

# 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 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](http://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](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/what-volunteers-do/) (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:*

- Elementary, Secondary or Special Education
- English or Linguistics
- TEFL/TESL
- Math
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Any Physical or Biological Science

*Recommended courses:*

- All College of Education courses will be accepted.
- C S 1313 Programming for Non-Majors
- MIS 2113 Computer-Based Information Systems
- LING 1203 Language Across Cultures
- LING 2303 General Linguistics
- EXPO 1213 & 1223 Expository Writing (various topics)
- ENGL 3143 Studies in Literacy and Rhetoric
- MLLL 4813 Principles and Techniques of Teaching a Foreign Language
- BIOL 1013 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1114 Introduction to Biology
- CHEM 1113 Introduction to Chemistry
- MATH 1503 College Algebra

*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
  - The subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject
  - Tutoring opportunities are available at the OU Student Learning Center, OU Language Learning Center, Math Center or other departmental tutoring
  - ESL tutoring opportunities are available through the volunteer program administered by the Norman Public Library - see website for upcoming trainings
- Working as a TA for a course
- Working as a camp counselor if this involves leading group activities and instruction
- Working in a teaching/mentoring capacity with young people at Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Norman, the Center for Children and Families in Norman, or similar organizations

## 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:*

- Nursing
- Nutrition or Dietetics
- Health Education
- Pre-med
- Biology
- Technical Education
- Environmental or Sanitary Engineering

*Recommended courses:*

- HES 1823 Scientific Principles of Health and Disease
- HES 2823 Introductory Nutrition
- HES 2913 Personal Health
- BIOL 1013 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1124 Introduction to Biology
- PHCH 2013 Introduction to Public Health
- FR 2253 Health, Medicine, and the Environment in French Culture
- COMM 2323 Survey of Health Communication
- COMM 3313 Communication and Public Health
- IAS 3193 Environment and Disease Crises in China
- CEES 3243 Water and Wastewater Treatment Design

*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
  - Volunteer opportunities are available through the OKC VA Center, Norman Regional Hospital, Mission Hospice, Crossroads Hospice, OKC Indian Clinic, and other health providers in the area.
- Counseling or teaching in health subjects
  - Opportunities available through the Sexperts program through the OU Gender & Equality Center
- Working as a resident advisor in a dormitory, as a peer nutritionist, or as a sexually transmitted infections counselor. Students may also volunteer with OU Health Services as a Health Hut Volunteer.
- Significant experience in mechanical repairs, construction, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, hydrology, or set design
- Immersive course experience:
  - CEES 4273G WaTER Technical Field Methods, a hands-on practicum teaching the skills for construction and implementation of WaSH projects in the context of a developing country.

- CEES 3422 Intercultural Immersion Experience in an Emerging Region – immersive WaSH project in developing region (currently offering India, Cambodia, Bolivia, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire)
- CEES 3422 Uganda Interdisciplinary Service-Learning Course, health related project in Gulu

### 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 or related field | ○ Park Administration                      | ○ Forestry                    |
| ○ Natural Resources Conservation         | ○ Wildlife Biology                         | ○ Biology, Botany, or Ecology |
|  | ○ Natural Resources or Wildlife Management | ○ Geology                     |

*Recommended courses:*

- ENST 1013 Consumption and the Environment
- ENST 2203 Ecosystem Impacts of Climate Change
- ENST 3033 Food, Agriculture and Environment
- GEOG 1203 Global Environmental Issues
- GEOG 3443 Environment and Society
- GEOL 2014 The Earth System
- GEOL 3033 Earth Resources and the Environment
- PBIO 1114 General Botany
- PBIO 3113 Cell Biology
- PBIO 4810 Horticulture
- BIOL 1013 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1124 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1134 Evolution/Ecology/Diversity
- IAS 3193 Environment and Disease Crises in China
- IAS 3603 Energy, Environment, and Climate Change in China
- IAS 3653 Energy, Climate, and Security
- CEES 2313 Water Quality Fundamentals
- CEES 2323 Environmental Transport and Fate Processes
- CEES 3243 Water and Wastewater Treatment Design

*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
  - Local volunteer opportunities are available with groups like Closer to Earth, The Nature Conservancy, and Sustainable OKC.
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping
  - Local experience is available through Common Wealth Urban Farms or the OU Wellness Community Garden.
- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management
  - Service trips with campus groups like Sooners without Borders can be good ways to gain related experience.
  - Immersive course experience:
    - CEES 4273G WaTER Technical Field Methods – hands-on practicum covering skills necessary for construction and implementation of WaSH
    - BIOL 4553 Wetlands Ecology – field-based examination of wetland science and management
    - GEOL 4136 Field Geology – six-week summer course at field camp in Colorado

## 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:*

- |                                    |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Agronomy     | <input type="radio"/> Entomology           | <input type="radio"/> Agricultural Economics |
| <input type="radio"/> Horticulture | <input type="radio"/> Agricultural Science | <input type="radio"/> Business or economics  |
| <input type="radio"/> Botany       | <input type="radio"/> Agribusiness         | <input type="radio"/> Biology                |

*Recommended courses:*

- P BIO 1114 General Botany
- P BIO 3113 Cell Biology
- P BIO 4810 Horticulture
- BIOL 1013 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1124 Introduction to Biology
- BIOL 1134 Evolution/Ecology/Diversity
- BIOL 3073 Medical Entomology
- BIOL 3083 Animal Behavior
- ECON 1123 Principles of Economics – Micro
- HES 2823 Introductory Nutrition
- ENST 2203 Ecosystem Impacts of Climate Change

- ENST 3033 Food, Agriculture and Environment

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
  - Local experience is available through Common Wealth Urban Farms, the OU Wellness Community Garden, the Environmental Science Association, and the OU Beekeepers' association. Joining the OU Botany Club can also help connect you with opportunities and allow you to participate in planting at the OU greenhouses.
  - Research experiences offered by faculty in Plant Biology (Botany) or Biology – see departmental websites for more information
- 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:

- Social Work
- Counseling
- Community Development
- Developmental Psychology
- Human Development
- Family Studies

Recommended courses:

- H R 3013 Introduction to Human Relations
- H R 3043 Interpersonal Skills / Group Dynamics
- H R 3303 Family Issues in Human Relations
- H R 4153 Introduction to Counseling in Human Relations
- H R 4223 International Human Relations
- AFAM 4113 Issues in AFAM Family
- PSY 2603 Lifespan Development
- PSY 3703 Social Psychology
- S WK 1113 Introduction to Social Work (all social work courses count)
- SOC 3723 Sociology of the Family
- IAS 3173 Work, Family and Religion in Rural China
- IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Iran
- IAS 3813 Development Practice

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

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs
  - Opportunities at Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Norman, the Center for Children and Families in Norman, etc.
  - Tutoring programs for children/adolescents
- 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
  - Camp counselor experience
- The OU office of Leadership & Volunteerism can help connect you with these opportunities

## 6. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**Harness 21<sup>st</sup>-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 | ○ Accounting, Banking or Finance      | ○ Graphic Design         |
| ○ Nonprofit Management              | ○ Computer Science and related majors | ○ Mass Communications    |
|                                     |                                       | ○ International Business |

Recommended courses:

- ECON 1113 Principles of Economics – Macro
- ECON 1123 Principles of Economics – Micro
- COMM 2113 Business and Professional Communication
- ACCT 2113 Fundamentals of Financial Accounting
- C S 1313 Programming for Non-Majors
- MIS 2113 Computer-Based Information Systems
- NPNG 2033 Introduction to Nonprofits
- IAS 3073 Global Economic Relations
- IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
- IAS 3323 Political Economy of Development
- IAS 3813 Development Practice
- ENT 3193 Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship
- GEOG 3233 Principles of Sustainability
- Most Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Management, Computer Science, Creative Media Production, Public Relations or Advertising courses will be accepted.

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
  - There are plenty of opportunities for internships in these areas, particularly for students in related majors. Make an appointment with OU Career Services or talk to your advisor and faculty in your department to learn more about opportunities.
- 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

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

- UCOL 1533 Global Perspectives
- IAS 2003 Understanding the Global Community
- ANTH 2203 Global Cultural Diversity
- WGS 2223 Intro to Social Justice
- AFAM 2003 Intro to African & AFAM Studies
- COMM 2003 Communication in Non-Western Culture
- COMM 3513 Intercultural Communication
- H R 3413 Cultural Awareness

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

- WGS 1220/2120 Women and Gender Studies
- LSTD 2333 Contemporary Social Issues
- ENGR 4013 Leadership and Management for Engineers
- GEOG 3443 Environment and Society
- CEES 3422 Intercultural Immersion Experience in an Emerging Region
- IAS 3083 International Activism
- IAS/PSC 2603 Governments Around the World
- IAS 3033 International Human Rights
- IAS 3103 Activism, Art & Leadership
- IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
- IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
- IAS 3783 US-Arab Cultural Encounters

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

**Optional: Intercultural experience in place of elective(s).** If you would like to give your students the option of substituting intercultural experiences for one or both electives, please refer to the guidance above and list the approved prolonged intercultural experience below. Please detail if these experiences will substitute one or both of the electives:

- Studying or volunteering abroad may count if the student is in a country that has at some point hosted Peace Corps Volunteers (see the list of current and past countries here [[www.peacecorps.gov/countries](http://www.peacecorps.gov/countries)]).
- Studying/volunteering abroad in these countries from one week to a summer may substitute for one course. For example, CEES 4273G WaTER Technical Field Methods or CEES 3422 Intercultural Immersion Experience in an Emerging Region
- 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. Volunteer opportunities are

available with Catholic Charities, the Spero Project, New Land Academy, and other organizations in Oklahoma. OU NISO (New International Student Orientation) Peer Mentors can also substitute their experience for one elective.

- Each distinct intercultural experience lasting at least forty hours may substitute for one elective.

## 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 OU Career Services
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** or complete a mock interview at OU 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, or serving on the executive board of a student organization.
  - a. For example, involvement with Campus leadership through Campus Activities Council or Student Government Association. Students in the College of International Studies can apply to participate in the Leadership Fellows (LeaF) Program and students in the College of Engineering are encouraged to get involved with Sooners Without Borders, the Society of Women Engineers, or the Environmental Science Student Association. Speak with your Peace Corps Prep Coordinator about any relevant leadership experiences.