



# Master's International Student Handbook

Your guide to the education adventure of a lifetime.



## **Master's International General Timeline**

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Steps to Complete</b>
Upon arriving on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact your MI campus coordinator</li> </ul>
During the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss ideas for potential MI project with the MI campus coordinator and your academic advisor</li> <li>• Communicate with the Peace Corps MI placement liaison</li> </ul>
9 to 12 months prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete medical exams and turn in kit</li> <li>• Contact MI placement liaison to discuss placement preferences and timeline</li> </ul>
3 to 6 months prior to departure and once medically cleared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive invitation to serve overseas from Placement staff</li> <li>• Receive the invitation packet with the Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) and information packet</li> <li>• Call the Placement staff within 10 days to accept or decline your invitation</li> <li>• Give copies of your VAD to your MI campus coordinator and academic advisor</li> <li>• Give your in-country address to your MI campus coordinator</li> <li>• Complete passport/visa application</li> <li>• Send updated résumé and aspiration statement to Peace Corps country desk contact</li> </ul>
6 to 8 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust your proposed academic project plan with your academic advisor based on your country assignment and information in the VAD</li> </ul>
3 to 5 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive staging event reporting instructions</li> <li>• Complete staging event registration forms</li> <li>• Call Sato Travel at Peace Corps headquarters to arrange travel from home to staging</li> <li>• Check with student loan lenders on deferment eligibility, complete forms, and bring forms with you to the staging event for certification</li> </ul>
2 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive e-ticket confirmation to your staging city</li> </ul>
Other steps to consider before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for an absentee ballot</li> <li>• Finalize personal financial matters (e.g., arrange for someone to have power of attorney)</li> <li>• Arrange to maintain state residence</li> </ul>



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# Master's International

## Student Handbook 2006—2007

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## Introduction

Welcome to Peace Corps Master's International! As a Master's International (MI) student, you can look forward to unique personal and academic experiences while serving the global community. With your skills and personal commitment to promoting the goals of the Peace Corps, you are not just an average American—you are someone who is going to make an extraordinary contribution by teaching skills to people in a developing community. But, while you will undoubtedly have an impact on others during your service as a Volunteer, your host community will probably have an even greater impact on you.

This handbook will help prepare you to be a Master's International Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV). In it you will find information on preparing to go overseas for your Peace Corps service, as well as preparing for your return home. You will find out when you can expect to hear from the MI staff in Washington, DC (see Appendixes A and B), and when you should take the initiative to contact the various Peace Corps offices (see Appendix C). Good luck with your academic studies. We look forward to hearing from you soon!



*Some days it just happens. Yesterday it happened. You never really know when or where it is going to happen; I guess that is one of the reasons that you have got to just be here.*

*Abdou, Khalidou's eldest son and probably my best friend here, has been building a house. To build a mud house you make the bricks (the brick holes became our fish ponds), build the walls, and then slap a roof on the thing and you're done. Well Abdou's house has been waiting for the roof part for over a month now. Lots of houses are in a stage of half construction here, but it being the third of July and the rains on the way, it isn't a very good idea to have a mud house without a roof. Yesterday Abdou got his roof and I got to witness something that warmed my heart and almost moved me to tears.*

*When I got to Khalidou's home he was busy mixing a 6' x 20' x 2' batch of dirt, straw, and donkey excrement. Wet it down, turn it, and repeat—tough work. Abdou was out in the bush cutting down halatropis trees. Halatropis is a broad-leaf weed tree that grows all over the Guidimakha. After all the mud was moist, Khalidou said we were done until the afternoon when we would throw it up on the roof.*

*Late morning turned into lunch time. Abdou had returned from the bush. He had cut three loads of halatropis and the pile was about 10' wide by 6' high. After lunch Abdou made tea and I asked what the afternoon held. He said that after tea we would throw all the halatropis up on the roof and then all the women of the neighborhood would come and throw the mud up on the roof.*

*After the second cup of tea we started working. Abdou and his cousin were up on the roof and Khalidou, Achita, all the kids, and I started throwing branches up to Abdou. The roof is probably 10' to 12' high, in no means impossible, but after 30 minutes of chucking branches up, you're pretty tired. After about 45 minutes we were done with the halatropis.*

*As if there was some grand schedule to all of this, right when we finished the halatropis the men of the neighborhood started showing up. They would go to the mud pile and take a melon-size chunk of mud, roll it on the ground two or three times to give it some shape and then toss it up. It was amazing, men and women together; there were 50 people there. You couldn't fit 50 people in Abdou's new house! The women were laughing and smiling. The young boys were bickering over the Brazil-France soccer game. The men were making balls of mud and loading them for the women to carry. The little kids were playing like frogs trying to jump from one side of the yard to the other without being run over. And then there was the Peace Corps Volunteer, taking it all in.*

*Back home, in the States, I have helped a few people put roofs on their homes. It may be a rural thing, but when you know someone is putting a roof on, you grab your hammer and head over. It was funny to see that even though the materials are a lot different here, the sentiment is the same. Communities build roofs. When all the work was done (maybe it took an hour or so to toss all the mud up) everyone left as quickly as they came. Instead of beer for the workers Achita made a 20 liter batch of zrig (sweetened, watered-down milk). A cup a zrig, a friendly wave, and the compound was empty.*

*Walking through the neighborhood later that night with Abdou, I relished the idea that each roof was a community undertaking. Sometimes you just have to be there at the right time, sometimes it just happens—through all the cynicism sometimes you hit it at the right moment and you remember why you came to Africa, why you did Peace Corps, and how happy this place really makes you.*

**Brock Emerson  
MI RPCV Mauritania, 2004–2006  
Michigan Technological University  
Civil and Environmental Engineering**



## Arriving on Campus

*I participated in the Master's International program through Virginia Technological University. I spent one year at school, taking courses in urban planning and international development. Then I worked as a Peace Corps municipal development Volunteer in Sacapulas, El Quiché, Guatemala. There, I was able to apply much of what I had learned in that first year of graduate school to my project of establishing a municipal planning office in the town.*

*The basic idea of setting goals, breaking them down into their component objectives, and then identifying the strategies to meet those objectives was something that translated very well. Now, back at school, I bring a lot to the program because I have two years of on-the-ground experience in international development work and in urban planning. Not many master's students can make that claim.*

**Doug Appler**  
MI RPCV Guatemala, 2000–2002  
Virginia Technological University  
Urban and Regional Planning

### What to Do When You Arrive on Campus

The time has come for you to embark on the first leg of your Master's International experience. You may be both excited and nervous about what lies ahead, but you can take pride in knowing that you have begun your classes in preparation for making a difference in the lives of others as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

You will soon be occupied with academic work, and it may be difficult to focus your attention on your Peace Corps application. Don't fall into this trap! The Peace Corps aims to invite MI participants to an assignment by the start of the last term on campus (the second semester for some programs) so that they can begin exploring more about the country and culture where they will be serving. To be sure that you are on track for an early placement in a Volunteer assignment, work actively with the staff at Peace Corps headquarters. Keep the Peace Corps informed of your academic progress by sending updated transcripts and contact information to the MI placement liaison, as well as advising the liaison of any new skills or experiences you have gained. This will help the MI placement liaison qualify you for an appropriate Peace Corps assignment.



## **Important Medical Information**

It is important that your Peace Corps medical reference form be turned in by the time you arrive on campus as these forms should be submitted 9 to 12 months before the end of your last term on campus. For example, submit medical forms in September if you are planning to leave the following summer (see Appendix F). If any portion of your medical information kit is missing, including forms, request them immediately by contacting the Office of Medical Services (OMS) at headquarters at 800.424.8580, ext. 1500. Also, you should contact your doctor (including your optometrist or ophthalmologist if you wear contact lenses or glasses) and dentist as soon as possible to schedule any necessary appointments.

It is important to respond in a timely manner to requests from OMS for any additional medical information (see Appendix F). If your application is missing medical, legal, or reference information, your placement will be delayed. The purpose of medical screening is to ensure that the Peace Corps can provide for each applicant's medical needs in his or her country of service. We suggest contacting OMS at the number above to verify that all your forms have been received.

If you have any questions about what you can do to facilitate the application process, call the Peace Corps MI program staff at Peace Corps headquarters at 800.424.8580, extension 1812.

## **Contacting your MI Campus Coordinator**

Your university has chosen an MI campus coordinator who is your on-campus program contact. The MI campus coordinator assists MI participants in the Peace Corps application process by serving as a liaison with the Peace Corps headquarters when necessary. Coordinators have many responsibilities not only to currently enrolled students, but also to applicants and to Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in the field. Many MI coordinators are faculty members or administrators who balance their MI role with other job responsibilities.

