

Peace Corps Prep Guide

UCEAP has partnered with the Peace Corps to offer a program that will prepare you for international development fieldwork and potential Peace Corps service. To meet the goals of the program, 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 and provides specific examples from your campus. **Use this guide to map out your UCEAP 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.** Relevant undergraduate coursework, training, and experiences completed prior to your application can be used to fulfill PC Prep requirements. Be sure to include them in your application.

1. Training and experience in a specific work sector

3 APPROVED COURSES + 50 HOURS RELATED EXPERIENCE + REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Leveraging concrete knowledge and skills is central to on-the-ground international development work. Through this Peace Corps 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.

Detailed below are [six sectors](#) in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve. Choose one sector to focus on and complete at least **3 courses** that align with that 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** at home or abroad in that same sector—preferably in a teaching or outreach capacity—and write a **reflection essay** (500 words minimum) about it. While you should include a description of your position and responsibilities, the majority of the essay should focus on how your experience prepared you for your chosen work sector. Your campus Peace Corps recruiter may be able to read it over and provide feedback.



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, then review the positions' required and desired qualifications and build them up accordingly. In the process, you should fulfill these PC Prep experiential requirements. Please 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.



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 or Linguistics
- TEFL/TESL
- Mathematics
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Any Physical or Biological Science

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

- APLX 135. Second Language Teaching
- EDUC 166. Technology and Education
- EDUC 185B. Introduction to Mathematics Education
- ENVS 177. Teaching Environmental Education
- PSYC 108. Educational Psychology

And **build 50 hours of related field experience** through an activity such as teaching in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or in a formal tutoring capacity. Teaching subjects may include English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

- Interning in a local K-12 school as part of UCSC's Cal Teach program
- Enrolling in Oakes 151A and B and serving as a mentor for the Corre la Voz program
- Teaching English to Thai school children as part of an internship when you study abroad at [Thammasat University](#) in Bangkok, Thailand
- Volunteering to teach English to Russian school children in St. Petersburg as part of the [Russian Area Studies](#) program

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:

- Nursing
- Nutrition or Dietetics
- Health Education
- Health Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Environmental or Sanitary Engineering

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

- BIOL 117. Global Health and Neglected Diseases
- BIOL 118. Pathogenesis: Molecular Mechanisms of Disease
- CMMU 160. Public Health
- METX 145. Medical Geology

And **build 50 hours of related field experience** through an activity such as volunteering or working 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. Other activities include health-related counseling or teaching.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Working as a resident advisor in a dormitory, as a peer nutritionist, or as a sexually transmitted infections counselor

Volunteering for the County of Santa Cruz's Community Health Education program

Participating in service learning in Oaxaca as part of the [Family and Community Health program](#) in Mexico

Interning with a public health NGO as part of the [Community Public Health program](#) at the University of Botswana



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.



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 3 COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Environmental Science
Natural Resources Conservation
Wildlife Biology
Natural Resources or Wildlife Management
Forestry
Biology, Botany, or Ecology
Earth Sciences

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

EE 180J. Advanced Renewable Energy Sources
ENVS 129. Integrated Pest Management
ENVS 145, Green Building Design
ENVS 160. Restoration Ecology
METX 144. Groundwater Contamination

And **build 50 hours of related field experience** through an activity such as educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, working on environmental campaigns, or providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management. Other activities include conducting biological surveys of plants or animals, gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Participating in the three-quarter IDEASS Program and plan, implement, and evaluate an interdisciplinary sustainable design project in the built environment for the Monterey Bay Region

Completing a capstone research project as part of the [Pacific Island Environmental & Community Health program](#) in the Solomon Islands

Conducting tropical biology research as part of the [Tropical Biology and Conservation program](#) in Costa Rica



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 3 COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Agronomy
Horticulture
Botany
Entomology
Agricultural Science
Agribusiness
Agricultural Economics
Environmental Science
Biology

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

CMMU 162. Community Gardens and Social Change
ENVS 130A. Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture
ENVS 138. Field Ethnobotany
ENVS 161A. Soils and Plant Nutrition
ENVS 170. Agriculture and Climate Change

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. Other activities include teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities and working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Interning at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the UCSC Farm
Interning for UCSC's Life Lab Garden Classroom
Interning with an agriculture-focused NGO in Accra while studying abroad at the [University of Ghana](#)



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 information technology.

