

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 Peace Corps 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 Peace Corps 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 + REFLECTION 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.



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 Peace Corps Prep experiential requirements. Please note that 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 UPPER-DIVISION COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

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

EXAMPLES OF EDUCATION COURSES AT UCSD:

- CHEM 187. Foundations of Teaching and Learning Science
- EDS 115. Cognitive Development and Education
- EDS 128. Introduction to Teaching and Learning (Elementary School)
- LING 119. First and Second Language Learning: From Childhood through Adolescence
- MATH 121A. Foundations of Teaching and Learning Mathematics

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

- Volunteering in a local classroom as part of EDS 139
- 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 UPPER-DIVISION COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

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

EXAMPLES OF HEALTH COURSES AT UCSD:

- BIBC 120. Nutrition
- BIMM 124. Medical Microbiology
- FPMU 110. Health Behavior and Chronic Disease
- FPMU 130. Environmental and Occupational Health
- GLBH 181. Essentials of Global Health

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

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 at UC San Diego Medical Center in the doula program
- Volunteering as a Student Health Advocate for Student Health Services
- 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 UPPER-DIVISION 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

EXAMPLES OF ENVIRONMENT COURSES AT UCSD:

BIBC 140. Our Energy Future—Sustainable Energy Solutions
BIEB 176. Conservation and the Human Predicament
ESYS 103. Environmental Challenges: Science and Solutions
SIO 106. Introduction to Hydrogeology
PHIL 163. Biomedical Ethics

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Joining Muir Environmental Corps and volunteering in environmental activities
Interning at UCSD's Sustainability Office
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 UPPER-DIVISION COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

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

EXAMPLES OF AGRICULTURE COURSES AT UCSD:

- BIEB 126. Plant Ecology
- BIEB 128. Insect Diversity
- COMM 114J. Food Justice
- USP 124. Land Use Planning

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

- Volunteering with UCSD's student-run Compost Team
- Interning with an agriculture-focused NGO in Accra while studying abroad at the [University of Ghana](#)



YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

Empower the next generation of change makers. 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 UPPER-DIVISION COURSES FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Social Work
Counseling
Community Development
Family Studies
Human Development
Development Psychology

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT COURSES AT UCSD:

COMM 102D. Practicum in Child Development
EDS 111. Child, Family, and Community Partnerships with Schools
HDP 122. Social Development
PSYC 101. Developmental Psychology
USP 134. Community Youth Development

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Volunteering for Education Corps at a service site in the San Diego community

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 UPPER-DIVISION 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

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COURSES AT UCSD:

ANSC 108 Tourism and Global Culture
ECON 116. Economic Development
MGT 147. Not-For-Profit and Government Accounting
MGT 167. Social Entrepreneurship
USP 171. Sustainable Development

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. This requirement should be fulfilled by one experience (not different activities with multiple organizations).

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE ACTIVITIES AT YOUR CAMPUS AND WITH UCEAP:

Volunteering to help local small businesses at Accion San Diego with either the Marketing & Outreach or Entrepreneurial Training & Assistance committee

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 language proficiency exam.

LATIN AMERICA: Individuals wanting to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must apply with strong intermediate proficiency. This typically means completing **three quarters or two semesters of intermediate-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 + REFLECTION 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.

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).

EXAMPLES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COURSES AT UCSD:

- SOCI 119. Sociology of Sexuality and Sexual Identity
- ETHN 119. Race in the Americas
- CGS 114. Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class
- COMM 108D. Disability

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.

EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL AND AREA STUDIES COURSES AT UCSD:

- SOCI 182. Ethnicity and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America
- TWS 132. Literature and Third World Societies
- POLI 145B. Conflict and Cooperation in International Politics
- ANSC 165. Contemporary South Asia



PEACE CORPS TIP

Prolonged intercultural experiences—such as volunteering abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees acculturated 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. Peace Corps 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 advisor at Career Services and register for a coaching session with Communication and Leadership to practice your **interview skills**.

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.

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 UCSD's Peace Corps recruiter before you apply to discuss your application and any questions you might have.