg Hill, or (2) Catholic Charities Refugee Services.
- Completing an internship at one of the many organizations and agencies in the Greater Fredericksburg region such as (1) Bundle of Joy Child Development, (2) the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, (3) the Smithsonian National Education Outreach program, (4) or completing a supervised practicum experience through the College of Education.
- Participating in a UMW Abroad program such as (1) Academic Latinoamericana - Ecuador and Peru, (2) CIEE Dakar, Senegal, (3) CIEE Gaborone, Botswana, or (4) Sol Education Abroad - Heredia, Costa Rica, (5) SIT Chile: Comparative Education and Social Change.

- Teaching in one of these or a similar form: in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or in a formal tutoring capacity. The subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject

#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
- Economics
- Sociology
- Nursing

Recommended courses:

- *ANTH 371G - Medical Anthropology*
- *BIOL 384 - Human Anatomy*
- *BIOL 413 - Human Physiology*
- *BIOL 440 - Biology of Cancer*
- *BIOL 441 - Immunology*
- *SOCG 320 - Food Justice*
- *SOCG 334 - Medical Sociology*
- *SOCG 335 - Global Perspectives on Health and Illness*

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
- Significant experience in mechanical repairs, construction, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, hydrology, or set design
- Participating in regional service opportunities such as those at (1) the Moss Free Clinic, Mary Washington Hospital, or the Spotsylvania Medical Center, (2) Fredericksburg Area HIV/AIDS Support Services (FAHASS), or serving as a volunteer EMT at a local Fire and Rescue Unit.

- Completing an internship at one of the many organizations and agencies in the Greater Fredericksburg region such as (1) the Virginia Department of Health, (2) Community of Hope, (3) the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Participating in a UMW Abroad Program such as (1) CIEE Dakar, Senegal, (2) CIEE Monteverde, Costa Rica, (3) CIEE Gaborone, Botswana, (4) KEI Bangkok, Thailand, (5) Atlantis Fellowship, (6) SIT Argentina: Public Health and Urban Environments, (7) SIT Chile: Public Health, Traditional Medicine, and Community Empowerment (8) SIT India: Public Health, Policy Advocacy, and Community

#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:

- Biology
- Economics
- Earth & Environmental Science
- Geology
- Philosophy
- Sociology

Recommended courses:

- ANTH 365 - *Environment and Development Narratives*
- BIOL 231 - *Plant Biology*
- BIOL 424 - *Tropical Ecology*
- BIOL 428 - *Conservation Biology*
- ECON 331A - *Environmental and Resource Economics*
- ECON 351C - *Poverty, Affluence, and Equality*
- EESC 230 - *Global Environmental Problems*
- EESC 240 - *Field Methods in Environmental Science and Geology*
- EESC 325 - *Environmental Geochemistry*
- EESC 326 - *Pollution Prevention Planning*
- EESC 340 - *Energy Resources and Technology*
- EESC 418 - *Applied Ecotoxicology*
- PHIL 330 - *Environmental Ethics*
- PHIL 430 - *Ethics, Environment, and Sustainability*

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
- Investigating an environmental issue through an independent research project
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping
- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management
- Participating in regional service opportunities such as (1) Friends of the Rappahannock, (2) Downtown Greens, and (3) campus sustainability projects coordinated by the President's Council for Sustainability.
- Completing an internship at one of the many organizations and agencies in the Greater Fredericksburg region such as (1) Environment Virginia, (2) Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, (3) Lake Anna State Park, (4) Friends of the Rappahannock, (5) Tree Fredericksburg, (6) The Sierra Club.
- Participating in a UMW Abroad Program such as (1) CIEE Dakar, Senegal, (2) CIEE Gaborone, Botswana, (3) IES Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, (4) KEI Bangkok, Thailand, (5) SIT Ecuador: Comparative Ecology and Conservation, (6) SIT Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, (7) SIT Mongolia: Geopolitics and the Environment, (8) SIT Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, & Biodiversity Conservation, (9), SIT Tanzania-Zanzibar: Coastal Ecology & Natural Resource Management, or (10) SIT Tanzania: Wildlife Conservation and Political Ecology, (11) SIT Australia: Rainforest, Reef, and Cultural Ecology, (12) SIT Australia: Sustainability and Environmental Action, (13) SIT International Honors Program: Climate Change – The Politics of Food, Water, and Energy, (14) SIT Madagascar: Biodiversity and 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:

- Biology
- Earth and Environmental Science

Recommended courses:

- ANTH 321 - *Anthropology of Food*
- BIOL 231 - *Plant Biology*
- BIOL 311 - *Plant Ecology*
- BIOL 323 - *Entomology*
- EESC 230 - *Global Environmental Problems*
- EESC 307 - *Environmental Soil Science*
- EESC 315 - *Hydrogeology*
- EESC 325 - *Environmental Geochemistry*

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
- Participating in regional service opportunities such as (1) Tree Fredericksburg, (2) Braehead Farm, and (3) the Virginia Cooperative Extension (in Spotsylvania or Stafford counties).
- Completing an internship at one of the many organizations and agencies in the Greater Fredericksburg region such as (1) the United States Department of Agriculture, (2) the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, (3) the Good Turn Earth Company, (4) Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Participating in a UMW Abroad Program such as (1) CIEE Gaborone, Botswana, (2) SIT Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and Biodiversity Conservation, (3) CIEE Monteverde, Costa Rica, (4) SIT Ecuador: Comparative Ecology and Conservation, (5) SIT Iceland & Greenland: Climate Change and the Arctic, (6) SIT India: Sustainable Development and Social Change, (7) SIT International Honors Program: Climate Change - The Politics of Food, Water, and Energy, (8) SIT Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management.

