



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 it when completing your PC Prep application. **This guide aligns point-by-point with each section of the application.** You will need to document how you plan to fulfill each requirement.

1. Training *and* experience in a specific work sector

3 courses + 50 hours related experience

Leveraging practical knowledge and skills is central to on-the-ground international development work. Through PC Prep, you will begin to build a professional specialty, which should serve your career, even if you do not become a Peace Corps Volunteer.

You need to complete at least **3 courses** that align with a specific work sector. They do not need to come from your academic major or minor. With careful planning, fulfilling this requirement should fit within your normal course load. Many of the courses in the tables below are associated with a Pathways Concept Area. Use this information to simultaneously fulfill your Pathways requirements with courses satisfying your chosen PC Prep work sector. Courses that fit within Pathways Minors are also noted.

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.



If you intend to apply to the Peace Corps, the best way to ensure that you will be a strong candidate is to explore Peace Corps’ openings and identify the [types of assignments](#) that appeal to you (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/volunteer-openings). Review the positions’ required and desired qualifications and develop them up accordingly in your choice of courses and experiential requirements.

There are [six sectors](#) (www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/what-volunteers-do/) in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve. **Focus on one sector**, then complete at least three 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:

- Education
- English, including Linguistics

Recommended courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
ENGL 1504: Introduction to Linguistics	3
ENGL 1514: Language and Society	3
ENGL/WGS 3134: Gender and Linguistics	1A
EDCI 3024: Issues of Schooling in the US	3, 7
EDCI 2574: Social Foundations of Education	
EDEP 2374: Educational Psychology for PK-12 Teachers	
EDCI 4554: Educating Exceptional Learners Across the Lifespan	
EDCI 4734: Adolescent Literacy and Reading	
EDEP 3474: Principles and Practices in PK-12 Assessment	
EDCI 4724: Secondary School Teaching Methods I	
EDCI 4744: Secondary School Teaching Methods II	
ENGL 3134: Gender and Linguistics	*
SPAN 2774: Minority Languages in the Spanish Speaking Context	*
HD 1134: Introduction to Disabilities Studies	**

HD 1004: Human Development I – Childhood and Adolescence	**
STS 3284: Technology and Disability	**
RED 4664: Universal Design	**
HD 4714: Senior Capstone Seminar	**
ALCE 4244: Teaching Methods in Agriculture	
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	

* Counts toward Language Sciences minor

** Counts toward Disabilities Studies minor

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

- Teaching in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or tutoring capacity; the subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, disability education, drama, or a STEM subject
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

Field experience choices for the education track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Joseph Mukuni mjoseph7@vt.edu. Qualifying opportunities are available through VT Engage or may be independently chosen. Career and Professional Development provides a gateway 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 3 courses from one of the following areas:

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ○ Public Health | ○ Pre-Health Profession | ○ Water Quality or Sanitation |
| ○ Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise | ○ Biology | |
| | ○ Environmental Health | |

Recommended courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
EDCO 2004: Healthy Relationships	3, 7
GEOG 4074: Medical Geography	3
UAP 5324 / BSE 4394: Water Supply and Sanitation in Developing Countries	
CMST 4324: Issues in Health Communication	
PHS 4014: Public Health Program Planning and Evaluation	
PHS 4054: Concepts in One Health	
PHS 4054: Concepts in One Health	

PHS 2004: Introduction to Public Health	
PHS 3014: Introduction to Environmental Health	
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	

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

- Volunteer or work experience in such areas as HIV/AIDS/STD 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
- 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
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

Qualifying opportunities are available through VT Engage or may be independently chosen. Career Services can help you find appropriate internships. Public Health majors will undertake qualifying service learning experiences. Field experience choices for the health track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Sophie Wenzel swenzel@vt.edu.

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 | ○ Environmental Resources | ○ Biology |
| ○ Natural Resources | ○ Management | ○ Ecology |
| ○ Conservation | ○ Wildlife Conservation | ○ Geography |
| ○ Environmental Conservation and Society | ○ Sustainable Biomaterials | |
| | ○ Forestry | |

Recommended courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
GEOG 3104: Environmental Problems, Population, and Development	3
HIST 3144: American Environmental History	2, 3
STS 2454: Science, Technology, and Environment	2
GEOG 2004: Water, Environment and Society	3
FREC 2554: Leading Global Sustainability	2, 3
SPIA 1024: Community Service Learning	3
SPIA 2024: Community Systems Thinking	3

UH 2524: Topics in Natural Science and Global Citizenship	4
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	
FIW 2114: Principles of Fish and Wildlife Conservation	*
FIW 4114: Biodiversity Conservation	*
GEOG/WATR 2004: Water, Environment, and Society	**
ALS/WATR 4614: Watershed Assessment, Management, and Policy	**

