



NASA Pathways Internship Program: Applicant Guide (September 2021)

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THE PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

As a Pathways Intern, you'll gain valuable experiences that will help you explore your career interests and hone your technical skills, providing you with the tools you'll need to begin a career at NASA. Pathways Interns typically follow a cooperative education model, where you'll alternate between working at NASA and going to school until you graduate. Interns usually tailor their academic schedules and coursework to best prepare them for a career they're most passionate about.

The biggest opportunity that comes to Pathways Interns is the chance to be noncompetitively converted to a full-time position after you complete your initial Pathways appointment. This gives you the chance to transition directly into a full-time job without having to reapply.

Consistently ranked as the number one place to work in the federal government for several years, working as an Intern at NASA is a blast! As a Pathways Intern, you'll have:

1. Meaningful work assignments.

- You'll be given real work that matters. Pathways participants are incorporated into existing teams of engineering or business professionals. You'll be assigned a mentor who will work side-by-side with you to make sure that you have a meaningful project and the tools/knowledge to complete it. Not only will you get hands on work experience, you'll be paid for it.

2. Autonomy and trust.

- Our mentors will provide you with independence and trust alongside support and structure to ensure that you're offered lots of opportunities for success. You'll feel empowered and fully supported at the same time, which will help you feel comfortable venturing into new work assignments and technical tasks.

3. Growth and development opportunities.

- The Pathways Programs are developmental programs, where we expect you to learn a lot! You'll be given many opportunities to grow your skills and prepare you with the tools you'll need to begin your career with NASA.

4. Impactful outcomes from your work contributions.

- The work you'll perform will have real impact on our operations. Pathways participants have built hardware flown on NASA missions, developed procedures for flight operations, and much more. There's a lot to be said about the unique sense of pride our Pathways participants develop after seeing how their work directly contributes to NASA's success.

5. Connections to the people around you.

- NASA is a place where you'll feel a sense of connection and belonging to a people united with a common purpose. Even though you may travel far distances to work with us, our NASA community will feel like a home away from home.

WHAT TYPE OF STUDENT IS NASA LOOKING FOR?

For our Pathways Intern positions, we're looking for students who are not only captivated with the [NASA vision & mission](#), but who are also well-rounded with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences. If you enjoy working on teams and have a willingness to learn new things, we're looking for you!

We receive thousands of applications each year. Top candidates leverage their experiences to demonstrate the following competencies: accountability, attention to detail, customer service, decision making, flexibility, integrity & honesty, interpersonal skills, learning, reading, self-management (achievement), stress tolerance, and teamwork.

During the application process, you may be invited to complete an online assessment that measures each of these competencies. The definitions for each competency are below—you'll find that you've probably experienced many situations already that have built your skills in these areas! Applicants reflect on their personal or professional experiences (extracurricular activities, group projects, previous work and life situations, etc.) as they build their resumes, complete the online assessment, and participate in interviews.

- **Accountability:** Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.
- **Attention to detail:** Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to detail.
- **Customer service:** Works with clients and customers (that is, any individuals who use or receive the services or products that your work unit produces, including the general public, individuals who work in the agency, other agencies, or organizations outside the Government) to assess their needs, provide information or assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations; knows about available products and services; is committed to providing quality products and services.
- **Decision making:** Makes sound, well-informed, and objective decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; commits to action, even in uncertain situations, to accomplish organizational goals; causes change.
- **Flexibility:** Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; effectively deals with ambiguity.
- **Integrity & honesty:** Contributes to maintaining the integrity of the organization; displays high standards of ethical conduct and understands the impact of violating these standards on an organization, self, and others; is trustworthy.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.
- **Learning:** Uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills; uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development.
- **Reading:** Understands and interprets written material, including technical material, rules, regulations, instructions, reports, charts, graphs, or tables; applies what is learned from written material to specific situations.
- **Self-management (achievement):** Sets well-defined and realistic personal goals; displays a high level of initiative, effort, and commitment towards completing assignments in a timely manner; works with minimal supervision; is motivated to achieve; demonstrates responsible behavior.
- **Stress tolerance:** Deals calmly and effectively with high stress situations (for example, tight deadlines, hostile individuals, emergency situations, dangerous situations).
- **Teamwork:** Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; fosters commitment and team spirit; works with others to achieve goals.

PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

For all our Pathways Internship positions, you must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen or national.
- Be at least 16 years of age at the time of appointment.
- Be a degree or certificate seeking student who is currently enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited educational institution on at least a half time basis as defined by the institution.

- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.9 on a 4.0 scale (or equivalent).
- Be able to work a minimum of 640 hours before graduation.

Some positions may have additional requirements. For example:

- All engineering positions require enrollment in a degree program at a college or university school of engineering with at least one curriculum accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) as a professional engineering curriculum. To find out if a degree meets this requirement, visit the ABET website at abet.org.
- Some positions require specific academic majors. If you are not pursuing a required major, you will not be qualified for the position. To be qualified, you must show proof from your educational institution that you are indeed pursuing the required major.
- Some NASA centers may have additional work requirements beyond the minimum 640 work hours. For example, some centers may require that you work at least three semesters at NASA prior to graduation.
- Some NASA centers may also require that you begin work at a specific start date. For those centers, Pathways Interns typically go through their employment experience as a cohort, where you'll be alongside your peers during the orientation process and throughout the semester.
- Some NASA centers may have requirements around full-time or part-time work schedules. For centers with a requirement to work a full-time, 40-hour-per-week schedule, you may need to alternate between periods of working at NASA with periods of taking classes at school.

HIRING PROCESS FOR THE PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

STEP 1: WRITING YOUR RESUME

NASA wants to get to know you and see your story – so be clear and concise but elaborate! Your resume is your best opportunity to demonstrate what sets you apart from other applicants. Write your USA Jobs resume in a narrative format, where you highlight your accomplishments by using the challenge/action/result (CAR) method. For each position you list on your resume, use the narrative format to tell the story of your professional journey, where you describe challenges you faced, actions you took to accomplish the task, and the ultimate outcomes and results of your actions. Be sure to provide specific examples of results and quantify when possible.

Here are a few other helpful things to consider:

- Include skills, tools, software, and knowledge that you have gained throughout your experiences. Remember, soft skills are important too!
- Include relevant contact information, such as your name, phone number, and email address. Be sure to use an email that you check regularly — this will be our primary way of contacting you after you submit your application.
- Get creative. Use the available fields on the USA Jobs resume to include any relevant information that you'd like to share with hiring managers.

STEP 2: APPLICATION ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

In addition to submitting their resume, all applicants must complete the application assessment questionnaire as part of the initial application process for the NASA Pathways student internship program. Applicants will be asked a series of questions pertaining to:

- Educational institution.
- Degree program.
- Credit hours completed.
- Major field of study.
- Current cumulative GPA.
- Availability for the internship program.
- Past internship experience.

In this questionnaire, applicants will be asked to report the number of credit hours completed (NOT in progress) or degree status in their current degree program. This information will be used by NASA to determine the grade level for which applicants will be considered.

Applicants may not be able to update their responses to the assessment questionnaire after initial submission, but may update the following information associated with their application:

- Biographic information.
- Eligibility selections.
- Supporting documents (adding/replacing).

The responses applicants provide about their education will be verified by NASA based on the submitted supporting documents (e.g., transcripts, acceptance letter). Applicants must submit a copy of their most recent college transcript that lists the school's name, student's name, degree program, major, GPA, college courses, course title, and number of credit hours completed. Unofficial transcripts will be accepted; however, should you be selected, official transcripts will be required prior to your appointment date. If your college transcript does not list all this information, you must provide supplemental documentation from your educational institution that specifies the information missing from your transcript.

All applicants will also be asked to certify that their responses to the application assessment questionnaire are true and accurate.

Note: For job announcements for higher graded positions (GS-11+), applicants will also be required to complete a self-rated assessment questionnaire that measures the non-technical competencies or “soft skills” critical to success in NASA’s Pathways positions (e.g., attention to detail, decision making, flexibility, teamwork). This questionnaire will be administered as part of the assessment application process.

STEP 3: ONLINE USA HIRE ASSESSMENTS

If applicants meet the NASA Pathways Internship Program requirements based on the results from the assessment questionnaire, they may be invited via email link to complete additional online assessments called USA Hire.