## **Your Responsibilities to Your MI Campus Coordinator**

You should meet your coordinator as early as possible in the fall term. As an MI participant you should

- Inform your coordinator of your latest campus address, e-mail address, and phone number.
- Schedule regular meetings with your coordinator to discuss your academic plans.
- Ensure that your Peace Corps application has been submitted and is up-to-date.
- Inform your coordinator if any changes or delays occur during the placement and medical process.
- Maintain regular contact with your coordinator while overseas on assignment.



## During the Academic Year

### Working With Your Faculty Advisor

During your first term on campus, in addition to working with your MI coordinator, you will also need to work closely with your faculty advisor. Your MI curriculum has been designed to meet the academic requirements of your degree and to provide you with the technical skills that will prepare you for your Peace Corps assignment. Some flexibility, in the form of electives, has been included in many programs to allow you to gain more in-depth knowledge in areas of particular interest to you.



### Preparing for Your Master's Project

Throughout your time on campus, you may work with your MI campus coordinator and faculty advisor to lay the groundwork for a proposed master's project. This project may take the form of a professional paper, project paper, thesis, portfolio, or another form of professional work. Remember, you will be going overseas as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and your Peace Corps assignment will be your primary responsibility. MI alumni who have successfully completed their projects have found ways during their service to integrate their Peace Corps responsibilities with their academic requirements. This takes creativity, persistence, and flexibility. You must fill any academic requirements in concert with, and complementary to, your Peace Corps assignment. You will decide on your final master's project after you arrive at your post. Once you decide on your project, you must obtain a signed statement from your country director indicating that your project has been approved (see Appendix E). You can send or fax a signed copy to Peace Corps headquarters:

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
Domestic Programs  
Master's International  
1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
Fax: 202.692.1421

Again, you must be flexible when preparing your master's project. You will not know your specific site assignment until you have completed pre-service training in your country of service. Placement locations vary considerably within a country, and the type of master's project that is possible may be determined in part by the resources available at your site. As an MI student, you should be prepared to adapt your master's project to your specific site. Most MI participants discover that their project ideas change once they arrive overseas and start their Peace Corps assignments.

## **Determining Your Academic and Communication Requirements**

Invariably, communication will be affected by your site placement. While you will have access to the local postal system, you should not count on having regular e-mail access. (See the section entitled "Preparing to Go Overseas: Communication While Overseas.") You should work out a tentative, flexible communication schedule with your MI campus coordinator and faculty advisor that can be adapted to either postal or e-mail availability once you are actually in-country.

It is important to understand the specifics of your particular program and know what is expected of you. While you are preparing to go overseas, keep these questions in mind:

- How will you communicate (e.g., e-mail, fax, letters, telephone)?
- How often are you expected to be in contact with your MI campus coordinator and faculty advisor during your Peace Corps service?
- Do you need to submit reports quarterly or biannually?
- When do your MI campus coordinator and faculty advisor need to receive a signed consent form (Appendix E) allowing you to conduct your academic project?
- Is any other form of communication required?
- What degree requirements will the completion of your project meet?
- How will you share your work with counterparts and staff in your host country? In what language?
- How and when will you submit your final work to your advisor?

When considering the integration of your master's requirements and your Peace Corps project, consider the following project guidelines for Peace Corps Volunteers:



### **Guiding Principles for Peace Corps Volunteer Projects**

*Volunteer projects are designed to:*

1. Increase the local community's abilities and skills in specific, sustainable projects.
2. Address the expressed needs of those who have limited access to resources and opportunities.
3. Seek sustainable results that complement other development efforts.
4. Engage local participants as partners in developing, implementing, and assessing the project.
5. Promote women's participation in development to increase their local status and opportunities.
6. Place Volunteers at the local level where needs occur.
7. Retain qualified and available local workers.
8. Use Peace Corps Volunteers who have the qualifications best suited to a country's needs.
9. Use local Peace Corps staff and resources to train and support Volunteers successfully toward the completion of their assignments.
10. Create partnerships with host agencies and communities that can support the project and the Volunteers.

## Three MI Project Examples

### Development Administration

*Serving as a Master's International PCV presented challenges I did not anticipate. The theoretical knowledge I gained in graduate school (development administration at Western Michigan University) caused me to analyze development projects that are implemented in Macedonia with a scrutiny that instantly makes me see the flaws as much as the benefits. Donor agencies can be irresponsible in project implementation and many programs promote donor dependency rather than sustainability. In many of the projects, monitoring is pitiful and evaluation frequently consists simply of budget reconciliation. Had I not studied development administration so intensely before coming here, I might not have noticed so keenly the problems that I see every day.*

*The benefit (but also sometimes the detriment) of serving as a Master's International PCV is that instead of enthusiastically attempting to assist with projects, an MI PCV may constantly be the thorn, the naysayer. Many of us have been trained to spot the faults in project design and implementation and now we want to correct them before those projects head down the path to disaster. This likely causes frustration for our host country national counterparts who are eager to start a project.*

*The cultural immersion aspect of my service in the Peace Corps is the most valuable facet of my time here, in part because I plan on pursuing international development after the Peace Corps. This relates immediately to my standing as an MI student because although in graduate school we learned that culture should always be a relevant factor in designing projects, I see that it is frequently neglected in implementation, at least here in Macedonia. I know that in the future when I am working in development, I will remember my experience at the grassroots level here in Macedonia with host country nationals, and will use the lessons I learned to design and implement more culturally sensitive projects.*

*As a Masters' International PCV I studied development administration—how it should be done and how it shouldn't be done. Then I came here and realized that how it should be done is much harder than the books and journal articles proclaim. Because many of us MI PCVs have a knowledge of development more richly cultivated than other PCVs, we feel the frustration of poorly designed projects and our role in them more acutely. But that only makes our time here more valuable for our future endeavors.*

**Elizabeth (Beth) Wager  
MI RPCV Macedonia, 2003–2005  
Western Michigan University  
Development Administration**

## Natural Resources

*I participated in the Master's International program because I was fully committed to making a new career in international development and I recognized the importance of having a graduate degree and related field experience. The combination of Peace Corps and the MI program seemed like the most pragmatic means to obtain that in the given amount of time. Also, a friend of mine named Glen Hill (Thailand 1988–90) had recently completed most of the requisites for the program and strongly encouraged me to pursue it. Glen was the first MI student at the University of Montana (UM) and I was the second. I was officially the first to actually complete the entire program with a degree from UM.*

*My MI experience was a mixture of frustration and triumph. I was the first UM student to actually enter the program on a pre-Peace Corps basis and at that time there was very little coordination between the Peace Corps and UM and very little information available. So a handful of professors and I hammered out a loose course outline and I dove in. Other than some confusion about UM fees (they wanted to charge me tuition for every semester while I was in the Peace Corps), everything worked out fine in the end. I finally wrapped it all up in 1996.*

*Since leaving the Peace Corps I have held some very interesting and challenging positions with nongovernmental organizations in protected areas management and sustainable agriculture/land use on a grassroots level. I am currently employed in East Timor by the National Cooperative Business Association as a project advisor. I plan and supervise projects in cooperative agroforestry, cattle production, organic coffee, and organic vanilla. And I am very, very happy.*

**Patrick Shane McCarthy**  
**MI RPCV Ecuador, 1993–1995**  
**University of Montana**  
**Natural Resources**  
**Crisis Corps Volunteer, Nicaragua 1999**

## Education

*From June 1998 to July 2000, I served in Bulgaria, a small, former communist Eastern European country. I taught English and did some teacher training at the English language high school in the fourth largest city in the country. Being a Peace Corps Volunteer is a scary thing. People join the Peace Corps to “save the world.” But it is so much more than that. Don’t get me wrong—it is fun and interesting and life-changing. But it is also frustrating and maddening, and it often challenges you in ways you could never, ever in a million years predict.*

*When I arrived in Bulgaria, I didn’t speak any Bulgarian. The first three months I was there, I lived with a host family who didn’t speak English. Needless to say, I learned Bulgarian pretty quickly by living with them, and by the end of my two years, was very proficient. But that first night with my host family, I wasn’t quite sure what I’d gotten myself into. The Peace Corps had told them that I had food allergies, but not what I was allergic to, so trying to explain to them what I couldn’t eat turned out to be a comedy of errors.*

*The memories I’d rather forget are largely eclipsed by what I’d rather remember, like cross-stitch and conversation over tea and homemade goodies with my friends—both Bulgarian and American—and watching the sun rise over the Black Sea from my apartment.*

*When I’d been in Bulgaria for about nine months, NATO started dropping bombs next door in Serbia and I found myself under scrutiny for my citizenship and supposed allegiances. To the Bulgarians, it wasn’t NATO dropping bombs, it was the U.S., and as U.S. citizens, we were warned to stay out of the public eye so that we wouldn’t be the targets of violence.*

*As we celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peace Corps, it is important to remember that not all Americans who go abroad through government programs go with guns and tanks. Some go in peace with only the skills they have in their heads and hands and come back richer for having given of themselves without asking for anything in return. This, I believe, is what Kennedy intended when he created this organization, and it is what I feel about my own experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer.*

**Allison Rainville  
MI RPCV Bulgaria, 1998–2000  
Monterey Institute of International Studies  
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program**

## Working With Peace Corps Offices

As you proceed through the Peace Corps application process, please communicate by e-mail with the Peace Corps MI program staff in the Office of Domestic Programs. Refer to the contact list and timeline in the back of this handbook (see Appendixes B and C). Contact the Peace Corps MI program staff when you arrive on campus for your first term of study.

