

RISC Application FAQs

Eligibility

Is the program open to rising sophomores or students graduating soon?

Yes, the program is open to rising sophomores and students graduating before the internship starts if they were enrolled in the fall semester.

Can a person with a U.S. green card apply?

No, the program requires U.S. citizenship due to contract stipulations, even if some individual projects do not.

Since this internship is related to intelligence and security, is this internship for students interested in that field or can other majors apply as well?

All majors are welcomed to apply.

If I have worked as a RISC intern before, can I reapply?

Yes. You can reapply. It is recommended to discuss your previous experience and what you hope to gain from a second RISC summer.

Does starting a graduate program affect eligibility?

No, graduate students, including those in master's and PhD programs, can apply.

What are the chances for younger students to be accepted compared to graduate students?

There are no specific criteria for the number of undergraduate versus graduates accepted each year; it depends on the applicant pool.

Are there any credit or prior job experience requirements?

There are no specific credit requirements; however, priority may be given to juniors and seniors due to their experience. Previous job experience is helpful but not mandatory.

Is technical experience required?

No, technical experience is not required. Past interns have entered the program with varying levels of experience across different fields.



Is previous experience in intelligence and security preferred?

Some experience is beneficial, but not required. Any experience in your interested field is beneficial, whether from jobs, capstone projects, or notable course projects.

Application Requirements and Recommendations

What is a CV, and do undergraduates need to submit one?

A CV is like a resume that highlights your accomplishments. If you have a resume, that is acceptable.

What are the requirements for the Letter of Recommendation?

Ideally, it should come from a professor or supervisor, but a mentor or advisor is also acceptable. It does not need to be on letterhead but should be submitted as a PDF clearly identifying the writer's affiliation.

Can I submit more than one Letter of Recommendation?

Only one letter of recommendation is requested.

Are unofficial transcripts acceptable?

Yes, unofficial transcripts are fine for the application.

How long should the Letter of Interest be?

While there is no hard limit, most letters are around one page.

Should I focus on one topic or mention multiple interests in the Letter of Interest?

Listing multiple disciplines is encouraged, as it demonstrates flexibility.

Do coursework projects count towards the programming proficiency ranking?

Yes, coursework projects can count, but the scope of the project matters, as it helps assess your collaborative skills.

What make a strong application?

A well-written cover letter that showcases your unique background, skills, and how they align with ARLIS's mission can enhance your chances.



Will changing my name affect the application process?

No, changing your name will not disrupt the application.

Can we edit our application after submission?

No, the current system does not allow edits. It is best to wait until you are confident in your application before submitting.

How is the stipend amount determined for interns?

Stipend levels are based on seniority, experience, and background.

For Computer Science applications, should I emphasize coding projects or work experience?

Including both coding projects and relevant work experience is beneficial for this internship.

Participation and Schedule Questions

Can I participate in the RISC program if I'm graduating in Spring 2025?

Yes, you can apply as long as you have not graduated before Fall 2024. You should not have graduated more than one year from the start of the program.

Are there any vacation days during the internship, and can I attend an academic conference in July?

The program does not allow vacations during the 10-week period, although there are days off for Juneteenth and Independence Day. Exceptions for academic conferences can be made, but interns are expected to make up any missed time during evenings or weekends.

What if my spring semester ends in early July?

Please reach out to us; we aim to work with you to find a solution that accommodates both your academic obligations and the needs of your teammates.

Is the internship only for the summer, with no further commitments to the University of Maryland?

Yes, the internship is limited to the summer with no additional commitments.



How are applications reviewed?

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, with the best consideration given to those submitted by the February 3rd deadline. Late applications may risk positions being unavailable.

When will I find out what project I'm assigned to if accepted?

You should know your project assignment by late April or early May, depending on various factors. Being specific about your interests in your Letter of Interest may expedite this process.

Will I need to be on Zoom all day during the internship?

No, you will not be required to be on Zoom the entire day. Interns should be available from 10 am to 3 pm EST daily, with the remaining hours scheduled in coordination with team members.

What if I have a summer training commitment with a military service (i.e., National Guard)?