The USA Hire assessments are composed of three different assessments. All of the assessments are administered online in a timed, unproctored environment and measure 12 non-technical competencies or “soft skills” critical to success in NASA’s Pathways Internship positions (e.g., attention to detail, flexibility, reading, stress tolerance). It is recommended that applicants reserve up to three hours to complete the assessments, even though on average it takes applicants just under two hours to complete them all.

Each of the assessments collect evidence of the different competencies using a variety of question formats (e.g., text, multi-media) and response types (e.g., multiple-choice, rating scales). Applicants can review samples of the assessment instructions, formats, and timing at

<https://usahire.opm.gov/assess/default/sample/Sample.action>.

Applicants should prepare for the USA Hire assessments by setting up a quiet workspace with a strong and reliable internet connection; making sure there is scratch paper available; taking several minutes to review the sample USA Hire assessment questions before clicking the link to the assessments in the invitation email; and allowing up to three hours to complete the assessments

Applicants have until 48 hours AFTER the close of the job announcement to complete the assessments. If applicants who were given access to the online USA Hire assessments fail to complete them within the allotted time, they will be removed from consideration.

Applicants with qualifying disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation for the online USA Hire assessments. Requests for reasonable accommodation MUST be received before the applicant starts the online USA Hire assessments and before the job announcement closes for the results to be considered.

The USA Hire assessments are scored based on internship job requirements identified by OPM government-wide for each Pathways job series (e.g., 0899) and grade level (e.g., GS-06). Applicants with overall results in the score range for a rating category (e.g., qualified, highly qualified, best qualified) are assigned that category while following applicable Veterans' preference ranking procedures.

Note: For job announcements for higher graded positions (GS-11+), applicants will NOT complete the online USA Hire assessments.

STEP 4: PANEL REVIEW ASSESSMENT

Applicants who meet the NASA Pathways Program eligibility and qualification requirements and score in the best qualified category on the USA Hire assessments are forwarded to the hiring official for employment consideration. At some NASA locations, the hiring official will convene a panel of NASA job experts, program managers, and/or leaders to review the qualifications of each applicant to determine which applicants will be invited for an interview.

STEP 5: INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

Applicants selected for an interview will receive an email invitation to participate in a real-time telephone or video interview. Depending on the NASA location, applicants may meet with a single NASA employee or a panel of NASA job experts, program managers, and/or leaders during the interview. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes and include questions (e.g., behavioral, situational) based on job-related competencies critical to NASA's Pathways Internship positions. The results of the interview will be used by the hiring official to make a final selection decision.

AVOIDING COMMON MISTAKES

Transcript issues.

- Many applicants submit transcripts that are missing required elements such as name, school name, degree program and type, and most importantly, the date the degree was conferred or is expected to be completed. Applicants should ensure their transcript has all this information.

Insufficient documentation.

- Some applicants are missing alternative documents associated to a transcript when a required element is missing (e.g., degree date, completion), documents related to Veterans' Preference, or documents related to a request for a reasonable accommodation for the online assessment. Applicants should prepare their documents before the application opens.

Waiting until the last minute.

- Many applicants do not start the application process until the night before or even hours before it closes. The entire application and online USA Hire assessments can take 2-3 hours to complete. Applicants should avoid waiting until the last minute to begin their application.

Making changes once you submit.

- Once applicants submit their application, they will not have the opportunity to make any changes to certain sections. Applicants should ensure all documents are reviewed prior to submitting, and that their responses to the application and assessment questionnaire are accurate and complete. Applicants can only submit one application per job announcement.

APPLICATION AND HIRING FAQs

APPLICATION – GENERAL

How many locations (NASA centers) can I select for consideration?

- Most NASA centers will be participating in the Internship Program. Each job announcement will contain information on available locations.

When is the anticipated start date for the Pathways student Internship Program?

- The expected start date for each internship is typically on the subsequent two semesters following the closing date of the vacancy for which you applied. Both start dates will NOT be offered at all locations.
- Each job announcement will include details on specific start dates and requirements for each NASA center.

What notifications will I receive after I submit my application?

- Applicants will be notified via email and through USA Jobs at various touchpoints of the application and hiring process (e.g., application received, qualifications results, referral/selection status).
- The job announcement, online application instructions, and USA Hire assessment invitation email all provide specific information on what notifications applicants can expect throughout the hiring process.