You should establish and maintain a complete application file containing photocopies of all documents you send to the Peace Corps. You may also wish to keep a record with dates and the names of your telephone contacts with Peace Corps staff. Ask those providing your references to send you a copy of the reference forms before sending them in.

### During the Academic Year, You Should Contact the Peace Corps Placement Office

Be proactive to obtain the required clearances and to get your invitation to serve when—and possibly even where—you wish to go. Respond quickly and completely with requested application information. All documentation—medical, legal, and reference—must be in your file so that your application can be processed.

The primary responsibility of the Peace Corps MI program staff is to work with the MI campus coordinators and monitor the administration and management of MI. Feel free to contact the Peace Corps MI program staff for guidance, information, or status checks at any time (see Appendix C).

#### Remember to:

- Confirm your date of availability.
- Submit a copy of your latest transcripts.
- Confirm the status of your medical application.
- Submit your new address, e-mail, and phone number.

### What Happens to Your File

When your file arrives at the Peace Corps, the information takes two routes: Your medical file is processed through the Office of Medical Services (OMS), and your application and legal documents are processed through the Placement Office. MI applicant files receive priority in both offices. However, remember that your file must be complete to be reviewed. It is your responsibility to provide all your references, legal documentation, and medical forms in a timely fashion (see Appendix F). If something happens that affects your availability date (e.g., you need to stay on campus for an extra semester), you should contact the Peace Corps MI placement liaison immediately. Not all assignments begin at regular intervals during the year, and an extra semester on campus could mean a three- to nine-month wait for an assignment.

## A Note about Two-Year Programs

Participants in MI programs that require two years of course work prior to Peace Corps service should complete their references and legal documentation during their first year of study and medical forms 9 to 12 months before expected departure for Peace Corps service. Dental forms should be completed 6 to 9 months before expected departure.

Monthly contact is not necessary; however, when there is a change or update of information, we ask that you contact the MI placement liaison six months prior to your departure date.

## How Placement Decisions are Made

One of the most pressing concerns for Peace Corps applicants is knowing where they will serve. The Placement staff works to find the best available assignments for cleared applicants, matching a country's request for Volunteers with nominees' skills and personal qualifications. Medical limitations are taken into consideration during the placement process. Your preferences will be strongly considered in this process, but a high degree of flexibility on your part is needed. Countries do not have programs in all areas and request Volunteers at different times of the year. The final match is designed to ensure a successful fit for you and the assignment in the country. After you have cleared the medical, legal, and placement departments, Placement staff will extend an invitation to you for a specific overseas program (see Appendix A).



*Use your life to the fullest extent possible. Use your knowledge and experience to improve the lives of those who have been given no voice in this world. As a Peace Corps Master's International Volunteer, I have been given the opportunity to do just that, and I would do it all again in a heartbeat.*

**Jolie Dennis**  
**MI RPCV Togo, 2003–2005**  
**RPCV Cameroon, 1994–1998**  
**Tulane University**  
**Public Health**





# Preparing to Go Overseas

## Your Invitation Packet

Once the Placement Office has found a match between a country's request and your skills, you will receive your invitation to serve. You will have 10 days from the mailing date of the invitation to respond. The invitation packet includes a Volunteer Assignment Description to help you decide whether or not to accept the invitation, plus information about the country to guide you in preparing for departure, if you accept.

Upon accepting your invitation to serve, you will be asked to send an updated, detailed résumé and a one- or two-page aspiration statement to the e-mail address provided in your information packet. You should send this information within two weeks of accepting your invitation. Because Peace Corps staff at your country post do not receive a copy of your application, it is important to use the aspiration statement to describe your personal and professional goals and objectives for serving in the Peace Corps.

Be sure to state that you are an MI student and emphasize your current skills and technical expertise, other special strengths (e.g., group facilitation skills, HIV/AIDS training, nongovernmental organization development, gender issues, youth development), and the courses you have completed in graduate school. This information is helpful as posts develop a site placement for you.

Once you accept the invitation to serve as a Volunteer, you will be sent more information about your host country and a description of your pre-service training. The packet will also include reporting instructions for your mandatory pre-departure orientation (staging) with the date and location in the United States, along with a list of recommended items to pack and a bibliography of useful country-specific reading materials. The Peace Corps travel office, Sato Travel, will make arrangements for your travel to your staging site.

## Communication While Overseas

Volunteers communicate with family and friends by regular international mail or—where available—by e-mail. As a Master's International Volunteer, you may want to remind your academic advisor that international mail can take much longer than domestic mail and may not be reliable. Your mailing address for your training period will be included in your information packet. Please provide the address to your academic advisor and the MI campus coordinator. Be sure to send them your permanent address after you have completed training and moved to your assignment site.

Your welcome packet should include information concerning communication in your country of service. Prior to departure, it may be useful to research affordable phone cards and international calling plans that include your country of service. This will make those first phone calls much easier. Also, many Volunteers who have access to e-mail have found that setting up a Web site is a convenient way to share experiences and communicate with friends, classmates, and family.

While many Volunteers find communication to the United States virtually as easy as at home, this is not the case for everyone. Access to, and usage costs of computers, e-mail, or the Internet vary considerably among countries and even within the same country. Peace Corps staff is generally supportive of an MI Volunteer's need to

communicate with academic advisors, but it may not always be possible to use a computer at the local Peace Corps office.

Many Volunteers bring their own laptops. However, personal ownership of computers does not exempt Volunteers, who represent both the Peace Corps and the United States in their host communities, from conformance to agency policies governing computer use.

The following is an excerpt from the *Peace Corps Manual*, section 543: Use of IT Systems by Volunteers, Trainees, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers:

Volunteers who create their own Web sites, or post information to Web sites that have been created and maintained by others, should be reminded that, unless password protected, any information posted on the Internet can be accessed by the general public, even if that is not intended. Volunteers are responsible for discussing the content in advance with the country director to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with this general guidance as well as any country-specific guidance.

The thoughtful and accurate insights that you convey in your communications with others can contribute substantially to bringing to the U.S. a better understanding of other countries. However, given the broad access to Volunteer-posted material on the Web, both in your country of service and elsewhere, you should remain culturally sensitive regarding the material you post to any Web site. People in host countries and members of the U.S. public may make inferences about the Peace Corps or the Volunteer's country of service based on the material a Volunteer posts to a Web site. Volunteer-posted material on the Web should not embarrass or reflect poorly on the Peace Corps or the countries where Volunteers serve.

Lastly, as a safety precaution, do not include information on your Web site about your precise living location or those of other Volunteers, or information about the location of events to be attended by a large number of Volunteers.

## **Deferring Your Student Loans**

You may have student loans from your undergraduate studies or new loans to cover the costs of graduate school. Because your Peace Corps service will take you out of the United States for an extended period, make arrangements to settle personal and financial affairs before reporting for service. Failure to do so may result in a delay or withdrawal of your invitation. It is important that you discuss with your academic advisor how you will defer your loans while you are in the Peace Corps. When deciding how to manage your student loans, consider whether:

- You will be continuously enrolled as a full-time student.
- Your lender will allow you to defer payments during Peace Corps service.
- You can try to defer your loans based on “economic hardship” status.

Speak with your academic advisor about what your student status will be while you are a Volunteer, and then talk to your student loan lenders. In all cases, we strongly recommend that you keep copies of all paperwork and give power of attorney to a relative or friend to handle your loan deferments during your Peace Corps service.

Although the Peace Corps does not grant loan deferments, it will provide you with certification of your status as a Volunteer at the staging event (pre-departure orientation). The number of deferment forms you will need depends on the number and types of loans you have. Contact your lender for the loan deferment forms. You should bring these forms with you to your Peace Corps staging event. One copy of your deferment form(s) will be certified at your Peace Corps staging event for you to send to your lender(s). Subsequent deferment forms will be certified by Peace Corps staff in your country of assignment and then sent to your lender(s).

Whoever will be handling your affairs stateside (such as your parents) should know that you'll be getting a deferral. In addition, your power of attorney should monitor your mail for any loan materials that may be delivered while you are overseas. Your power of attorney may also send loan deferment forms for certification to:

Peace Corps  
Certifying Officer  
Volunteer Financial Operations  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526

For more information about federally guaranteed student loans, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 800.4FED.AID, or search online via [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).

## **Filing Taxes**

The Office of Financial Operations distributes W-2s every January directly to Peace Corps Volunteers overseas. If you designate a power of attorney and file the documentation with the Peace Corps, the Office of Financial Operations will automatically send a duplicate W-2 to the person designated with the power of attorney. Your individual situation and the amount of income earned for that tax year determines whether or not you must file taxes.

## Arriving Overseas

### Pre-Service Training

The knowledge and skills you have gained since beginning the Master's International program will be factors in determining your Peace Corps assignment. Nevertheless, there is still more to learn. You will complete an in-depth pre-service training program upon arriving in your country of service to prepare you more specifically for your assignment and life there. Your graduate education has been good preparation for your assignment, but pre-service training enhances what you have already learned

and includes language, technical, health, safety, and cross-cultural components. After successfully completing the pre-service training program, which lasts 8 to 12 weeks, you are sworn in as a PCV.



*Pre-service training is now complete and I am very happy with the results. A foundation has been laid upon which I can begin my work with a certain confidence. The training staff deserve to be commended for an excellent program and we are all well-content to find ourselves here in such an exciting post, equiped and ready for work.*

**Luke Barrett**  
PCV Madagascar, 2006–2008  
Michigan Technological University  
Environmental Engineering



## Your Site Placement

The Peace Corps MI program staff notifies your associate Peace Corps director (APCD) and country director (CD) before you arrive that you are a Master's International participant. The APCD will be your program director, and it is up to you to discuss your additional MI academic objectives with him or her early in your training. Some APCDs have had experience working with MI candidates, others have not. Take the initiative in meeting with your APCD to discuss the nature of your particular MI program. As you go through training, you will be evaluated on the skills you bring with you, your ability to acquire the host-country language and to function in the culture, and your ability to adapt to your new environment. Staff make specific assignments based upon the needs of the site and your perceived skills and interests.

Remember: You must receive signed approval letter from the CD for any academic work you will conduct (see Appendix E). It is up to you to adapt your overseas academic requirements to the specifics of your Peace Corps assignment and the conditions of your site.

## Upon Arrival at Post

Once you arrive at your post, it will be helpful for both the CD and APCD to know what technical skills you bring to your assignment and how you might be of assistance to other Peace Corps Volunteers and national counterpart staff at post. Upon arriving at your post, you are encouraged to:

- Describe your experiences, talents, and interests to the CD and APCD, indicating how you anticipate using your academic skills in your placement assignment.
- Ask about the country project plan and inquire about your role in the development of your community and local project.
- Ask about technical training you will receive before and during service.
- Ask where you might be able to find appropriate resources that would help in implementing your local project.
- Negotiate the terms of your assignment relating to duties and mutual expectations pertaining to you and your supervisor.
- Help the CD and APCD determine the best way for you to use your skills.
- Ask about protocol and working styles of counterparts and supervisors.
- Ask about written guidelines for effective and appropriate workplace protocol.
- Ask for assistance with cross-cultural transition, as needed.
- Ask about written reporting requirements and timelines.
- Ask for help in setting your personal and professional goals and objectives for your placement.

We encourage you to keep in touch with your faculty advisor(s), the MI university coordinator, and MI staff. We value your feedback and welcome hearing about your experiences while you serve as a PCV.

## Returning Home

### Before You Leave Your Post

Several weeks before your Peace Corps service ends, you will participate in a close of service (COS) conference with your Volunteer group to discuss the procedures to be completed in the final weeks of service, as well as how to prepare for life after the Peace Corps. As an MI participant, you will also need to plan the next steps to fulfill your academic requirements and receive your degree.



### Issues to Consider

- Have you compiled all the information you need for your academic research?
- Do you need to set up a graduate review committee?
- Have you determined how you will share your work with counterparts and staff in your host country? What language will you use?

### If You Plan to Travel before Returning to the United States

- Will travel plans affect your academic standing?
- Will travel plans affect your student loan deferments?
- If necessary, have you informed your MI campus coordinator of your travel plans?

### Completing Your Academic Requirements

Once you are back in the United States, contact your MI campus coordinator and faculty advisor to confirm when and how you will be submitting your MI project. This can vary greatly from program to program. Some programs require participants to return to campus for another term to complete their degree; others require participants to submit a portfolio, thesis, or professional project. Be sure you understand the specifics of your program and know what is expected of you.

The Peace Corps MI program staff also needs to see your work. Please submit a copy of your project or thesis to the MI program at Peace Corps headquarters. Student projects help build the Peace Corps knowledge base and serve as an educational resource for current and future MI students. Information can be sent to [microproject@peacecorps.gov](mailto:microproject@peacecorps.gov).

## When You Receive Your Degree

Remember to notify the Peace Corps MI program when you receive your degree. We maintain a database of MI alumni and need your help to make sure our information is correct. We are always in need of returned Peace Corps Volunteers willing to talk with new MI participants and with people interested in the program. Information can be sent to [mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov](mailto:mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov).

As a good business practice, be sure to thank your community as well as your graduate school advisor. Your community has played a significant part in the development of your project and it is important to thank all who have been a part of its success. Indicate what you did, why it was important, and the effect that it had. Leave copies of your work with all who have requested it and all who would find it useful. Your area of study may prove to be a good foundation for collaborative work in the future.

Your valuable experience and insights are a great resource for future MI participants, your faculty, your department, and the Peace Corps. Be sure to keep in touch with your campus contacts, the Peace Corps MI program staff, and your local Peace Corps recruiting office. We often call upon RPCVs to help us in promotional activities, to review MI-related materials or publications, or to assist with other Peace Corps activities. Your feedback helps us to continually improve this important program.



## Conclusion

Thank you for being a part of the Peace Corps and the Master's International program. You are making an invaluable contribution to your community and to the world. Your efforts are commendable and we hope you will have an amazing experience, one that is academically, professionally, and personally enriching. We wish you the best of luck in your studies and in your time overseas and we look forward to hearing about your experiences as an MI student and as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Please keep in contact with us by e-mail: [mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov](mailto:mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov).



*As a Master's International student I came here to teach people about nutrition and health, but in the process I have learned about the complexities of life—solidarity, companionship, and a new meaning of time.*

Kate Reinsma  
MI PCV Cameroon began service in October 2005  
Colorado State University  
Food Science and Human Nutrition





# *Appendix A*

## Peace Corps Application Process and Deadlines

	What you do	What Peace Corps does
<b>Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill out application</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview</li> <li>• Submit a copy of the acceptance letter from the MI university to recruiter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn in reference letters, transcripts, skill addenda, fingerprints, etc.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominate applicant to program</li> <li>• Review health status report</li> <li>• Send medical kit</li> </ul>
<b>Placement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete medical exams</li> <li>• Turn in medical kit 9–12 months prior to estimated departure*</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical review and qualification</li> <li>• Legal review and qualification</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn in any extra documents requested (e.g. legal documents, transcripts, résumé) approximately six months prior to estimated departure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement suitability review and qualification</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation to an assignment</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept or decline invitation within 10 days of receipt</li> <li>• If accepting, complete passport/visa applications, aspiration statement, and updated resume</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send aspiration statements and résumés to post</li> </ul>
<b>Staging</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send staging kit to applicant one month before departure</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete necessary documents in staging kit</li> <li>• Set up air arrangements with Peace Corps travel office</li> <li>• Meet training class for two-day staging in the U.S.</li> <li>• DEPART FOR YOUR NEW HOME!</li> </ul>	

\* Most MI candidates apply to the Peace Corps long before they plan to depart. Because medical clearance expires two years after the physical, and dental clearance expires one year after clearance, it is often best to submit the medical kit 9 to 12 months before estimated departure for the Peace Corps. However, if you have more complex medical issues, you might want to send the kit in sooner. Make sure all reports are included and all questions are answered! Incomplete medical kits are a major factor in applicants not being cleared in time for their assignments.

## *Appendix B*

## Master's International General Timeline

Timing	Steps to Complete
Upon arriving on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact your MI campus coordinator</li> </ul>
During the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss ideas for potential MI project with the MI campus coordinator and your academic advisor</li> <li>• Communicate with the Peace Corps MI placement liaison</li> </ul>
9 to 12 months prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete medical exams and turn in kit</li> <li>• Contact MI placement liaison to discuss placement preferences and timeline</li> </ul>
3 to 6 months prior to departure and once medically cleared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive invitation to serve overseas from Placement staff</li> <li>• Receive the invitation packet with the Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) and information packet</li> <li>• Call the Placement staff within 10 days to accept or decline your invitation</li> <li>• Give copies of your VAD to your MI campus coordinator and academic advisor</li> <li>• Give your in-country address to your MI campus coordinator</li> <li>• Complete passport/visa application</li> <li>• Send updated résumé and aspiration statement to Peace Corps country desk contact</li> </ul>
6 to 8 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust your proposed academic project plan with your academic advisor based on your country assignment and information in the VAD</li> </ul>
3 to 5 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive staging event reporting instructions</li> <li>• Complete staging event registration forms</li> <li>• Call Sato Travel at Peace Corps headquarters to arrange travel from home to staging</li> <li>• Check with student loan lenders on deferment eligibility, complete forms, and bring forms with you to the staging event for certification</li> </ul>
2 weeks prior to departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive e-ticket confirmation to your staging city</li> </ul>
Other steps to consider before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for an absentee ballot</li> <li>• Finalize personal financial matters (e.g., arrange for someone to have power of attorney)</li> <li>• Arrange to maintain state residence</li> </ul>

## *Appendix C*

## Peace Corps Contact List

Call Peace Corps toll free at 800.424.8580

[www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

### Master's International

MI staff

ext. 1812 or 202.692.1812

### Placement Office

Legal questions

ext. 1846 or 202.692.1846

### Medical and Dental Clearance

Office of Medical Services

ext. 1500 or 202.692.1500

### Loan Deferment Questions

Office of Financial Operations

ext. 1784 or 202.692.1784

### Passports/Visas/Travel Arrangements

Sato Travel Office

ext. 1170 or 202.692.1170

### Staging Questions

Staging Office

ext. 1865 or 202.692.1865

### Regional Recruiting Offices

800.424.8580

Your call will be directed to your local recruiting office. Or call direct using the phone numbers below.

**Atlanta** 404.562.3456  
(AL, FL, GA, MS, SC, TN, PR, Virgin Islands)

**Boston** 617.565.5555  
(MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)

**Chicago** 312.353.4990  
(IL, IN, KY, MI, MO, OH)

**Dallas** 214.253.5400  
(AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)

**Denver** 303.844.7020  
(CO, KS, NE, UT, WY)

**Los Angeles** 310.356.1100  
(AZ, Southern CA)

**Minneapolis** 612.348.1480  
(IA, MN, ND, SD, WI)

**New York** 212.352.5440  
(CT, NJ, NY, PA)

**San Francisco** 510.637.1520  
(HI, Northern CA, NV)

**Seattle** 206.553.5490  
(AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)

**Washington, DC/Rosslyn, VA**  
703.235.9191  
(DC, DE, MD, NC, VA, WV)

## *Appendix D*

## Frequently Asked Questions – Master’s International

### What is Master’s International?

The Master’s International program is a partnership between the Peace Corps and select institutions of higher education throughout the United States. This partnership enables people to integrate a Peace Corps Volunteer experience into a master’s degree program. Fifty institutions now offer an opportunity to earn an advanced degree while gaining international experience. Master’s International students earn master’s degrees by completing approximately one year of intensive on-campus study, then serving for two years in the Peace Corps in an assignment related to the course of study. These programs are designed to help individuals develop skills that are in high demand among countries requesting Peace Corps Volunteers.



Prior to the beginning of Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps provides three months of intensive technical, language, and cross-cultural training. This training, combined with two years of work in an assignment, provides an unparalleled practical experience. Upon completing the program, MI graduates possess both excellent academic credentials and international field experience—an attractive combination for prospective employers.

### What Will I Do as a Peace Corps Volunteer?

MI students are placed in projects relevant to their course of study. The many projects designed by MI students have included:



- a public health project in Madagascar that introduced improved nutrition and hygiene practices to schoolchildren and their mothers;
- an agricultural project in Nepal that introduced more efficient crop production, pest management, seed production, and storage techniques to increasing both food production and income;





- a forestry project in Paraguay that promoted the integration of forestry with current agricultural practices, working with farmers to help increase farm income and conserve local natural resources;
- a business project in Kenya that helped entrepreneurs gain practical business skills, including inventory management, accounting practices, marketing, and accessing credit; and
- a project in Kyrgyzstan that taught English to secondary students and introduced new teaching methods to local English teachers—improving their English skills in the process.

## **What Are the Benefits of Being a Master’s International Student?**

The foremost benefit of the Master’s International program is that you will gain both a master’s degree and two years of international experience upon completing the program. In addition to receiving excellent training and practical experience, Master’s International students receive several benefits from the Peace Corps, including:

- transportation to and from the country of service;
- living and housing expenses;
- language, cross-cultural, and technical training;
- full medical and dental coverage;
- vacation time and allowance;
- cancellation or deferment of certain government education loans;
- a readjustment allowance of approximately \$6,000 given at completion of 27 months of service (can be used to defray tuition costs);
- career counseling and support; and
- noncompetitive eligibility for federal government jobs for one year after completing a full term of overseas service.

All participating Master’s International schools offer academic credit for Peace Corps service. In addition, several schools provide scholarships or tuition waivers for these credits. Master’s International students at some universities can also compete for research or teaching assistantships. These benefits are unique to each school.

## **When Will I Receive My Peace Corps Assignment?**

While you are completing your coursework, your Peace Corps application will be kept active with the Peace Corps Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Placement Unit in Washington, DC, which is responsible for assessing and placing applicants in specific

projects. Peace Corps host countries submit requests for Volunteers at least six months prior to the scheduled starting date of training. Placement staff will select a project that most closely matches your technical and language skills.

As you begin your academic studies, you are encouraged to contact the MI placement liaison to advise him or her of your academic progress and to verify the completion of your Peace Corps application. The MI placement liaison will note any interests or project focus you may have. Note that placements can be made only where Volunteers with specific skills have been requested. The more flexible you are about your assignment, the more satisfied you will be with your overall experience as a Master's International student.

### **What Determines the Degree Programs Offered Through Master's International?**

Degrees are offered in areas of study where the Peace Corps has sufficient need for Volunteers and has received host country requests.

### **Where Might I Serve in the Peace Corps?**

The Peace Corps will extend a service invitation to you approximately four to six months before the date you indicate you will be available for Peace Corps training. The invitation will specify both a country of service and a project assignment. There are many factors involved in making a placement, including the selection criteria set by the countries, your language skills, and possible medical issues. While you are encouraged to express your preferences regarding geographic region and the reasons for those preferences, it is not always possible for the Peace Corps to invite you to a specific country or project.

### **How Long Do I Serve in the Peace Corps?**

Peace Corps Volunteers serve for 27 months. This includes three months of technical, cross-cultural, and language training that takes place in your country of service prior to beginning work on your project. MI graduates typically say that it takes at least one year simply to get adjusted, learn the language, and establish the necessary credibility in the host community. We encourage you to be patient with this process and with yourself—the results are worth the wait.

### **As a Master's International Student, Will I Be Treated Differently From Other Peace Corps Volunteers?**

You will have the same responsibilities as other Peace Corps Volunteers. You will need to explain your status as an MI student to the Peace Corps staff in your country of service and discuss with them ways in which you can approach a study project in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner. The Peace Corps MI program staff can support you in preparing for this aspect of your Peace Corps service.

### **I Already Have a Master's Degree. Can I Get a PhD through Master's International?**

Master's International does not currently provide an opportunity to earn a doctoral degree.

## **How Is This Different From Entering Graduate School and Peace Corps Separately?**

As an MI student, you earn academic credit for your Peace Corps service. In some cases, the school will waive the cost of these credits. You will have the benefit of your faculty advisor's technical expertise and support as you identify and address areas of need overseas. In addition, you will return to the United States with two years of degree-related professional international experience with a highly regarded organization—the Peace Corps.

## **Does the Peace Corps Provide Financial Support to Master's International Students?**

The Peace Corps does not provide scholarships to Master's International students. However, some student loans can be deferred or cancelled in connection with your service. All costs associated with your Peace Corps experience are covered by the Peace Corps, including transportation, medical care, and living expenses. In addition, the Peace Corps provides a readjustment allowance of approximately \$6,000, which is paid at the end of your service. Most schools provide students with an opportunity for research or teaching assistantships, scholarships, or tuition waivers to offset the cost of credits earned while in the Peace Corps.

## **What Happens If I Don't Complete My Peace Corps Service?**

You will need to contact the university and your MI coordinator to determine how the early termination of your Peace Corps service will affect the completion of your master's degree.

## *Appendix E*

Dear Country Director,

The bearer of this letter is a Peace Corps Master's International (MI) Volunteer. Current memoranda of cooperation signed with national universities participating in the MI program require that MI Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) receive approval from post staff to conduct an academic project while serving. Academic projects may range from studies directly related to the student's primary Peace Corps assignment to topics developed from secondary projects, or even to research conducted during a student's own personal time. MI PCVs understand that they might have to adapt their overseas academic requirements to the specifics of their Peace Corps assignment.

We encourage you and your staff to become familiar with the MI PCV's area of study by meeting with the Volunteer and discussing the nature and objectives of his or her graduate assignment. By opening the avenues of communication between the MI PCV and your staff, we hope to minimize any misunderstandings that may arise and encourage the sharing of information that may be of benefit to the post, the host country, and the MI PCV.

Research projects that involve human subjects must be screened through a university's institutional review board and follow federal human subject research guidelines to ensure that the safety and privacy of host country nationals are protected. Universities also monitor the research project for academic quality and appropriateness.

The Peace Corps staff's responsibility is to ensure that an MI PCV's project does not interfere with his or her assignment responsibilities and that safety, medical, and security concerns are not compromised.

For our records, the MI program would appreciate your signature at the bottom of this letter acknowledging your approval for the MI PCV to conduct his or her academic project. Please make copies of this letter for your records and for Peace Corps headquarters and return the signed original letter to the MI PCV.

Should you have any questions regarding the Peace Corps MI program, feel free to contact [mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov](mailto:mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov). Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Master's International Staff

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By signing below, I give my permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to work on his/her MI academic project. This project must not interfere with his/her primary responsibilities as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Signature of Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return a signed copy to: Master's International, Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters, 1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20526. You may also fax a signed copy to 202.692.1421.

## *Appendix F*

## Important Medical and Dental Information

### The Medical Process

The information provided in this section is designed to help you complete the medical phase of your application process as effortlessly as possible. According to the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services (OMS), many applicants omit required information, and this delays the clearance process for everyone. Since some symptoms or conditions must be considered together, your medical clearance can be completed only when all necessary reports, exams, and lab work are received. Some files may have had a lengthy review before they are recognized as incomplete. Please ensure that all information on your medical and dental examinations is complete and documented on the appropriate forms. This includes the results from your lab work, all required signatures, dates, and physician and dentist license numbers.

The checklist in your medical packet will help you to prepare a completed medical kit and expedite your medical clearance. Please use it before you send your examination results and other medical information to OMS for medical review. If your forms are incomplete, they will be returned to you. Should new or additional information be needed, we will request it as soon as possible.

The steps outlined below are designed to help you organize and complete your medical and dental process. Please follow them carefully.

1. Read the entire medical kit completely and thoroughly.
2. Make appointments with your doctor and dentist after reading and understanding the kit and requirements. Complete your medical and dental examinations as soon as possible.
3. Please ensure that:
  - Your doctor responds to and completes every section of the *Report of Physical Examination* (PC-1790-S) and supplemental forms, if applicable.
  - Any supplemental forms for evaluation (by a specialist) other than your doctor have been completed and signed.
  - Your *Report of Physical Examination* is signed or co-signed by a licensed medical doctor (MD) or doctor of osteopathy (DO).
  - Your dentist has completed all required sections of the *Report of Dental Examination* (PC-1790).
  - Your optometrist or ophthalmologist completes and signs the *Eyeglasses Prescription and Measurement* (PC-116) form. Even if you wear contact lenses, you must bring two (2) pairs of eyeglasses with you.

4. Write your name and social security number on all examination forms, as well as on all laboratory reports, diagnostic results, or other documents you send to us.
5. Keep a copy of all forms and reports in case they are lost en route to OMS.
6. Mail all your completed forms, including your *Eyeglasses Prescription and Measurement* form (if applicable) and the reimbursement forms, in the envelope provided.

The physical exam for Peace Corps is good for *two* years from the date the exam is signed by the examining physician. The dental exam is good for *one* year from the date of signature by the examining dentist. Because MI applicants are normally nominated *at least* one year before their actual departure, it may be tricky deciding when to begin! Completed medical and dental exams for MI applicants are prioritized and reviewed quickly by Peace Corps' screening team. *We strongly encourage MI applicants to complete the medical forms quickly and correctly!*

Because the medical and dental exams are reviewed separately, applicants may opt to submit the medical and dental exams at separate times. If an applicant submits medical exams that meet our guidelines, our staff can grant *provisional medical clearance*. A provisional medical clearance allows applicants to be formally invited to a Peace Corps MI program *with the stipulation and understanding that the dental exam must be submitted to OMS (and dental qualification be granted) at least 30 days prior to the staging event.*

## Medical Reimbursement

The Peace Corps will partially reimburse medical expenses that you may incur in connection with your Peace Corps application. The fee schedule below shows the maximum rates.

<b>Medical Reimbursement Fee Schedule</b>	
<b>Medical Examination &amp; Lab Work</b>	
Maximum allowed for all	
Females under 50:	\$165
Females 50 or older:	\$290
Males under 50:	\$125
Males 50 and older:	\$175
<b>Dental Examination &amp; X-ray</b>	
Maximum allowed for all applicants:	\$60
<b>Eyeglass Prescription &amp; Measurement (if required)</b>	
Maximum allowed for all applicants:	\$12



<b>Financial help with your expenses for your medical, dental, and vision examinations will be provided in one of three ways.</b>	
Pay Applicant	You may make appointments (with your medical providers), pay all costs, and submit a copy of the provider's receipt for the services for which you are seeking reimbursement.
Pay Federal Facility (contact OMS if using this option)	You make an appointment for your examinations at a federal facility. These facilities (listed in your telephone directory under the United States Government [Blue Pages]) include Veterans Affairs medical facilities and all Department of Defense medical facilities. Services at a federal facility are provided at no charge to you; the Peace Corps will reimburse these facilities directly. However, since your ability to get an appointment in these facilities is based on space available, this option may delay your processing. An authorization letter, not included in your medical kit, is required for this option. You will need to call the Office of Medical Services at 202.692.1500 for this authorization letter.
Pay Provider	You may submit the unpaid bill and request the payment be sent to the provider. Note that the Peace Corps will pay your provider(s) only up to the maximum amount indicated on the fee schedule.

OMS does not require that you receive immunizations in advance, so do not incur such expenses. OMS only requires a documented immunization history (section IX on your Report of Medical Examination). The Peace Corps will provide you with any immunizations you need at your staging or during your in-country pre-service training. Please bring a copy of section IX from your exam forms to your pre-departure staging.

Your financial forms are processed separately from your medical forms. Claims are generally paid within 30 days of receipt.

### **Dental Examination**

Peace Corps Volunteers serve in countries where the quality and availability of dental facilities are frequently limited. It is vitally important for all Volunteers (at the beginning of their service) to be:

- free of oral diseases and related causative conditions;
- free of oral infections or contagions that might endanger the Volunteer or others; and

- free of any related oral condition that may interfere with job performance or require treatment (such as impacted wisdom teeth and improperly fitted prostheses).

In summary, the Volunteer should be able to serve in the Peace Corps for at least two years with no reasonably foreseeable dental problems. The Peace Corps will reimburse the applicant up to a total of \$60 for a dental examination and laboratory and diagnostic tests. The Peace Corps does not reimburse for dental treatment.

The dental examination done for your Peace Corps application must include either a mounted full-mouth series (18 films) or a panorex with four (4) bitewing films, and a complete chart of the applicant's teeth on *Report of Dental Examination* (PC-1790).

### **Eyeglasses Prescription**

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, you must bring two pairs of glasses with you to Peace Corps service. To ensure that the Peace Corps can replace your glasses if they are lost or broken while you are overseas, please have your optician or optometrist complete the *Eyeglass Prescription and Measurement* form (PC-116) provided in your medical kit. This form will be used by the Peace Corps to replace lost or broken glasses. It is not meant to be used to obtain the two pairs of glasses you must bring with you to staging.

The Peace Corps strongly discourages the use of contact lenses while in service overseas. Lens cleaning and sterilization supplies are not readily available and are not stocked by the Peace Corps medical units. The water supply in many countries is contaminated and infection is a very real hazard. The Peace Corps does not supply or replace contact lenses. Remember: even if you presently wear contact lenses, you are required to bring two pairs of glasses with you. This form must be completed even if you only wear corrective lenses part-time or have them prescribed and do not wear them.

The maximum amount that the Peace Corps will reimburse applicants for eyeglass examination and measurement is \$12. This fee covers all laboratory and diagnostic tests. The Peace Corps does not pay for treatment.

## Frequently Asked Questions – The Medical Process

This helpful information is also included in your medical kit. Please review these questions *before* calling OMS. However, if you need clarification or have additional questions, OMS can best serve you from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. (EST). Call 800.424.8580, ext. 1500. Feel free to call OMS for any specific questions not covered in this section.

### **Do I have to go to a federal medical facility or may I go to a private physician or student health service for my medical exam?**

You may go to any of these facilities. You will be responsible for paying any portion of the bill in excess of the amount noted on our fee schedule. A federal medical facility is a Veterans Administration clinic/hospital or a Department of Defense medical treatment facility outpatient clinic/hospital. Services at these facilities are provided as a courtesy from one federal agency to another. Access to these facilities depends on the facility, the services it can provide, and its particular priorities. You (not the facility) must request an authorization letter from OMS prior to scheduling an appointment with a federal facility. To request the letter, please call 800.424.8580, ext. 4047. The federal facility, in most cases, will bill the Peace Corps directly.

### **When will my physical examination results expire?**

Your physical examination results expire two years from the date of the examination. Before you depart overseas, OMS will ask you to update the office about any medical events that may have occurred since you were medically qualified for Peace Corps service.

### **Can my examination be done by a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner?**

Yes. However, the examination form must be co-signed by a medical doctor or a doctor of ophthalmology, including his or her medical license number and state.

### **I had laboratory and/or diagnostic testing done a few months ago. Do I need to repeat these tests for my physical examination?**

Under many circumstances, the Peace Corps will accept laboratory and/or diagnostic tests that are dated within six months of the date your physical examination is signed (unless otherwise specified). These include:

- Pap smear
- Mammogram (50 and over)
- Electrocardiogram (EKG) (50 and over)
- Blood, stool, and urine tests
- Tuberculin skin tests (PPD or TB)
- HIV and blood typing
- Dental exam

### **If I've had a physical examination done in the last few months, can I substitute it for my Peace Corps physical examination?**

Yes. You may use a physical exam performed within the last year, but the accompanying medical information must be within six months of the date of the exam. All items on the forms must be completed.

### **Do I have to submit my dental X-rays with my dental examination?**

Yes. X-rays are required to obtain dental clearance, and these are sent overseas as part of your Peace Corps medical record.

### **Will the Peace Corps offer me an invitation to serve if I have not been dentally cleared?**

Yes. Although you are not dentally cleared, Peace Corps can offer you a provisional medical clearance, and you can be invited to a specific country project.

### **If I can still be invited, what are the consequences of not being dentally cleared?**

The Peace Corps will not release your airline ticket to attend your staging event until you have been dentally cleared.

### **How soon before my staging must I be dentally cleared?**

Ideally, you should be cleared 30 days before your staging event. However, if special circumstances warrant it, the Peace Corps will allow you to be dentally cleared less than 30 days before your staging.

### **Will the Peace Corps pay for my dental treatment before I go overseas?**

No, you are financially responsible for any dental treatment required prior to going overseas.

### **When will my dental examination results expire?**

Dental examination results are good for one year. After one year, you will need to have a dental checkup and bitewing X-rays done. After two years, the Peace Corps requires a completely new dental examination be done with full mouth X-rays.

### **Whom can I contact about other dental questions?**

If you have any questions concerning your dental status or administrative issues, you can call our dental screening assistant at 800.424.8580, ext. 1507. The dental screening assistant is available Monday through Friday during normal business hours. If, after consultation with your dentist, you do not understand what treatment you need, you can speak with our dentist at 800.424.8580. The dentist is available on Monday and Wednesday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) and on Friday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. (EST).

## **Does the Peace Corps pay for the additional medical reports it requires beyond the basic medical/dental examination?**

The Peace Corps fee schedule allows only for reimbursement at the specified established rates, even though the medical/dental expenses you incur may be more.

## **What assistance does the Peace Corps provide to applicants who cannot afford the required dental treatment before entering the Peace Corps?**

The Peace Corps cannot offer reimbursement for any restorative treatment(s) you may require for dental clearance. You may be able to make arrangements with your dentist to accept monthly allotments from your Peace Corps readjustment allowance once your Peace Corps service has begun. Call the Volunteer Financial Operations division for more information at 800.424.8580, ext. 1770.

## **What immunizations do I need to obtain before I go overseas?**

Do not obtain any immunizations for Peace Corps service. The Peace Corps will provide you with all required immunizations at the start of your Volunteer service. Section IX of the *Report of Physical Examination* form (PC-1790) asks only for your immunization history. If you have records of previous immunizations, bring these with you to your medical examination so your doctor can verify and record the information on the examination form. Please bring these records with you to your pre-departure orientation staging. If you are allergic to any immunizations, you must inform us on your medical history and/or examination form. The Peace Corps will not reimburse you for any immunizations you receive prior to service.

## **I am missing some forms from my medical kit. How do I obtain them?**

If your medical kit appears to be missing a specific form or forms needed to complete the medical/dental process, request those forms by calling 800.424.8580, ext. 4047. If you are leaving a voice-mail message, please provide the following information, and the documents will be sent to you automatically via the forms request box on the automated menu.

- Name (spell your last name, please)
- Social security number
- Daytime telephone number
- Fax number (if requesting fax transmission)
- Address (if you cannot receive a fax)

## **What kind of health insurance coverage will I have in the Peace Corps?**

The Peace Corps is self-insured. It provides a comprehensive health program to trainees and Volunteers from the time they depart for staging until the time they complete Peace Corps service. The Peace Corps health benefits program is recognized as a group health plan under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This means any period that you were covered under this plan is recognized by a future employer under its health plan.

At the completion of Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps will provide you with one month of paid medical insurance called CorpsCare<sup>®</sup>. You have the option of continuing this coverage or obtaining coverage through a different insurance company. Applicants accepted for Peace Corps service who have a preexisting condition or are at least 50 may wish to consider keeping their current medical insurance if they believe they will have difficulty obtaining health insurance upon their return from the Peace Corps.

At the completion of Peace Corps service you will be issued a certificate of insurance, which may allow you to participate in your next employer's group health insurance without exclusion for preexisting medical conditions.

### **What forms do I include in the envelope provided by the Peace Corps?**

As an applicant receiving a medical kit, you are provided either a FedEx envelope or a first class U. S. Postal Service envelope. Both are pre-paid. You may submit your physical, dental, eye, and reimbursement forms together in the envelope that the Peace Corps provides. Please note:

- We encourage those applying as couples to submit their medical and dental information together in one envelope.
- The Peace Corps provides each applicant (receiving a medical kit) one pre-paid envelope.
- If an applicant receives a FedEx pre-paid envelope, the air bill has the account number for the Peace Corps embedded in the barcode. All you need to do, once you are ready to submit your exam forms, is drop the envelope off in any FedEx drop box.
- First class U. S. Postal Service envelopes can be dropped off in a mailbox clearly marked U.S. Postal Service.

## *Appendix G*

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# Peace Corps Notice of Privacy Practices

*THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.*

This Notice describes what the Peace Corps does to protect your medical information, and how we use it. Because there are several laws and policies that govern the Peace Corps on this subject, it is particularly important that you read this Notice carefully. This Notice will tell you about the kinds of information we collect about you, how we use it, the information we must or may disclose, and what rights you have. We are required by law to protect the privacy of your medical information, and we may use and disclose such information under certain circumstances. We are also required to provide you this notice of our duties and practices.

## **What kinds of medical information will the Peace Corps collect about you?**

Over the course of the Peace Corps application, service, and post-service process, we collect various types of medical information from various sources, including you, your doctors and other health care professionals, Peace Corps medical officers, and other Peace Corps health care professionals and consultants. Protected health information may include, but is not limited to, general physical and mental health care and treatment history and records; information about past, present, or future physical or mental health conditions or treatments; lab results; X-rays; and pharmacy and dental records.

## **How does the Peace Corps use your medical information?**

The Peace Corps may use the information to determine your eligibility for Peace Corps service.

If you are selected for Peace Corps service, we may use your health information for placement purposes, and to arrange for and provide medical care and treatment for you overseas and in the U.S. We may use the information to arrange for payment for such care and treatment. We may also use it in connection with the operation of the Peace Corps medical services program, such as ensuring that the quality of care being provided is appropriate; for legal review; and for audit, compliance, and training purposes. In general, only those parts of the agency involved in these activities will have any access to your medical information.