IF YOU CHOOSE YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT, TAKE 3 COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Social Work
Counseling
Community Development
Family Studies
Human Development
Development Psychology

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

LALS 155. Latin American and Latino Youth Movements
PSYC 102. Adolescent Development: Adolescence into Young Adulthood
PSYC 106. Social and Emotional Development
SOCY 111. Family and Society

And **build 50 hours of related field experience** through an activity such as teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs. Other activities include planning, organizing, assessing community needs, counseling, and leadership, in areas such as education, youth development, health and HIV/AIDS, the environment, and/or business.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club of Santa Cruz

Interning full-time at a community development or children's rights organization as part of the [Semester in Mumbai with Internship program](#)



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 3 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

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

CMPS 119. Software for Society
ECON 136. Business Strategy
ECON161B. Marketing Research
ENVS 143. Sustainable Development: Economy, Policy, and Environment
LGST 167. Politics of International Trade

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 (including website design and online marketing). Other activities include starting and running your own business or other entrepreneurial activity, founding or leading a community- or school-based organization, and training others in computer literacy, maintenance, and repair.

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Volunteering as a social media coordinator for the Arts Council of Santa Cruz

Assisting an NGO with graphic design as part of an internship when you study abroad at [Fudan University](#)

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 Peace Corps Prep curriculum.

Peace Corps Prep minimum language course requirements align with those needed by applicants to the Peace Corps itself, which vary by linguistic region. This requirement can also be fulfilled by a letter of proficiency from a professor or a score of intermediate or higher on a placement test.

LATIN AMERICA: Individuals wanting to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must apply with strong intermediate proficiency. This typically means completing **one year of college-level Spanish**

WEST AFRICA: Individuals wanting to serve in French-speaking African countries should be proficient in French or Portuguese, usually through **one intermediate or higher 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 helpful to have taken at least **one foreign language class**.

3. Intercultural competence

ONE TERM ABROAD + REFLECTIVE ESSAY + 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 introspective courses and a term studying abroad 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.

Study abroad can be a beneficial precursor to service abroad in many ways. It can foster resilience, self-sufficiency, and global awareness and prepares you for the intercultural realities inherent to Peace Corps service. **Study abroad with UCEAP** for at least one term and write a **reflection essay**

(500 words minimum) on how living in and interacting with another culture has prepared you to build relationships and integrate yourself into a new community. Your campus Peace Corps recruiter may be able to read it over and provide feedback.

Take at least **one diversity and inclusion course** to help you increase cultural self- and other-understanding, building your 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).

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

- APLX 149: Inter-Cultural Communication
- ANTH 126. Sexuality and Society in Cross-Cultural Perspective
- CRES 100. Comparative Theories of Race and Ethnicity
- SOCY 145. Sociology of Masculinities

Take at least **two global or area studies courses** such as international development, area studies (i.e., Black studies, Chican@ studies, Middle East studies, etc.), the economics of poverty, peace studies, cultural anthropology, world literature, etc. Global/area studies course 2 can also be fulfilled by studying abroad for a term on a UCEAP program in a [country](#) that has at some point hosted Peace Corps Volunteers.

APPLICABLE COURSES AT UCSC:

- ANTH 130A. Peoples and Cultures of Africa
- ANTH 148. Gender and Global Development
- ECON 128. Poverty and Public Policy
- SOCY 167. Development and Underdevelopment



PEACE CORPS TIP

Prolonged intercultural experiences—such as 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 + ONLINE PRESENCE

Peace Corps service and similar international development work opportunities are highly professional and selective. PC Prep requires **four specific activities** that will strengthen your candidacy for the Peace Corps (or any other professional endeavor).

Have your **resume** critiqued by a career coach at and attend an **Acing your Job Interview workshop** at Career Services.

Complete at least one significant **leadership experience** (such as organizing a campus event, leading a work or volunteer project, or serving on the executive board of a student organization) and write a **reflection essay** (500 words minimum). While you should include a description of your leadership

activity, the majority of the essay should focus on how your experience has prepared you to partner with communities to make a difference. Your campus Peace Corps recruiter may be able to read it over and provide feedback.

Using your reflection essays and resume, develop an **e-portfolio** or **LinkedIn profile** to highlight your experience, skills, and qualifications in your chosen work sector.

Alumni Mentoring

Although not required, you are strongly encouraged to sign up for the UCEAP alumni mentoring program. You will be paired with an alum that is currently serving in Peace Corps or who is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear about their Peace Corps experience, ask for advice, and learn how they transitioned from Peace Corps to career.

If you are considering applying to Peace Corps, we suggest that you meet with UCSC's Peace Corps recruiter before you apply to discuss your application and any questions you might have.