



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 will build four core competencies through interrelated coursework, hands-on experience, and professional development support. These four competencies, or “learning objectives,” 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 identify the type of assignments in which you’d like to serve through this interactive tool (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 approved courses + 50 hours of related experience in that sector. *A list of approved courses are available on MSU’s Peace Corps Prep website: murraystate.edu/pcprep.*

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 (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/edu_youth)



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 approved courses from one of the following areas:

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|--|------------------------------------|
| Elementary, Secondary or Special Education | Computer Science |
| English or Linguistics | Engineering |
| Teaching English as a Second Language | Any Physical or Biological Science |
| Math | |

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

- Teach in a classroom or with a community outreach organization (or similar situation) English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject - check with professors who teach the Intro sections of the relevant courses
- Tutor international students, students with disabilities or in a STEM subject
- Mentor an actor with disabilities through Penguin Project (Playhouse in the Park), a K-12 student through Calloway County 4H, Calloway County Public Library, Calloway County Adult Education, West KY Mentoring, West Kentucky Educational Co-op, Teacher Quality Institute, Best Buddies, Junior Achievement, Special Olympics, Center for School Safety, Head Start, Fun with Languages, Merryman House, Adventures in Math & Science (AIMS) or Murray Main Street Youth Center
- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - International Teaching Experience in Belize
 - Telecommunications Systems Management service program installing a network and repairing computers in a Belizean high school
- Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - BIO 112 Field Biology
 - BIO 216 Biological Inquiry and Analysis

#2 HEALTH (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/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 approved courses from one of the following areas:

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

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

- Volunteer, intern or work in areas such as hospice, family planning counseling (Life House Crisis Pregnancy Center), emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, or maternal health, Murray/Calloway Endowment for Healthcare
- Hands-on care-giving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting
- Teach or advise in health-related subjects (Calloway County 4H programming and health and wellness fairs)
- Serve as a peer mentor: resident advisor, peer nutritionist, GROW mentor (MSU Women's Center)
- Significant experience in mechanical repairs, construction, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, hydrology, or set design
- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - Nursing in Belize
 - Issues in Comparative Healthcare Abroad (offered annually in alternating locations, England and Hungary)
- Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - NTN 412 Community Nutrition and Health
 - NUR 205 Pharmacology in Nursing
 - NUR 305 Nursing Care of Childrearing Families
 - NUR 410 Community Health Nursing
 - NUR 412 Leadership and Management in Nursing

#3 ENVIRONMENT (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/env)



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 approved courses from one of the following areas:

Environmental Science or related field	Natural Resources or Wildlife Management
Natural Resources Conservation	Forestry
Park Administration	Biology, Botany, or Ecology
Wildlife Biology	Geology

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

- Educate the public on environmental or conservation issues or work on environmental campaigns (Calloway County 4H, Murray State Arboretum, Friends of Land Between the Lakes, Jackson Purchase Foundation, Four Rivers Watershed Watch, Marshall County Conservation District, Wildlife and Fisheries Society, Murray Environmental Student Society)
- Conduct biological surveys of plants or animals
- Contribute to a community garden, farm, nursery management or landscaping
- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - Conservation in Ecuador and Galapagos Islands (biennial program)
 - Sustainability in Denmark or Japan
 - Australia Zoo Internship
- Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - BIO 578 Conservation Biology
 - CET 587 Sustainable Environmental Technology
 - GSC/PLN 507 Land Use Planning
 - REC 465 Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources

#4 AGRICULTURE (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/agr)



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 approved courses from one of the following areas:

Agronomy	Agribusiness
Horticulture	Agricultural Economics
Botany	Business or economics
Entomology	Biology
Agricultural Science	

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

- Work on 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
- Contribute to a community garden, farm, nursery management or landscaping
- Teach or tutor the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities (Calloway County 4H, Murray State Arboretum, Friends of Land Between the Lakes, Jackson Purchase Foundation, Four Rivers Watershed Watch, Marshall County Conservation District, Wildlife and Fisheries Society, Murray Environmental Student Society)
- Work on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm

- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - Semester at Szent Istvan Egyetem, Hungary, with Eastern Europe’s largest large animal hospital
 - Veterinary Service in Thailand with Loop Abroad
 - Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - AGR 440 Behavior Modification Techniques for Domestic Animals

#5 YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/youth)



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 approved courses from one of the following areas:

Social Work	Developmental Psychology
Counseling	Human Development
Community Development	Family Studies