#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:

- Psychology
- Sociology

Recommended courses:

- PSYC 231 - *The Infant and Child Development*
- PSYC 232 - *The Adolescent and Emerging Adult Development*
- PSYC 350 - *Psychology of Women and Gender*
- SOCG 331 - *The Family*

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
- Participating in regional service opportunities such as (1) UMW's James Farmer Scholars Program, (2) Thurman Brisben Center, (4) Catholic Charities Refugee Services.
- Completing an internship at one of the many organizations and agencies in the Greater Fredericksburg region such as Rappahannock Big Brothers, Big Sisters or the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.
- Participating in a UMW Abroad Program such as: (1) CIEE Dakar, Senegal, (2) SIT Nicaragua: Youth Culture, Literacy, and Media, or (3) SIT Samoa: Pacific Communities and Social Change, (4) SIT Chile: Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and Community Development, (5) SIT India: Sustainable Development and Social Change.

#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:

- Accounting
- Business
- Economics
- Geography
- Management/Management Information Systems
- Marketing
- Sociology
- Computer Science and Related Majors
- Geography

Recommended Courses:

- ACCT 101 & 102 – *Principles of Accounting I & II* or ACCT 110 *Intensive Principles of Accounting*
- ACCT 301 & 302 – *Intermediate Accounting I & II*
- ACCT 304 – *Cost/Managerial Accounting*
- ACCT 401 – *Accounting Information Systems*
- ACCT 420 – *Governmental and Not-for-Profit Accounting*
- ANTH 317 – *World Economies*
- ANTH 365 – *Environment and Development Narratives*
- BUAD 473 – *Environment of International Business*
- ECON 331A – *Environment and Resource Economics*
- ECON 351C – *Poverty, Affluence, and Equality*
- ECON 384 – *Economic Development*
- FINC 301 – *Principles of Finance*
- FINC 430 – *Financial Modeling*
- GEOG 236 – *Globalization and Local Development*
- GEOG 339A – *Development Studies*
- GEOG 363 – *Qualitative Methods in Geography*
- MGMT 301 – *Principles of Management*
- MGMT 346 – *Human Resource Management*
- MGMT 421 – *Entrepreneurial Venture Creation*
- MIST 201 – *Management Information Systems and Applications*
- MIST 301 – *Principles of Knowledge Management*
- MKTG 301 – *Principles of Marketing*
- MKTG 411 – *Marketing Research*
- MKTG 460 – *International Marketing*
- SOCG 204 – *Social Stratification*

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
- Participating in regional service opportunities or completing an internship such as at the Small Business Development Center or the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Participating in a UMW Abroad Program such as (1) CIEE University of Botswana – Gaborone, Botswana, (2) CIEE Dakar, Senegal, (3) SIT Jordan: Modernization and Social Change, (4) SIT Peru: Indigenous Peoples and Globalization, (5) SIT Samoa: Pacific Communities and Social Change, or (6) SIT Uganda: Development Studies, Kampala, (7) SIT Chile: Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and Community Development

**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 language.

Working across cultures often entails verbal and nonverbal languages distinct from your own. Building foreign language skills is thus a second key component of the PC Prep curriculum. *Where would you like to serve?* PC Prep minimum course requirements align with those needed by applicants to the Peace Corps itself, which vary by linguistic region.

- Latin America: Individuals wanting to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must apply with strong intermediate proficiency. This typically means completing **two 200-level courses**.
- West Africa: Individuals wanting to serve in *French-speaking* African countries should be proficient in French (or, in some cases, any Romance Language), usually through **one 200-level course**.
- Everywhere else: The Peace Corps has **no explicit language requirements** for individuals applying to serve in most other countries. However, you will still likely learn and utilize another language during service, so it is only helpful to have taken at least one foreign language class.

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 102 courses + substantive intercultural experience

You'll take at least 1 of these core courses:

- WGST 101 - Intro to Women's Studies
- SOCG 155 - Social Issues
- ANTH 101 - Intro to Cultural and Social Anthropology

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

- SOCG 215 - Gender and Society
- SOCG 221 - Racial and Ethnic Relations
- ANTH 211 - Race in Global Perspective
- ANTH 212 - Anthropology of Gender
- ANTH 350 - Amazonian Societies
- HIST 462 - Women in Latin America
- MDFL 201 - World Literature in Cultural Context
- A qualifying and approved education abroad experience in a country that has previously hosted Peace Corps volunteers and which is approved by UMW's Center for International Education (counts as 1 elective)
- An approved community service experience
- An internship (499 course) that qualifies as an intercultural experience of at least 40 hours and which has been approved by the Peace Corps Prep Coordinator (counts as 1 elective)

*For additional information on international programs, please visit the Center for International Education located in the 4th floor of Lee Hall

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

*Peace
Corps
Tip!*

Prolonged intercultural experiences—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** reviewed by a career coach in the Center for Career and Professional Development.
2. Schedule a mock **interview** at the Center for Career and Professional Development, or use Big Interview to hone your skills from home.
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, or serving on the executive board of a student organization.