



# PEACE CORPS PREP STUDENT GUIDE



# Peace Corps

## Why Peace Corps Prep?

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

1. Training and experience in a work sector
2. Foreign language skills
3. Intercultural competence
4. Professionalism
5. 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! Use the worksheet under each heading to track your progress.

# 1. Training and experience in a specific work sector

## 3 courses + 100 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 **three 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 100 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 identify the type of assignments in which you'd like to serve through the Peace Corps' online interactive tool at [www.peacecorps.gov/openings](http://www.peacecorps.gov/openings), then review the positions' desired qualifications and build them up accordingly. In the process, you should fulfill these PC Prep experiential requirements.

There are six sectors in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve—detailed below. **Choose one sector to focus on** then complete at least 3 courses + 100 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 | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/edu\\_youth/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/edu_youth/assignments/)

**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 among the following areas:**

- **Elementary Education** — Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education
- **Secondary Education (K-12)** — Art, Exercise and Sport Science, Music or Spanish  
(7-12) — Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Geology, History, Mathematics, or Politics and Government
- **Anthropology**
- **Communication Arts** — Communication, Film Studies, Theater and Performance, Strategic Communication
- **Computer Science**
- **Recreation and Outdoor Education** — Outdoor Environmental Education, Outdoor Leadership, Recreation
- **Latin American Studies**
- **Geography**

**And build 100 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.
- **Volunteering for CAFÉ, our community ESL program.**
  - The subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/Second Language, environmental education, drama, or a STEM subject
  - Doing interpretive programs in our schools, in our state or federal lands agencies including volunteering at Black Canyon National Park. Giving programs on the campus or at the community center or library.

## ☐ #2 HEALTH | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/health/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/health/assignments/)

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** – Pre Medicine/Cell and Molecular, Pre-Nursing
- **Exercise and Sport Science** – Exercise Science, Health Fitness, Clinical
- **Psychology**

*And build 100 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:*

- Volunteer or work experience in community health, hospice, family planning counseling, emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, and hands-on caregiving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting
- Volunteer or intern with the following local organizations: The Gunnison schools health fair, the community health fair, mental health clinic, Gunnison Valley Health, Adaptive Sports, Boomers and Beyond, Young at heart, the Willows Assisted Living.
- Take a Wilderness First Responder or EMT course through Extended Studies
- Join Western's Mountain Rescue Team, the only certified collegiate search and rescue team in America

## ☐ #3 ENVIRONMENT | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/env/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/env/assignments/)

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:*

- **Environment and Sustainability** – Individualized Contract, Water
- **Environmental Science**
- **Biology** – Environmental Biology and Ecology, Wildlife and Conservation
- **Recreation and Outdoor Education** – Outdoor Environmental Education
- **Sociology**

*And build 100 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:*

- Educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, or towards community and campus sustainability
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals with the CPW, USFS, BLM, FS, NPS or NRCS.
- Volunteering for Mountain Roots, Local Farms, First, Coldharbour, Farmers Market, Office of Resource Efficiency, HCCA, or the many other community based organizations.
- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management

## ☐ #4 AGRICULTURE | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/agr/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/agr/assignments/)

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:***

- Environment and Sustainability
- Biology
- Business Administration
- Economics

***And build 100 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:***

- Working with businesses involving ranching, vegetable gardening, farming, nursery work, tree planting or health, forestry, landscaping, livestock care and management, or with our local CPW fisheries.
- Doing an internship with the county or federal weed agencies and invasive plants
- Working with the USFS regional forest health office
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm or ranch
- Joining the student club the Organic Guild or volunteer with Mountain Roots
- Volunteering with the Natural Resource Conservation Agency or Colorado State University County Extension Office.

## **#5 YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT** | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/youth/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/youth/assignments/)

**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:***

- **Sociology** – Criminal Justice
- **Geography**
- **Psychology**
- **Latin American Studies**
- **Recreation and Outdoor Education** – Outdoor Environmental Education, Outdoor Leadership, Recreation
- **Computer Science**
- **Exercise and Sport Science** – Exercise Science, Health Fitness, Clinical
- **Environment and Sustainability**
- **Biology** – Pre-Medicine/Cell and Molecular, Pre-Nursing

***And build 100 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:***

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs, participating in student clubs such as active minds, psychology club, sociology club.
- Activities that involve planning, organizing, assessing community needs, counseling, and leadership, in areas such as education, youth development, health, the campus and community multi-cultural center, the environment, and/or business/.
- Volunteer for the Gunnison County Partners Program. Volunteer for after school programming at the local schools. Work with young children whose parents are attending the community ESL courses at night. Volunteer for the Gunnison Recreation program.

