

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), 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, we offer **three sectors** at the University of Oklahoma—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 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:

Course Title
CEES 4243G WaTER Technologies for Emerging Regions
CEES 3243 Water and Wastewater Treatment Design
IAS 3173 Rural Life in Modern China
IAS 3193 Environment and Disease Crises in China
IAS 3263 Poverty and Rural Development
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3773 Public Health in Africa
IAS 3113 Women in East Asia
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East

*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, like 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

#2 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:

- Civil Engineering and Environmental Science
- Natural Resources Conservation
- Natural Resources or Wildlife Management
- Biology, Botany, or Ecology
- Geology

Recommended courses:

Course Title
IAS 3193 Environment and Disease Crises in China
IAS 3283 Culture, Power, and Global Environment
IAS 3603 Energy, Environment, and Climate Change in China
IAS 3653 Energy, Climate, and Security
CEES 4243 WaTER Technologies for Emerging Regions
CEES 3243 Water and Wastewater Treatment Design
CEES 2313 Water Quality Fundamentals
CEES 2323 Environmental Transport and Fate Processes
CEES 3213 Water Resources Engineering
CEES 4324 Environmental Biology and Ecology
CEES 4463 Environmental Evaluation and Management
CEES 4813 Env Science and Env Engineering Professional Practice
BIOL 3463 Water and Ecological Sustainability
GEOL 3033 Earth Resources and the Environment
GEOL 2014 The Earth System

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
- 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

#3 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

Recommended courses:

Course Title
IAS 3063 Politics of Developing Countries
IAS 3073 Global Economic Relations
IAS 3253 Africa in the World Economy
IAS 3263 Poverty and Rural Development
IAS 3303 Mexican Economic Development
IAS 3323 Global Economic Crisis
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3323 Political Economy of Development
ENT 3193 Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship
GEOG 3233 Principles of Sustainability

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

***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 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:

For this competency, we require **that all students take three courses: one core course in Diversity and Inclusion and two relevant electives**. If a Prep program would like to, they may give their students the option of engaging in substantive intercultural experiences in place of one or both electives.

- The **core course(s)** should be an introspective Diversity and Inclusion offering that helps students increase cultural self- and other-understanding, building their adaptability around relevant cultural differences. Examples would be Intercultural Communication, Multicultural Counseling, or courses that integrate self-reflection into the study of marginalized groups (i.e., classes focused on race, gender, sexuality, or disabilities). Alternatively, some PC Prep partner universities have created a specialized “Global Service” course to fulfill this requirement.
- **Electives:** To fill out this competency, programs may require that students take two more courses of the above type or more globally-oriented classes such as International Development, area studies (i.e., African Studies, Latin American Studies, etc.), the Economics of Poverty, Peace Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Emerging Markets, World Literature, etc.
- **Intercultural experience in place of elective(s)**
 - **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](http://www.peacecorps.gov/countries) [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. Consult your Peace Corps Prep Coordinator about
 - Each distinct intercultural experience lasting at least forty hours may substitute for one elective.

You must take at least 1 of these core courses:

- 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 3513 Intercultural Communication
- LSCS 3113 Intro – World Cultural Studies
- HR 3413 Cultural Awareness in Human Relations

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

Course Title
ENGR 4013 Leadership and Management for Engineers
WGS 1220/2120 Women and Gender Studies
LSTD 2333 Contemporary Social Issues
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 3963 Politics of Developing Countries
IAS 3113 Women in East Asia
IAS 3233 Nationalism and the Middle East
IAS 3423 Politics and Society in Iraq
IAS 3463 Arab Culture and Society through Modern Fiction
IAS 3533 Contemporary Chinese Contexts
IAS 3573 Religious Conflict in Asia
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.

***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** critiqued by someone in Career Services.
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** at Career Services.

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. 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.