* Counts toward Biodiversity Conservation minor

** Counts toward the Blue Planet minor

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
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping
- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

Field experience choices for the environment track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Randy Wynne wynne@vt.edu. Qualifying opportunities are available through VT Engage or may be independently chosen. Career and Professional Development provides a gateway 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:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| ○ Crop and Soil | ○ Entomology | ○ Animal and Poultry |
| ○ Environmental Sciences | ○ Agricultural Science | ○ Sciences |
| ○ Horticulture | ○ Agribusiness | ○ Biology |
| ○ Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science | ○ Agricultural and Applied Economics | |

Recommended courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
APSC 1454, 1464: Intro to Animal & Poultry Sciences	
CSES 2244: Agriculture, Global Food Security and Health	4

CSES 2444: Agronomic Crops	
CSES/FREC 4334: Agroforestry	
AINS/ALCE 2414: Identity and Inclusion in Agriculture	1a, 7
ENT 2254/2264: Bees and Beekeeping/Laboratory	
HORT 2184: Sustainable Agriculture Practicum	
ECON 2005: Principles of Economics	*
AAEC 1005: Economics of the Food and Fiber System	3, *
CSES 2244: Agricultural Global Food Security and Health	*
AAEC 3204: International Agricultural Development and Trade	*
CSES 3444: World Crops & Systems	*, **
ALS 2204: Introduction to Civic Agriculture	**
ALS 3404: Ecological Agriculture: Theory and Practice	**
ALS 4204: Concepts in Community Food Systems	**
ALS 4244: Global Food Security and Health Capstone	*
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	

* Counts toward the Global Food Security and Health minor

** Counts toward the Civic Agriculture and Food Systems minor

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
- Teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm
- Complete an extension workshop in beekeeping
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

Qualifying opportunities are available through VT Engage or may be independently chosen. For example, students may complete a study abroad course as part of their minor requirement and also use that for their field experience. Undergraduate research opportunities may also qualify. Career and Professional Development provides a gateway for [internship opportunities](#). Field experience choices for the agriculture track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Ryan Stewart ryan.stewart@vt.edu.

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:

- Sociology
- Psychology
- Human Development and Family Science

Recommended courses

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
HD 1004: Human Development I	3
HD 1134: Introduction to Disabilities Studies	2, 7
HD 2004: Human Development II: Adulthood and Aging	3
HD 2014: Integrative Health Practices	3, 7
WGS 1824: Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies	3
SPIA 2024: Community Systems Thinking	*
HD 3024: Community Analytics	*
SPIA 4784: Community Systems Capstone	*
ALCE 4884: Youth Program Management	
HD 1004: Human Development I – Childhood and Adolescence	**
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	

* Counts toward the Community Systems and Engagement minor

** Counts toward the Disabilities Studies minor

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

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs
- 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
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

Qualifying opportunities are available through VT Engage or may be independently chosen. In addition to regular service opportunities offered by VT Engage, VT Engage trains leaders for youth service trips. Career and Professional Development provides a gateway for [internship opportunities](#).

Field experience choices for the youth in development track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Tom Archibald tgarch@vt.edu.

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

- Business
- Public Administration or Nonprofit Management
- Mass Communications

Recommended courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
AAEC 1005: Economics of Food and Fiber Systems	
AAEC 3014: Analytic Methods in Applied Economics	
AAEC 3454: Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship	
AAEC 4323: Rural and Regional Development and Prosperity	
AAEC/FREC/WATR 4464: Water Resources Policy and Economics	
ECON 2005: Principles of Economics	3
HUM/RLCL/COMM 3204 : Multicultural Communication	3
IS 4014: International Development	*
MGT 3444: Multicultural Diversity in Organizations	3
BIT/MGT 2404: Multicultural Problem Solving and Analytics	*, 5
ECON 3034: Poverty and Discrimination	*, 7
MGT 4314: International Management	*, 7
MGT 4334: Ethical Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility	*
MKTG 4644: Marketing, Society, and Public Interest	*
SOC 2034: Diversity and Community Engagement	*,3
SOC/PSVP 3854: Globalization: Sociological Perspectives	*
SPIA 1024: Community Service Learning	*,3
SPIA 3554: Transdisciplinary Problem Solving for Societal Issues	*
SPIA 4464: Data and the Art of Decision-Making	*
AAEC 3204: International Agricultural Development and Trade	*
AAEC 3324: Environmental and Sustainable Development Economics	*
ECON 3004: Global Economic Policy	*
ECON 3024: Economic Justice	*
ECON 4124: Growth and Development	*