## **#6 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** | [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/busdev\\_01/assignments/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/busdev_01/assignments/)

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

- **Business Administration** – Management, Finance, Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship, Energy Management, Resort Management, Marketing, Latin American Business
- **Computer Science**
- **Art** – Graphic Design
- **Communication Arts** – Communications, Strategic Communications
- **Economics**
- **Accounting**

**And build 100 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
- Founding or leading a community- or school-based organization
- Working with Westerns Small Business Development Center or ICE program

**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.*

**Objective 1 Worksheet**

Check the box of the work sector you're most interested in pursuing. Write in your three courses below, and use the table to help keep track of your volunteer experience.

1. Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Log**

Organization	Date	Hours	Description

## 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.
- **Use Mango**, our free language course software for **over 70 languages available through our library**.
- **Explore additional languages** with our **Extended Studies** program.
- **Travel with our Study Abroad Program** and learn a language while immersed in another culture and place.

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

### Objective 2 Worksheet

If you intend to learn a foreign language, please list which one:

List the top two foreign language courses you plan to take:

1. Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Or describe your alternative learning process (such as **Mango**) below:

## 3. Intercultural competence

### 3 approved courses

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. It is highly encouraged, but not required, to study abroad to gain a more in depth understanding of another culture. See example courses on the next page.

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

- ANTH 107 Intro to Anthropology
- ANTH 320 Ecological Anthropology
- GEOG 110 World Regional Geography
- POLS 250 Politics of the Environment
- POLS 260 Intro to World Politics

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

- ANTH 230 Cultural Anthropology
- ANTH 355 Medical Anthropology
- ECON 303 International Economics and Globalization
- BUAD 275 ICE Mindset
- BUAD 340 - Global Business
- BUAD 363 - Business and the Environment
- ECON 303 International Economics and Globalization
- ENG 232 Borderlands: Race, Class, and Gender
- ENG 305 Creative Writing: Non-fiction
- ENG 331 Literature and Ethnicity
- ENG 358 Global Literatures
- ENG 394 Globalization and Literature.
- ENVS 360 Global Environmental Policy
- GEOG 120 Introduction to Human Geography
- GEOG 351 Geog. of Latin America and the Caribbean
- HIST 260 History of Latin America
- HIST 254 History of Africa
- HIST 297 History of East Asia
- HIST 354 Conflict in Africa
- HIST 364 Women in Latin America
- HIST 365 Latin American Revolutions
- ROE 235 Foundations of Teaching Environmental Education
- ROE 391 Experiential Education
- ROE 398 Program Planning
- POLS 255 Intro to Comparative Politics
- POLS 340 Politics of Social Movements
- POLS 350 Human Rights
- POLS 355 Politics of Development
- SOC 380 Social Inequalities
- SPAN 340 Spanish Civilization and Culture
- SPAN 341 Latin American Civilization and Culture
- SPAN 460 Hispanic Literature: Prose

*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, volunteering or having an internship abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees acculturate to the United States, or volunteering in diverse schools—would also strengthen your Peace Corps candidacy significantly. To inquire about study, internships or service-learning abroad, schedule a meeting with Katie Wheaton, Study Abroad Advisor (970-943-7056).*

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**Objective 3 Worksheet**  
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List the core course and two approved electives you plan to take:

Core Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Elective 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Elective 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester & Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Professionalism

The Peace Corps is a highly competitive organization. Professionalism is an important part of any career path. Two specific activities that will strengthen your candidacy for the Peace Corps (and other professional endeavors) are:

- Have your resume critiqued by Mariah Green, Career Services or the Peer Academic Leaders, Exploratory Center.
- Attend a workshop, class or mock interview for interview skills from facilitated by the Peer Academic Leaders or Career Services.

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**Objective 4 Worksheet**  
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**Professional Resume Feedback:** Please indicate when you plan to meet with Western's Career Services for a one-on-one resume review.

Month and Year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional Interview Prep:** Please indicate when you plan to meet with Western's Career Services to hone your interview skills.

Month and Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Leadership development

International development is a highly professional sector. It is difficult to break into and demands great initiative and leadership to advance professionally within the field.

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 club or SGA. Join the LEAD team, become a Resident Advisor, a Peer Academic Leader or an Orientation Leader. You will also need to include a letter from a faculty, staff, or supervisor attesting to leadership skills. Important leadership qualities include but are not limited to:

- flexibility and adaptability
- inspire and motivate
- self-reflection
- perseverance
- compassion & empathy, and others

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**Objective 5 Worksheet**  
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- Submit a letter from your supervisor to the Peace Corps Prep Coordinator.

List your leadership experience below, and briefly describe what skills you gained: