

## Corporation for National and Community Service Policies and Procedures

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**Policy Number:** AV-2010-02      **Effective Date:** March 1, 2010  
**Revision Number:**

**Subject:** VISTA Policy allowing VISTA Members to take educational classes while serving

1. Purpose: To lift certain prior restrictions on taking education courses while serving in VISTA.
2. Who is Covered: All VISTA Members and VISTA Leaders
3. Policies Cancelled:
  - a. All prior VISTA policies restricting VISTA Members and VISTA Leaders from taking education classes while serving that are unrelated to the VISTAs' project assignment or career development plan;
  - b. All prior VISTA policies requiring prior approval from the Corporation State Office before taking education class are eliminated.
4. Originating Office: COO/VISTA
- 5. Summary of Revisions

*Corporation employees can access this document electronically at [intranet.cns.gov](http://intranet.cns.gov)*

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**Approved By:**



**Paul Davis, Acting Director of VISTA**

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**A. WHAT IS THIS POLICY?**

**1. What is the purpose of this policy?**

The purpose of this policy is to end the prohibition on VISTAs and VISTA Leaders taking classes while serving that are unrelated to their project assignment or career development plan; and to lift the requirement that a VISTA or VISTA Leader seeking to take a class or classes while enrolled in the VISTA program receive prior approval from the Corporation State Office.

As set forth in this policy, VISTAs and VISTA Leaders may take classes unrelated to their project assignment or career development plan, so long as the time dedicated to class attendance, coursework, and study does not interfere with the operations of the VISTA project to which they are assigned or the responsibilities of the VISTA. The VISTA project’s needs supersede any classes’ requirements.

**2. What happens if the study interferes with the responsibilities of the VISTA or the operations of the VISTA project?**

Through the Terms, Conditions and Benefits training prior to PSO, it is made clear to the VISTA applicants that VISTA service to the organization and community takes precedence over course-work, and should a class or classes interfere with the VISTA’s service or the operations of the project, the VISTA Project supervisor shall notify the Corporation State Office, who shall direct the VISTA to either withdraw from the course within one week; or be subject to termination from the VISTA program, forfeiting all benefits. Neither the sponsoring project nor the Corporation for National and Community Service shall be held responsible for any cost incurred by the VISTA in connection with attending classes, even if she or he is required to withdraw from a course and has to forfeit fees, tuition and other costs.

**3. Who determines if the study interferes with the VISTA project?**

The Corporation state office staff will determine if the study interferes with the VISTA’s service or the operations of the VISTA project, or both. The determination will be made in consultation with the VISTA project supervisor, and other project staff as needed.

**4. Does the VISTA have to get approval before taking a class? Does the VISTA need to discuss advance plans with the project supervisor to take classes?**

No formal written approval is necessary. However, before enrolling in any class, VISTAs and VISTA Leaders must discuss with their supervisors specific plans for enrollment, including the number of credit hours intended to be taken, the period of time of the class or classes, and the course schedule (including dates and times when classes are scheduled). Such discussions will support the VISTA project in ensuring that a VISTA or VISTA Leader's intended coursework will not interfere with the operations of the VISTA project or their VISTA's service.

If, after discussion with the VISTA or VISTA Leader, the project supervisor still has concerns about the VISTA's plans to enroll in classes, the supervisor must immediately notify the Corporation State Office of the issue. Examples of when the project supervisor must notify the Corporation State Office include: a) despite the discussion the VISTA had with the project supervisor, the VISTA still expresses an intent to enroll in classes that take place in the course of regular VISTA duty hours; or b) despite the discussion, the VISTA still expresses an intent to enroll as a full-time student in classes, requiring the dedication of many hours per week to classwork, not VISTA service. In addition to notifying the Corporation State Office, going forward the VISTA project supervisor should monitor the VISTA or VISTA Leader's performance to ensure that the class or classes do not interfere with VISTA service or the operations of the project.

**5. What if a person is taking a class or classes before they begin their VISTA service and the class or classes are scheduled to continue during their service?**

VISTA applicants and candidates who are taking a class or classes that are scheduled to resume or continue during their service, should discuss this issue with their expected sponsor, so as to ensure that the class or classes will not interfere with their VISTA service or the operations of the project.