



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 will need to document how you plan to fulfill each requirement. **This guide aligns point-by-point with each section of the application!**

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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](#) 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, Middle, or Secondary Education
- K-12 Special Education
- English
- Physical Health Education
- TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
- Math
- Computer Science
- Information Systems
- Engineering
- Physical or Biological Science
- Education Media

Recommended courses (continued on next page):

- EDUC 102E: Critical Questions in Education
- EDUC 123: Learning, Behavior and Engagement in Context
- EDUC 310: Teaching in Diverse Society
- EXED 200: Foundations of Exceptional Education
- TESL 300: Introduction to Second Language Acquisition

- 221: Literature/Culture Ideas
- ENG 222: Genre(s)
- ENG 239: Studies in World Literature
- ENG 260: Survey of African-American Literature
- PSYC 160: Lifespan Human Development
- WRTC 312: Studies in Literacy

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- Volunteering as a tutor with Harrisonburg City Public Schools
- Volunteering with Harrisonburg-Rockingham Boys and Girls Club
- Volunteering with Shenandoah Early Head Start
- Helping to maximize participation by helping coordinate the Harrisonburg area Day of Caring event facilitated by the United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
- Joining in on one of the Early Childhood programs as part of the United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County such as We Read to Succeed, Smart Beginnings, or Stuff the Bus
- Volunteering with Generations Crossing which helps enable children from infancy through preschool in lower income working families to benefit from an intergenerational learning environment
- Helping plan and implement Harrisonburg Education Foundation’s annual fundraising event
- Volunteering with On the Road Collaborative through their 8th Grade Academy Program

This is a sample of service opportunities offered in the Harrisonburg community. Please visit Community Service-Learning for [additional service opportunities](#) and information about the [Alternative Break Program](#). Paid and unpaid internships also can meet this requirement. Please see the University Career Center for [internship opportunities](#).

#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:

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|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| ○ Nursing | ○ Health Communication | ○ Communication Sciences and Disorders |
| ○ Dietetics | ○ Health Services Administration | ○ Medical Humanities |
| ○ Health Sciences | | |

Recommended courses (continued on next page):

- BIO 103: Contemporary Biology
- BIO 140: Foundations of Biology
- BIO 222: Interdisciplinary Biology for Engineering and Physical Sciences
- BIO 270: Human Physiology

- CSD 200: Introduction to CSD
- HTH 100: Personal Wellness
- HTH 210: Medical Terminology
- KIN 100: Lifetime Fitness and Wellness
- NSG/HTH/IPE/SOWK 314: Rural Health: An Interdisciplinary Approach
- NSG/HTH/WGS 417: Women's Global Health and Human Rights
- NUTR 280: Nutrition for Wellness
- NUTR 380: Global Nutrition
- PSYC 160: Lifespan Human Development
- SCOM 370: Introduction to Health Communication
- SCOM 471: Culture and Health Communication

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- 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
- Participating with the Healthy Community Council's monthly committee meetings and subcommittee taskforce groups
- Volunteering with the Free Clinic of Harrisonburg
- Volunteering with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Health Department
- Volunteering with Way to Go, Inc. by helping to coordinate transportation assistance to health care providers and programming for low-income working families
- Volunteering with New Bridges Immigrant Resource Center which helps low-income immigrants establish and maintain economic stability and access to healthcare
- Volunteering with Autumn Valley Guardianship which provides guardianship and conservatorship services to legally incapacitated and indigent adults when no other option exists for the individual
- Volunteering with JMU's Institute for Innovation and Human Services' Healthcare for the Homeless Suitcase Clinic which provides transportation services for homeless clients to access medical, dental, and behavioral health sciences
- 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

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#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
- Environmental Humanities or Humanitarian Affairs
- Integrated Science and Technology
- Environmental Management
- Biology
- Earth Science
- Geology
- Geographic Science

Recommended courses:

- GEOL 102 Environment Earth
- GEOL 110 Physical Geology
- GEOL 110L Physical Geology Lab
- GEOL 115 Earth Systems & Climate Change
- GEOL 115L Earth Systems & Climate Change
- GEOL 210 Applied Physical Geology
- GEOL 211 Introduction to Oceanography
- GEOL 320 Meteorology
- ENVT 200 Environmental Systems Theory
- GEOG 200. Geography: The Global Dimension
- GEOG 215. Introduction to Geographic Information Science and Cartography
- GEOG 301. Introduction to Natural Disasters
- GEOG 310. Environmental Issues
- GEOG 315. Field Studies in Geography
- GEOG 325. Environmental Ethics
- GEOG 336. Environmental Hazards: A Focus on Southeast Asia
- GEOG 341. Wilderness Techniques
- GEOG 343. Wildlife Management
- GEOG 344. Globalization and Development
- ISAT 100. Environmental and Energy Sustainability
- ISAT 112. Environmental Issues in Science and Technology (2,3)
- ISAT 320. Fundamentals of Environmental Science & Technology I
- ISAT 426. Environmental Information Systems
- JUST 357: Environmental Justice
- PHYS 215: Energy and the Environment
- WRTC 326/SCOM 354: Environmental Communication and Advocacy
- WRTC 416/SCOM 465: Rhetoric of Environmental Science and Technology

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- Educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, or working on environmental campaigns
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals
- Conducting geological surveys of earth materials (rocks or minerals) or water systems (surface water and/or groundwater)
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping
- Getting involved with JMU's Environmental Stewardship initiative
- Volunteering with Valley Conservation Council which promotes environmental conservation through holding lands in permanent conservation easements
- Volunteering with Shenandoah National Park or George Washington National Forest
- Volunteering with Shenandoah River State Park, Sky Meadows State Park, or Kiptopeke State Park
- Volunteering with and participating in various programming activities at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum
- Volunteering with Virginia Clean Cities

This is a sample of service opportunities offered in the Harrisonburg community. Please visit Community Service-Learning for [additional service opportunities](#) and information about the [Alternative Break Program](#). Paid and unpaid internships also can meet this requirement. Please see the University Career Center for [internship opportunities](#).

#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:

- Environmental Science
- Dietetics
- Environmental Humanities
- Integrated Science and Technology
- Biology or Geology
- Business or economics
- Environmental Management

Recommended courses:

- GEOG 322. Agricultural Systems
- GEOG 430. Geography of Crop Plants
- GEOL 102: Environment: Earth
- GEOL 115: Earth Systems and Climate Change
- GEOL 210: Applied Physical Geology
- ISAT 473. Local Agriculture and Farm Internships
- NUTR 280: Nutrition for Wellness
- NUTR 380: Global Nutrition

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- 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
- Consider contacting Vine & Fig (New Community Project), Radical Roots Farm, or Project GROWS
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm
- Teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities
- Getting involved with Valley Conservation Council's storm-water fencing programming
- Volunteering to help promote and support the numerous Farm to Table initiatives spread throughout the Shenandoah Valley region
- Volunteering with the Virginia Poultry Federation's producer and grower cooperative programming
- Volunteering with the Harrisonburg Farmer's Market
- Volunteering with the Farm Credit Knowledge Center
- Volunteering with Sky Meadows State Park (vegetable garden)
- Volunteering with Liberty Hall Livestock

This is a sample of service opportunities offered in the Harrisonburg community. Please visit Community Service-Learning for [additional service opportunities](#) and information about the [Alternative Break Program](#). Paid and unpaid internships also can meet this requirement. Please see the University Career Center for [internship opportunities](#).

#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
- Psychology
- Coaching Education
- Sociology
- Sports and Recreation
- Family Studies
- Management

Recommended courses (continued on next page):

- CIS 204: Introduction to Information Systems
- GEOG 200. Geography: The Global Dimension
- GEOG 301. Introduction to Natural Disasters
- GEOG 310. Environmental Issues
- GEOG 336. Environmental Hazards: A Focus on Southeast Asia
- GEOG 427. Water Resources of the World
- HTH 100: Personal Wellness
- ISAT 426. Environmental Information Systems

- KIN 100: Lifetime Fitness and Wellness
- PSYC 160: Lifespan Human Development
- WGS 200: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies
- EDUC 123: Learning, Behavior and Engagement in Context
- EDUC 310: Teaching in Diverse Society
- EXED 200: Foundations of Exceptional Education

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs
- Volunteering with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg and Rockingham’s Mentorship Programming or with Second Home after school program
- Volunteering with The Reading Show / Gus Bus
- Volunteering with the Office on Children and Youth with annual data collection efforts
- Other 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.

This is a sample of service opportunities offered in the Harrisonburg community. Please visit Community Service-Learning for [additional service opportunities](#) and information about the [Alternative Break Program](#). Paid and unpaid internships also can meet this requirement. Please see the University Career Center for [internship opportunities](#).