What documents are required to submit with my online application?

- Resume: Showing education, research, and/or work experience.
- Transcript or acceptance letter: Showing degree program, major, credit hours, and cumulative GPA.
- Veterans' preference documentation (if applicable).
- Reasonable accommodation documentation (if applicable).

Is there a size limit when uploading supporting documents to my online application?

- All documents MUST be less than a total of 5MB in size and unencrypted.

Where/when will the Pathways job announcements be posted?

- All Pathways job announcements will be posted on USAJOBS.gov.

- NASA's job announcements for the Pathways Internship Program open for applications twice per year, typically in February and September.

APPLICATION - ELIGIBILITY

Is a previous NASA internship required to be considered?

- A previous NASA internship is NOT a requirement and will NOT affect an applicant's eligibility.

Is a certain major or field of study required to be considered?

- Some positions require certain majors to be considered. The job announcement will include details on preferred or required majors.

Does my academic institution influence my application consideration?

- The specific school does NOT get factored into the selection of candidates for the internship program. Applicants from any and all accredited institutions are encouraged and eligible to apply.

Is there an age limit to be considered?

- All applicants MUST be at least 16 years of age at the time of the expected start date for the internship to be considered.

Are there certain eligibility requirements I must meet to be considered for a specific NASA center?

- Some NASA centers have specific requirements that must be met outside of the job announcement. The job announcement will include details on center-specific requirements.

What is the minimum number of hours required to complete the internship program?

- Selectees MUST complete at least 640 hours of work in the internship program prior to completing their degree/certificate requirements.

What previous work experience is required?

- Applicants are NOT required to have previous work experience to be eligible for the internship program. If applicants are referred for selection, their academic and professional experience will be important factors of consideration.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

What types of questions will I be asked on the initial assessment questionnaire?

- Applicants will be asked a series of questions about their education (i.e., degree program, major, status, credit hours, current cumulative GPA), internship program availability, and past internship experience.
- For job announcements for higher grade positions (GS-11+), applicants will also be required to complete a self-rated assessment questionnaire that measures the non-technical competencies or "soft skills" identified as critical to success in NASA's Pathways positions (e.g., attention to detail, decision making, flexibility, teamwork).

Will my responses to the initial application assessment questionnaire be verified?

- The responses applicants provide about their education (e.g., degree program, major, credit hours, GPA) will be verified based on the supporting documents (e.g., transcripts, acceptance letter) submitted with their application.

- Applicants will also be asked to certify that their responses to the questionnaire are true and accurate before submitting their application.

Can I change my responses in the assessment questionnaire after it has been submitted?

- Applicants will not be able to update their responses to the assessment questionnaire after initial submission.
- But applicants can update their biographic information, eligibility status, and submit additional documents for the job announcement during the open period.

How do I apply to a certain grade level?

- Applicants will be asked to report the number of credit hours completed and status in their current degree program. This information will be used to determine the grade level for which applicants will be considered.
- Applicants should NOT count credit hours that are currently in progress when indicating the number of hours completed.

Is there a required cumulative GPA I must meet to be considered?

- Applicants MUST have a current cumulative GPA of 2.90 or HIGHER on a 4.0 scale to be considered.

ONLINE USA HIRE ASSESSMENTS

Are there additional assessments I need to complete after my initial application submission?

- If applicants meet the NASA Pathways internship program requirements based on the results from the initial application assessment questionnaire, they may be invited via email link to complete additional online assessments called USA Hire.
- The USA Hire assessments are composed of three different assessments. All of the assessments are administered online in a timed, unproctored environment and measure non-technical competencies or “soft skills” critical to success in NASA’s Pathways internship positions.
- For job announcements for higher graded positions (GS-11+), applicants will ONLY be required to complete the initial application assessment questionnaire, and will NOT complete the USA Hire assessments.

How long do I have to take the online USA Hire assessments?

- Applicants have until 48 hours AFTER the close of the job announcement to complete the USA Hire assessments.
- If an applicant requests a reasonable accommodation that is adjudicated AFTER the assessments would normally close, he/she will have 48 hours after the assessment link is sent or until 48 hours after the close of the job announcement, whichever is later, to complete the USA Hire assessments.

