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 UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



Sri Lanka Internship Frequently Asked Questions

Questions about Sri Lanka

What is internet access like?

In Colombo and other major cities Internet access is very good. Generally the whole of Sri Lanka is well connected and one can get access to the Internet. There are many Internet cafes or kiosks available in major towns. Some of the hotels in the east have Wi-Fi connectivity too.

What is the weather like?

Sri Lanka is a tropical climate with distinct hot and rainy seasons. During the month of June, it will be dry season, but it will be hot and humid.

Is Sri Lanka safe?

Sri Lanka is generally a safe country. However, please keep in mind that this is a post-conflict, developing region. Please be sure to use common sense while traveling, and always travel in groups, particularly at night-time. Please be mindful of cultural norms and be sure to act appropriately in public settings. The University of Maryland and USAID cannot guarantee the safety of any individuals, so should you be selected to participate in this program, a waiver of responsibility must be signed prior to your departure.

Do I need a visa?

No, you do not need to obtain a visa prior to departing for Sri Lanka. A valid passport and proof of return ticket is all that is needed to enter Sri Lanka. An entry visa will be issued upon arrival at immigration at the Sri Lanka airport for all persons (U.S. citizens and other).

Do I need to get vaccinations? Is there malaria?

Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following vaccinations for people traveling to Sri Lanka:

- Yellow Fever
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Malaria (pills)

We recommend that all students contact his or her local travel clinic immediately once they know they will be traveling to Sri Lanka to have all vaccinations updated. All vaccination costs will be covered by the program.

What is the dress code?

The dress code during the two-weeks in Sri Lanka should be smart-casual.

Does everyone speak English?

No, not everyone speaks English. Sinhalese and Tamil are the two official languages of Sri Lanka; however, most people in tourist areas and in businesses speak English.

Are there cultural sensitivities to men and women working directly together?

This will be covered in the pre-departure orientation.

Are there any big cultural faux pas that I should beware of?

This will be covered in the pre-departure orientation.

Questions about the Process/Program:

What will I be doing?

Although your exact responsibilities will depend on the needs of the company to which you will be assigned, the work can generally be characterized as development consulting. You will be matched with projects based on your background and expertise, and will be solving real problems that client companies face. This is a unique opportunity to apply your skills in a real world setting while at the same time acquiring experience that will be valuable to you in your professional life.

Where will I be? In the capitol city?

As the firms are still being selected, it is hard to say exactly where each student will be located. Some students may be located in Colombo, while others may be located in provinces where the businesses are. Definitive locations will be known in the coming weeks.

Who will be my supervisor?

Each team will be paired with a supervisor who is qualified to manage a project in that technical area. The supervisor will be responsible for meeting with the team to discuss pre-trip preparations and research, will be available remotely while the team is in Sri Lanka to review documents and answer questions, and will be responsible for reviewing the final report at the conclusion of the internship.

In Sri Lanka, we are tentatively planning for representatives from BGI, USAID, and VEGA to travel with the groups to supervise their on-the-ground activities.

How will you select interns? How many will you select?

We hope to select 8-12 interns. The final number will depend on how many firms are requesting assistance, where the firms are located, and available funds.

Once the applications are received by the deadline of March 4, an initial read through will take place by the University of Maryland. They will thoroughly read through each piece of the application and select students to be interviewed in-person by UMD, USAID and BGI. Students chosen for interviews will be notified by March 18.

Students selected for an interview will meet in-person for a panel interview and will be notified no later than April 15 with a final selection decision.

How will you decide who should work together?

Teams will be configured based on interest and skill set. Each Sri Lankan company requesting assistance has specific needs that need to be met, so we will try to match teams to that company's needs.

What will the interview process be like?

Interviews will be in-person at the University of Maryland campus during the weeks of March 28 and April 4. Students will be interviewed by a panel of representatives from UMD, USAID and BGI and asked a series of questions regarding their interest and qualifications for this internship. Selected students will be notified no later than April 15.

If I'm graduating in May, can I still participate?

Yes. Since the internship is not for credit, it is possible for you to participate even if you are graduating in May. However, if you will need to begin your fulltime work before completion of your internship, we hope that, in fairness to your team members and clients, you will not participate in the program.

Can I do another internship in addition to this one, if the timing works out?