#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:

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| ○ Business or International Business | ○ Accounting or Finance | ○ Media Arts and Design or Graphic Design |
| ○ Public Policy and Administration | ○ Computer Science and related majors | ○ Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication |
| ○ Education Media | ○ Economics | ○ Communications Studies |
| ○ Nonprofit Studies | | |

Recommended courses (continued on next page):

- ACTG 244: Principles of Accounting
- BUS 160: Business Decision Making in a Modern Society
- CIS 204: Introduction to Information Systems
- CIS 221: Introduction to Programming
- COB 191: Business Analytics I
- COB 204: Computer Information Systems

- ECON 200: Macroeconomics
- ECON 201: Microeconomics
- ECON 365: Economic Development
- HUMN 360: GIS for Humanitarian Assistance
- JUST 223: Social Justice Interventions
- JUST 301: Restorative Justice
- JUST 301: Solutions to Global Poverty
- JUST 339: Mapping Justice
- JUST 353: Justice and Development
- JUST 373: Rebuilding Post Conflict Societies
- SMAD 150: Mediated Communication: Issues and Skills
- WRTC 340: Writing as Leading
- WRTC 484: Writing for Nonprofits
- WRTC 486: Writing in the Community

And build 50 hours of **related** field experience through an activity such as (but not limited to):

- 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
- Volunteering with the Madison Center for Community Development’s outreach efforts to help capture the needs of local nonprofit organizations
- Volunteering to help plan and promote one of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance’s annual events
- Volunteering with Rockingham County’s Department of Community Development through actively participating as a community member through the County’s upcoming Comprehensive Planning
- Founding or leading a community- or school-based organization
- Volunteering with the Refugee and Immigrant Economic Impact Taskforce
- Volunteering with the Staunton Creative Community Fund
- Volunteering with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber

This is a sample of service opportunities offered in the Harrisonburg community. Please visit Community Service-Learning for [additional service opportunities](#) and information about the [Alternative Break Program](#). Paid and unpaid internships also can meet this requirement. Please see the University Career Center for [internship opportunities](#).

***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 placement region

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. The JMU Peace Corps Prep program strongly encourages foreign language study.

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:

- ANTH 195 Cultural Anthropology
- HUM 252: Global Cultures
- JUST 235: Justice in a Global Community
- SCOM 248 Intercultural Communication
- SCOM 471: Culture and Health Communication
- EDUC 310: Teaching in Diverse Society
- EDUC 379: Comparative Intercultural Education
- HON 331/332 Global Studies I & II

And choose 2 additional electives from the above list or these below (continued on next page):

- AFST 200: Introduction to Africana Studies
- ECON 200: Macroeconomics
- GEOG 200: Geography: The Global Dimension
- HUMN 201: Introduction to Humanitarian Affairs
- JUST 223: Social Justice Interventions
- JUST 301: Indigenous Peoples
- JUST 328: Race, Class and Justice
- JUST 331: Human Rights in Theory and Practice
- JUST 341: Gender and Justice

- JUST 385: Disability and Justice
- POSC 200: Global Politics
- SOCI 110: Social Issues in a Global Context
- SOCI 140: Microsociology: The Individual in Society
- WGS 200: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies
- WRTC 318: Intercultural Professional Communication
- WRTC 410: Sociolinguistics
- Any globally oriented course from one or more of these area studies:
 - [African, African American and Diaspora Studies](#)
 - [Latin American, Latinx and Caribbean Studies](#)
 - [Middle Eastern Communities and Migrations](#)
 - [Asian Studies](#)

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

NOTE: Prolonged intercultural experiences may qualify to substitute for one or both course electives, with the following guidelines:

- 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](#)).
 - Studying/volunteering abroad in these countries from one week to a summer may substitute for one course. You can complete this requirement by joining one of the [JMU's study abroad programs](#).
 - Experiences that last a full semester may substitute for both electives.
- Other intercultural experiences may qualify such as
 - helping new immigrants/refugees acculturate to life in the U.S. (Harrisonburg is a refugee resettlement city)
 - volunteering in the very diverse Harrisonburg City Public Schools
 - volunteering as a LINKer on the JMU campus, serving as an international ambassador
- Each distinct intercultural experience lasting at least forty hours may substitute for one elective.
- Please consult with the Peace Corps Prep Coordinator in the Center for Global Engagement to ensure that an optional intercultural experience qualifies as a substitute for intercultural course requirements.

***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 the [University Career Center](#)
2. Attend **InterviewPrep** or schedule a **Big Interview Practice Interview** at the [University Career Center](#)
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.