What if I don’t complete the online USA Hire assessments within the allotted time?

- Applicants who were given access to the online USA Hire assessments and fail to complete them within the allotted time will be removed from consideration.

How long do the online USA Hire assessments typically take to complete?

- On average applicants complete the online Pathways USA Hire assessments in just under 2 hours.
- It is recommended that applicants reserve up to 3 hours to complete the assessments.

How are the online USA Hire assessments scored?

- The USA Hire assessments are scored based on internship job requirements identified by OPM government-wide for each Pathways job series (e.g., 0899) and grade level (e.g., GS-06).

What types of questions will I be asked with the online USA Hire assessments?

- The Pathways USA Hire assessments measure 12 non-technical competencies or “soft skills” identified as critical to success in NASA’s Pathways positions (e.g., attention to detail, flexibility, reading, stress tolerance).
- The assessments collect evidence of the different competencies using a variety of question formats (e.g., text, multi-media) and response types (e.g., multiple-choice, rating scales).
- To become familiar with the instructions, format, and timing of the USA Hire assessments, applicants can review sample questions at <https://usahire.opm.gov/assess/default/sample/Sample.action>

How can I prepare for the USA Hire assessments?

- Since the USA Hire assessments evaluate competencies that generally do not change over time, studying for the assessments will not improve applicant performance or outcomes.
- Applicants should prepare for the USA Hire assessments by setting up a quiet workspace with a strong and reliable internet connection; making sure there is scratch paper available; taking several minutes to review the sample USA Hire assessment questions before clicking the link to the assessments in the invitation email; and allowing up to 3 hours to complete the assessments.

How long are my scores valid with the online USA Hire assessments?

- USA Hire responses and results for specific occupations and grades are retained for one (1) year. The reason is the assessments measure competencies that do not generally change over time, and performance on the assessments cannot be improved with additional studying.
- During that timeframe, if applicants apply to the same job at a different grade or a new job and grade, their original responses are rescored based on the relevant job requirements.

Can I request reasonable accommodation for the online USA Hire assessments?

- Applicants with qualifying disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation for the online USA Hire assessments.
- Requests for reasonable accommodation MUST be received before the applicant starts the online USA Hire assessments and before the job announcement closes for the results to be considered.

What if I disagree with my online USA Hire assessment results?

- Applicants are encouraged to contact the NASA Shared Services Contact Center listed on the job announcement for questions related to their qualifications.
- The USA Hire help desk can respond to technical difficulties with the assessments, such as inability to access the USA Hire assessments link, difficulty completing the assessments, or applicant user experience questions, but will not share or discuss assessment results with applicants.

PANEL REVIEW ASSESSMENT

How do I qualify for the panel review assessment?

- Applicants who meet the NASA Pathways Program eligibility and qualification requirements and score in the best qualified category on the USA Hire assessments are forwarded to the hiring official for employment consideration.

What happens during the panel review assessment?

- At some NASA locations, the hiring official will convene a panel of NASA job experts, program managers, and/or leaders to review the applications, supporting documents, and qualifications of each referred applicant to determine who will be invited for an interview.

INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

How do I qualify for the interview assessment?

- Applicants who meet the NASA Pathways Program eligibility and qualification requirements and score in the best qualified category on the USA Hire assessments can be selected for an interview.
- Applicants may be selected for an interview based on the independent decision of the hiring official or the recommendation of the panel assessment.

What types of questions will be asked during the interview assessment?

- The interview will include questions (e.g., behavioral, situational) based on job-related competencies critical to NASA's Pathways Internship positions.
- The interview will be conducted in real-time by telephone or video conference and will last approximately 40 minutes.
- Depending on the NASA location, applicants may meet with a single NASA employee or a panel of NASA job experts, program managers, and/or leaders during the interview.

How do I prepare for the interview assessment?

- Review the information contained in the interview email invitation, especially the video link provided in the email which contains a detailed overview of the interview process.
- Review the job announcement and related job description and duties.
- Review your resume and consider your academic, research, and work experiences.
- Practice responding to interview questions using the CAR method to elaborate on your experiences or share a situation that describes an accomplishment.
- Prepare several questions of your own about the position, internship program, or NASA.