## **What laws and policies govern the Peace Corps' use and protection of your medical information?**

The Peace Corps takes its responsibilities to protect the confidentiality of medical information very seriously. As a federal government agency, the Peace Corps is subject to the Privacy Act, which sets out the terms for using and sharing information about you that is kept in personally identifiable systems of records, including medical records. The Peace Corps also has a specific policy to protect the confidentiality of medical records. And, for medical information in the U.S., but not overseas, the Peace Corps is subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This notice reflects the impact of those laws and policies.

## **To whom are we required to disclose your medical information?**

- As a general matter, to you when you request it. The process for requesting your information is discussed below.
- To the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in connection with its performing a HIPAA compliance review.



## When *may* we disclose your medical information without your express permission?

Under HIPAA, we are permitted to disclose medical information for the following purposes. In some circumstances, the Privacy Act may limit such disclosure.

- To those who need to know in connection with your medical care and treatment, such as physicians, other medical officers, and consultants.
- To those who need to know for purposes of payment. The Peace Corps pays for certain evaluations, treatments, and other health-related services you may receive.
- To those who need to know for health care operations, such as assessing and improving the quality of the Peace Corps medical program; providing training; detecting and preventing fraud, abuse, and misrepresentation; ensuring legal compliance; and cost management.
- When disclosure is required by law.
- For certain public health activities, such as notification of communicable diseases; or to prevent or control disease, injuries, or child abuse and neglect.
- To health oversight agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration or the Peace Corps Inspector General.
- For judicial and administrative proceedings, if sought through a court order, or in response to a subpoena of which you have been given appropriate notice.
- To law enforcement officials for certain purposes, including in connection with search warrants, to report a crime, to help identify or locate someone, or in emergencies.
- To appropriate authorities to report abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.
- To coroners, medical examiners, and funeral directors.
- To facilitate organ donation.
- For approved research purposes.

- To prevent a serious threat to health and safety.
- For national security activities and protection of the President.
- For workers' compensation purposes.

## What may we disclose only with your authorization?

Other uses of your medical information require a written authorization from you. You may revoke such an authorization by notifying us in writing. Please note that any such revocation cannot apply to any information that was disclosed prior to receiving the revocation.

## What rights do you have relating to your medical information?

- You have the right to review and get a copy of medical information in your medical record. To do so, you will need to complete a *Peace Corps Authorization of Release of Information*. You may request it by mail at the address below, or you may call 1-800-424-8500 ext. 1500 to request a copy. You can send it to Peace Corps, Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters, 1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20526, Attn: Medical Records Manager, or if you are a Volunteer overseas, under the Privacy Act you can provide it to your Peace Corps Medical Officer at post. We will then let you know when and how you can review or get a copy of your record. We have the right under HIPAA and the Privacy Act to limit your access to some or all of your medical records. If any records are not disclosed, we will tell you why in writing and let you know how you can appeal the decision.
- You have the right to request that information in your medical record be amended. You will need to explain in writing the amendments that you are asking for. We will respond promptly and in writing. If we agree, we will make amendments. If we disagree with your request, we will tell you why in writing, and let you know how you can appeal the decision.

- You are entitled to a paper version of this Notice on request.
- You have the right to choose how we provide medical information to you. You may ask us to send information to you at a certain place, such as at your work address, or in a certain manner. We will do so if we reasonably and legally can.
- You have the right to ask us to limit our use or disclosure of your medical information, but we do not have to agree to your request.
- You have the right to ask us for a list of disclosures we make of your medical information. The list will not include disclosures for treatment, payment, or health care operations purposes; disclosures to you or your representative; disclosures that you authorized; or disclosures for disaster relief, national security or intelligence purposes.

We are required to comply with the provisions of this Notice while it is in effect. We reserve the right to modify this Notice. We reserve the right to make the revised notice effective for medical information we already have about you as well as for information we receive in the future. We will provide notice of

revisions on the Peace Corps website, and make reasonable efforts to provide notice to individuals as well.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding this notice or want to lodge a complaint about our privacy practices, please let us know by writing to: Peace Corps, Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters, 1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20526, Attn: Medical Records Manager.

You may also contact the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with complaints or concerns. They can be contacted at 1-800-368-1019 or by mail at 150 S. Independence Mall West, Suite 372, Public Ledger Building, Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

*Effective: September 2004*

## *Appendix H*

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# Authorization for Peace Corps Use of Medical Information

*This authorization permits the Peace Corps to use my protected health information to determine my eligibility for the Peace Corps and as necessary for administration of the Peace Corps program. Without a signed authorization, the Peace Corps cannot process my application.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize that:

Please print or type name

- A. All health information I provide to the Peace Corps or that is provided by anyone who has provided health care services or treatment to me, consulted on such services, or otherwise has health care information responsive to the information requests of the Peace Corps, including my response to the Health Status Review, and any follow-up health information requested by and provided to the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services relating to me prior to my being sworn in as a Peace Corps Volunteer (including, but not limited to, information about my prior physical and mental health history, my current health status, and possible future care and treatment) may be disclosed to the following people:

Peace Corps staff, including in the Office of Medical Services, Office of Special Services, Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Office of Safety and Security, Office of General Counsel, appropriate regional operations offices, Peace Corps medical officers, country directors at overseas posts, and any other Peace Corps staff or contractors who have a need to know the information to perform their duties,

for the purposes of making a determination of my medical or other eligibility for Peace Corps service and of placement/assignment.

- B. If I am accepted for Peace Corps service, the information listed above will become part of my Peace Corps health record. All information in my Peace Corps health record, and any other personal health information relevant to me that is provided to the Peace Corps by me or any health care provider or other person, may be disclosed to Peace Corps staff or contractors, as described in paragraph A above, who have a specific need to know the information for the purposes of performing their duties in connection with administration of the Peace Corps program only. This may include, but is not limited to, information relevant to my continued service as a Peace Corps trainee or Peace Corps Volunteer.

This authorization is effective until five years following either my close of Peace Corps service or final determination by the Peace Corps that I am not eligible for Peace Corps service. I understand that I may revoke this authorization at any time by sending a written revocation to the Office of Medical Services, Peace Corps, Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters, 1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington DC, 20526, but that my revocation before acceptance will stop consideration of my application, and that my service as a Volunteer is conditioned on the existence of this authorization, which is necessary to administer the Peace Corps program.

I understand that the Peace Corps will carefully protect the confidentiality of my health care information for the duration of the authorization period, consistent with the Privacy Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (as applicable), and Peace Corps policies on confidentiality of medical information, as described in the Peace Corps Notice of Privacy Practices.

I have read and understand this authorization.

---

Printed Name

Signature

Date (m/d/y)

DOB

## Peace Corps Contact List

Call Peace Corps toll free at 800.424.8580

[www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

### Master's International

MI staff

ext. 1812 or 202.692.1812

### Placement Office

Legal questions

ext. 1846 or 202.692.1846

### Medical and Dental Clearance

Office of Medical Services

ext. 1500 or 202.692.1500

### Loan Deferment Questions

Office of Financial Operations

ext. 1784 or 202.692.1784

### Passports/Visas/Travel Arrangements

Sato Travel Office

ext. 1170 or 202.692.1170

### Staging Questions

Staging Office

ext. 1865 or 202.692.1865

### Regional Recruiting Offices

800.424.8580

Your call will be directed to your local recruiting office. Or call direct using the phone numbers below.

**Atlanta** 404.562.3456  
(AL, FL, GA, MS, SC, TN, PR, Virgin Islands)

**Boston** 617.565.5555  
(MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)

**Chicago** 312.353.4990  
(IL, IN, KY, MI, MO, OH)

**Dallas** 214.253.5400  
(AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)

**Denver** 303.844.7020  
(CO, KS, NE, UT, WY)

**Los Angeles** 310.356.1100  
(AZ, Southern CA)

**Minneapolis** 612.348.1480  
(IA, MN, ND, SD, WI)

**New York** 212.352.5440  
(CT, NJ, NY, PA)

**San Francisco** 510.637.1520  
(HI, Northern CA, NV)

**Seattle** 206.553.5490  
(AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)

**Washington, DC/Rosslyn, VA**  
703.235.9191  
(DC, DE, MD, NC, VA, WV)



**For more information about Master's International please contact:**

Master's International  
Office of University Programs  
Domestic Programs  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526

202.692.1812, or 800.424.8580, ext. 1812  
E-mail: [mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov](mailto:mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov)  
Website: [www.peacecorps.gov/masters](http://www.peacecorps.gov/masters)

