

USDA Student Employment Programs Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who qualifies to apply for student internship positions?

A student who is: a U.S. Citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident or otherwise authorized to be employed; at least 16 years of age; currently enrolled or accepted for future enrollment in an accredited school/vocational/home-schooled program; available for full-time or part-time work; has a G.P.A. of 2.0 or higher; and meets the requirements of a vacancy.

2. If I graduate this spring and have not applied to another school am I still eligible for an internship?

If someone has just graduated from a degree program and has not yet applied to another school, the person will not qualify for an internship position. In order to qualify, the applicant must be currently enrolled in a degree or certificate program and/or have been accepted to another program. A student enrolled in GED courses and pursuing a GED diploma meets the definition of student.

3. Are the internships for the summer only?

In most cases, yes, however, some USDA internship opportunities are available throughout the year. Each agency has its own hiring criteria and deadlines. If an applicant is interested in learning more about internship opportunities, he or she should contact the Agency internship coordinator directly. These contact numbers may be found at: [link to the internship coordinators matrix?](#)

4. What is the deadline to apply for an internship and when should I expect to hear the results?

Applications for summer internships are accepted each year beginning the last week of January through the last week of April. Notification of placements is made between mid-April and mid-May of each year. Orientation day starts in mid-June for headquarter interns, and orientation for field interns starts on their first day of work.

5. How much will students get paid?

Most intern position announcements provide the salary and GS level in the vacancy announcement. The term "GS" stands for **General Schedule**. It is simply a pay-scale. As such, pay scales for internships vary based on the position, level of experience, and educational level achieved. The Federal Government Pay Scale can be found at: www.OPM.gov, click on "View Salaries and Wages".

6. How long are the summer internships?

The summer internships vary in length of time based on agency need and position. Generally internships can begin anytime in May or June and usually end in August. Terms of employment may be generally negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the hiring manager.

7. How many interns will USDA hire?

USDA usually hires between 5,000 and 8,500 students annually nationwide. This number varies each year by Agency and is based on internship needs and funding availability.

8. Where are the internships located?

Internship opportunities are located across the United States and the District of Columbia as well as U.S. Territories/Possessions including American Samoa, Navassa Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Jarvis Island, Baker Island, Guam, Howland Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Islands, Palmyra Atoll, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Wake Atoll.

9. Where do I look to learn more about the different USDA agencies?

There are several options, including, but not limited to the home page located at: www.usda.gov and, in the top tab, select "Agencies and Offices." From here you may select from our 17 agencies and 15 offices or select the 7 mission areas links. Or you may click each link from the "Linking Applicants to USDA Factsheet" to search the agency for which you may be interested.

10. Sustainability is an initiative. Are there internships for those with Sustainability Studies majors?

Students with diverse majors and interests are sought after by USDA agencies even for work on the Sustainability Initiative. Sustainability of programs and initiatives could be a part of an internship experience. However, those with Sustainability Studies Majors discover ways to take advantage of the earth's natural resources while simultaneously protecting them for use by future generations. The major is a combination of ideas and methods from a variety of disciplines, such as the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Your course work most likely covered subjects ranging from ecology and natural resources to landscape architecture and urban planning to economics, sociology, and anthropology. As such, agencies focused on the balance between economic growth and conservation, environmental policies, and ethics would most likely be found in NRCS, NIFA, and Rural Development to name a few.

11. If an applicant is particularly interested in a discipline, for example, Soil Science, where can this applicant apply for an internship?

If an applicant's interest is soil science, the applicant can apply for any internship opportunity offered through the Agricultural Research Service, Forest Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service.

12. How long will my application be kept after I apply? Do I need to apply again after the summer for the Fall or for next year?

If you apply using the One-Stop, Common application at www.studentapplication.usda.gov, your application will remain current until you are hired or for 6 months after you submit your application. You will also receive an e-mail message alerting you that your application is about to expire. At this time, you can log-in and update your application for the next session.

13. Regarding the application process, what can I expect after I apply? How long will it be before I get notified that I have been accepted?

Once your application is submitted to our database, USDA recruiters, hiring managers and internship coordinators will have the ability to search the database using the following criteria: Area of Interest, Location, Academic Level, Application Status, Affinity Groups, Academic Major and Internship Session. If your application is selected, you will be contacted directly by the agency representative. It usually takes 2 to 3 weeks for you to be notified that your application has been accepted and that you will be asked to interview. If you haven't heard back and it's been 3 weeks, send an inquiry to USDAInternships@dm.usda.gov and an update will be provided to you.

14. What work schedule can I expect as an Intern?

Your work schedule will depend on the position and agency need. The hiring manager and you will have a mutually agreed upon work schedule, to include hours, days and start and end dates.

15. Do I have to write an essay?

No, essays are not required.

16. What about English Language proficiency?

Successful candidates for internships will possess skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing in English. Listening is measured by the ability to process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations. Reading takes into

consideration the processing, interpretation, and evaluation of written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency. Speaking engages a student in verbal communications in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences. Written proficiency engages one in written communication in a number of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences. It is recommended that applicants are able to write comprehensively in English as an intern.