You are still encouraged to apply. In past instances, interns with similar commitments have been compensated for eight weeks instead of ten.

Internship Projects and Disciplines

Will interns work on multiple projects or be assigned to just one?

Interns are assigned to one project, typically with 2-4 interns per project.

Do projects involve a mix of disciplines or a focus on specific majors?

Most projects have a mix of disciplines, although some may center around specific areas of expertise.

Does the internship include UX/UI design?

Typically, no, but specific projects may have such requirements.

Is the program limited to STEM fields?

No, while there are STEM-related projects, domain expertise in social sciences is also needed.

What is the role of languages and linguistics in the internship?

Language skills can be essential for various projects, including language fluency for communication or specialized skills for tools like speech recognition and natural language processing.



Are there projects related to biology or biotechnology?

While the specific projects aren't known until proposed by government sponsors, having a background in biology or biotechnology can be beneficial, particularly in areas like critical technology protection.

How does political science and linguistics fit into the internship?

Political science is relevant for policy analysis and understanding geopolitical contexts, while language fluency and sociolinguistics can be valuable for specific projects.

Can interns switch projects if they are not interested in their assigned one?

Intern project assignments are based on government needs and interests stated in applications. Once assigned, it is challenging to make changes, so it is crucial to clearly express your interests in your Letter of Interest.

What advantages come from having a background in language other than English?

Some projects may require language skills for accessing documents or designing software features. High-demand languages include Mandarin, Russian, Korean, Arabic, and Farsi.

Are accepted applicants immediately assigned to projects?

Applicants are not immediately assigned; project assignments are made based on interests expressed in the application and are finalized before the internship begins.

Security Clearance Questions

Does having an existing security clearance provide an advantage in the internship?

Yes, holding a security clearance can make you eligible for additional project topics and typically indicated relevant past experience and a sustained interest in national security work.

Is everyone considered for a security clearance, and how does that process work?

Last year, we had 122 interns, and about 90 received at least provisional Secret clearance. Some interns chose not to seek a clearance.

Can a security clearance from a previous job transfer to this internship?

Possibly, but it would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



Should I mention my active security clearance in my Letter of Interest?

Yes, you should mention it, especially how it related to your past work. This information is also requested in the application portal and can open doors to additional project opportunities.

General Internship Questions

What are you looking for in a candidate?

We seek candidates with excellence in relevant disciplines, relevant experience (i.e., research or analytic projects), teamwork skills, and a genuine interest in a career in intelligence or security. We also value candidates under-represented demographics and those with hard-to-find skills.

Can I earn academic credits from this internship?

Most universities allow either payment or academic credits for internships, but not both. However, if your program requires an uncredited internship, we can assist in certifying this.

Is the internship in-person or online?

The internship is primarily virtual, but there are required in-person events during the final week. Some projects may require access to secure facilities, and co-located teams may choose to meet in person. ARLIS provided workspaces for interns who request it.

What is the interview process like?

There is no interview requirement for the RISC program. All applications are reviewed, and selections are made based on project needs and candidate skills.

Is there a preference for University of Maryland students?

No, we consider all applicates equally, regardless of their university affiliation.

How many positions are available, and how many applications do you typically receive?

We expect to have between 100-150 positions this year, with around 600-700 applications across all disciplines.

If I apply and am not accepted, do I need to reapply in full the following year?

No, our new application system allows previous candidates to build on their past applications without starting over, provided they use the same email address.



Do interns typically receive job offers from government entities after the program?

The government usually does not offer jobs directly, but the experience gained will be beneficial for future applications. We are working to establish pilot programs to help interns secure positions.

Is it appropriate to reach out to past RISC interns or faculty for insights about the program?

Absolutely! We encourage you to connect with them for guidance.

Is this internship a good opportunity for transitioning from the private sector to the public sector, especially without a security clearance?

Yes, this internship offers compelling work opportunities, a change to learn about various intelligence and defense agencies, and the ability to build a professional network. We also initiate a security clearance for interns, which is valuable for future job prospects.

Do you accept an equal number of interns from different disciplines?

No, the number of interns varies each year based on government project requests. There is typically more demand for candidates with programming and data skills compared to those with a linguistics background without computational training.