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

- Teach, tutor or mentor at-risk youth (Calloway County 4H, Calloway County Family Resource Center, Calloway County Public Library, West KY Mentoring, Best Buddies, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, Murray Main Street Youth Center, GROW, STAND, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Divine Divas
- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - Human Rights in London, volunteering with Friends House: Quakers in Britain
 - Social Work in Belize
- Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - NLS 290 Introduction to the Role of Service and the Nonprofit Sector
 - NLS 350 Management and Program Development in Nonprofit Organizations
 - NLS 351 Leadership, Governance, and Board Development in Nonprofit Organizations
 - NLS 352 Volunteerism, Volunteer Development, and Human Resource Management
 - NLS 480 Special Problems in Nonprofit Organizations
 - NLS 501 Seminar on Nonprofit Organizations

#6 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/busdev_01)



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 Development, take three approved courses from one of the following areas:

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

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

- Accounting majors can volunteer through the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) tax preparation program
- Murray Main Street, Chamber of Commerce, Murray/Calloway County Senior Citizen Center, Murray Kentucky Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Murray/Calloway County Public Library, Calloway County Community Foundation, Pennyryle & Purchase Area Development Districts, West Kentucky Work Force Development Area, West Kentucky Regional Chamber Alliance, Small Business Development Center, Regional Innovation Center, MSU Office of Regional Outreach

- Work with businesses, organizations, or cooperatives in accounting, finance, microfinance, management, project management, budgeting, or marketing
- Start and run your own business or other entrepreneurial activity
- Train others in computer literacy, maintenance, and repair
- Design a website or participate in online marketing
- Found or lead a community- or school-based organization
- Participate in an education abroad course, such as:
 - Non Profit Leadership in Austria, including a volunteer program and global leadership seminar (biennial program)
- Participate in a service learning course, such as:
 - NLS 475 Social Entrepreneurship
 - NLS 502 Workshop in Financial Resource Development

Peace Corps 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.

Tip!

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 want to serve in a country that speaks your same language, you can skip this requirement!

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. Some example courses:

You will take at least 1 of these core courses:

- COM 340: Intercultural Communication
- GDS 201: Introduction to Gender and Diversity Studies
- POL 250: Introduction to International Relations

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

- Courses taken while studying abroad (Subject to approval by your PC Prep academic advisor)
- AGR 353: World Food, Agriculture and Society
- BUS 396: International Business seminar
- CHN 105: Introduction to Chinese Culture

- CHN 340: Chinese Diversity Through Food
- COM 340: Intercultural Communication (if not selected as your core course)
- ECO 310: Issues in Global Economy
- FRE 105: Introduction to French Culture
- GDS 201: Intro to Gender & Diversity Studies (if not selected as your core course)
- GSC 110: World Geography
- HIS 202: Understanding Global History
- HIS 309/RGS 309: World Religions
- JPN 105: Introduction to Japanese Culture
- NLS 370: Philanthropy, NGOs and International Development
- NLS 380: The Nonprofit Sector in Comparative Perspective: Study Abroad Experience
- POL 250: Intro to International Relations (if not selected as your core course)
- POL 453: Government and Politics of Latin America
- POL 454: Government and Politics of Asia
- SOC 250: Global Sociology
- SPA 105: Introduction to Spanish and Latin American Culture
- SWK 225: Human Diversity

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

***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. Please contact MSU’s Education Abroad Office to learn about the wide variety of international experiential learning opportunities available to you such as volunteering with Friends House in Britain, spending a semester in Hungary working in a large animal hospital, studying nursing or teaching in Belize, or installing networks and repairing computers in Belizean high schools as part of MSU’s Telecommunications Systems Management service abroad program.

4. Professional and leadership development

[Resume & Interview Support + Leadership Experience]

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. 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 (100 Oakley Applied Science). Walk-in hours are available Tuesday through Thursday, 2:00 to 3:30 PM or you may call 270.809.3735 to schedule an appointment.
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills**. Career Services offers the Job Search Workshop series every semester which includes an interview workshop. You may also schedule a mock interview to practice your interview skills.
3. Develop at least one significant **leadership experience** and be prepared to discuss it thoughtfully. For example, you may organize a campus event, lead a work or volunteer project, or serve on the executive board of a student organization.

You can find a list of available student organizations as well as instructions on how to register a new organization at www.murraystate.edu/studentorgs. Consider applying to the Student Leadership Series and participating in available Organization Leadership Trainings scheduled each semester through the Office of Greek Life and Student Leadership Programs.