GEOG 2244/SPIA 2014: Sustainable Urbanization	*, 3
MGT 3074: Social Entrepreneurship	*
HTM 3484: Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism	*, 3
PSCI /GEOG/IS 2064: The Global Economy and World Politics	*, 3
PSCI/IS 4054: Seminar in Global Political Economy	*
GEOG/NR 1115: Seeking Sustainability I	**
GEOG/NR 1116: Seeking Sustainability II	**
GEOG/NR 4444: Practicing Sustainability	**
ENGL 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports	

* Counts toward the Global Business Practices to Improve the Human Condition minor

** Counts toward the Pathways to Sustainability minor

For students pursuing the full Global Business Practices Pathways minor, a capstone study abroad course (3954), independent study (4974) or undergraduate research (4994) may meet Peace Corps Prep requirements. See your Faculty Contact.

*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
- Complete a Virginia Cooperative Extension Summer Internship

In addition to regular service opportunities offered by VT Engage and internships arranged through Career Services, students may find their own opportunities. Career and Professional Development provides a gateway for [internship opportunities](#). Field experience choices for the community economic development track must be pre-approved by the Faculty Contact, Dr. Catherine Larochelle claroche@vt.edu.

**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.

3. 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 2000-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 2000-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 intend to serve in a country that speaks your same language, you can skip this requirement. See your Faculty Contact or the university Peace Corps Prep coordinator.

4. 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:

Take at least 1 of these core courses:

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
IS 1004 / PCSI 1004: Nations and Nationalities	3, 7
HUM/RLCL 3204: Multicultural Communications	3
SOC 2004: Social Problems	3, 7
SOC 2034: Diversity Community Engagement	3, 7
SOC 2054: Ethnography: Studying Culture	3, 7

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

Course Number and Title	Pathways Concept Area
AFST 1814: Introduction to African Studies	2
AFST/RLCL/WGS 2204: Race and Gender in Religion and Culture	2
AFST/HIST/IS 3864: Development and Humanitarianism in Africa	2
UH 2544: Topics in Social Science and Global Citizenship	3
ARBC 2774: Arab Culture and Civilization	2
ART 3054: Islamic Art and Architecture	2
HIST 1515: History of Africa	2
HIST/STS 2054: Engineering Cultures	2
RLCL 1904: Religion and Culture in Asia	2
RLCL 2324: Islam	2

With approval of your Faculty Contact, other courses may be taken to fulfill this requirement.

**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.

5. Professional and leadership development

Resume and interview support + leadership experience

Peace Corps service and similar international development work opportunities are highly professional and selective. Peace Corps 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 & Professional Development at Virginia Tech.
2. Attend a workshop or class on **interview skills** at Career & Professional Development at Virginia Tech.
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.



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Peace
 Corps

TEMPLATE STUDENT APPLICATION

Name: _____ Student ID: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Major(s): _____ Minors(s): _____

Expected Graduation (month and year): _____ Cumulative GPA: _____

1. Training and experience in a specific [work sector](#)

Please check the box of the sector in which you would like to serve:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth in Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Economic Development |

Note: Actual Peace Corps assignments are based on local needs, and thus may or may not align seamlessly with your qualifications. Flexibility is key to the Peace Corps experience.

(1) Coursework. List the number and name of 3 courses in this same sector that you plan to take, and the semester in which you plan to take them. (It is fine if you've already taken them.)

Note: The courses you include on this application may change, but it's good to have a plan.

1. Course: _____ Semester and year: _____
2. Course: _____ Semester and year: _____
3. Course: _____ Semester and year: _____

(2) Hands-on experience in that same sector (must total at least 50 hours). Describe what you plan to do:

2. Foreign language skills

Requirements depend upon desired Peace Corps volunteer placement site. (1) *Latin America/ Spanish-speaking countries* – two 2000-level courses. (2) *West Africa/ French-speaking countries* – one 2000-level course in any Romance Language. (3) *Everywhere else* – no explicit requirements, but language skills are a plus.

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

List the top 2 foreign language courses you plan to take:

Course 1: _____ Semester and year: _____

Course 2: _____ Semester and year: _____

Or describe your alternative learning process (e.g., native speaker):

3. Intercultural competence

List the core course and two approved electives you plan to take:

Core course: _____ Semester and year: _____

Elective 1: _____ Semester and year: _____

Elective 2: _____ Semester and year: _____

4. Professional and leadership development

1. **Professional resume feedback:** When do you plan to meet with Career and Professional Development for a one-on-one resume review? Month and year: _____

2. **Professional interview prep:** When do you plan to meet with Career and Professional Development for an interview workshop? Month and year: _____

3. **Describe a leadership experience that you intend to pursue:**

For example, leading a work or volunteer project, serving on the executive board of a student organization, or organizing a big campus event.

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Peace Corps Prep Coordinator

Date