Yes, you can do another internship if the timing works out. Please keep in mind that this internship is a 6 week commitment (2 weeks of prep time prior to departing for Sri Lanka, 2 weeks in-country, and 2 weeks of post-work to conclude the final report). We understand that some students may be eager to secure another internship after they return from Sri Lanka, and they may do so; however, please keep in mind that only students who can commit to this time frame will be selected. The prep and post work can be done with your teammates during nights and weekends so long as the final report is delivered by the final deadline.

Can we adjust the team schedule to allow for some tourism while we are there, or before or after?

Yes, you can travel around Sri Lanka or the region before or after your trip if you desire, at your own cost. If you are selected for the program and would like to travel, please notify UMD, USAID and BGI so that we can work closely with you to re-arrange the specific dates for the pre and post work to occur.

How will we travel within the country? Will someone be traveling with us?

You will travel around the country by car, bus, or train. The Sri Lankan companies will arrange and pay for all local travel. Ideally representatives from VEGA, USAID and BGI will travel with the groups; however, that is not certain at this point in time.

What type of hotel will we stay in? Do we each get our own room?

If the assignment is in Colombo then the accommodation will be a hotel. If it's in the provinces, then you will likely stay in a guest house. Interns will stay at local hotels

near the businesses they are supporting. Please keep in mind that these hotels may not be similar to expectations of U.S. hotels. Students can be paired in rooms if they desire. Students are asked to be flexible with their lodging arrangements, but lodging provided, while perhaps not luxurious will be adequately clean and secure.

What if I get sick?

Should you become ill while traveling in Sri Lanka, please travel to the nearest hospital or doctor, ideally with someone from your business, team, or group. The bigger firms have their own in-house medical arrangements; otherwise there are private hospitals in the provinces. Each intern will receive a traveler's health insurance card that will cover any medical expenses incurred while traveling. We encourage students to refer to the State Department or Center for Disease Control websites for lists of general medications that should be packed in anticipation of illnesses, such as aspirin, digestion and diarrheal medications, cold and flu medications and cough drops. We also recommend that students pack small first aid kits with bandages, gauze, and anti-bacterial ointment.

What will my stipend be?

Each student will receive a stipend to cover daily meal and incidental costs. The exact amount will be determined once the student is selected, and based on the region he or she will be located in.

Will you provide laptops or do I need to bring my own?

We strongly suggest that students bring their own laptops, although desktops in the offices of the selected firms may be available. Basic office supplies such as pens and notebooks will be provided by the VEGA office. Should you anticipate special needs, you should be prepared to bring those materials with you.

What if the company or an individual tries to give us a gift?

Students should NOT accept cash as a gift, but a small token is fine. The businesses may give a gift based on cultural norms and would be offended if it were refused. Small tokens should be taken as part of goodwill.

How much might the flight cost?

Current prices for flights to Sri Lanka in June average \$1,700 round trip.

May I get funding from my department to cover my airfare?

Yes, we encourage students to be creative in finding other sources of funding for plane tickets.

Questions about Work Content:

What are the expected final products? How long of a report? Can it just be a PowerPoint?

Each business will have a desired final product, such as a marketing plan, that will be individual to each team. In addition, the final deliverable for all teams will be a written, final report in a Microsoft Word Document. The estimated length is ten pages,

but that is subject to the needs of the specific project. It cannot be a PowerPoint. A PowerPoint presentation can be used to demonstrate findings to the companies in Sri Lanka at the conclusion of the two weeks in-country, however, for their internship to be complete, a final report must be written.

What if the company doesn't want a report?

As mentioned above, the final report will be for project purposes and will be maintained by UMD, USAID and BGI. Should the company not desire a final report, but a PowerPoint instead, then that will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

How sophisticated are these businesses? How large are they?

Some businesses are more sophisticated than others, but most of them are medium to large sized businesses, some with global outreach. Exact information on the businesses will be provided once they are confirmed.

What if the company isn't cooperative?

If the company isn't cooperative, we encourage students to discuss this with their UMD supervisors and with any other counterparts. While all of the companies selected have specifically requested support, it is not unusual for challenges to exist once the work begins. We encourage students who are applying to be flexible with these real-life challenges.

What if the company wants to change our scope of work once we arrive?

If the company wants to change your scope of work upon arrival, we encourage that you do not acquiesce until this is discussed with your on-the-ground counterpart and your supervisor at UMD. This is another real-life challenge that exists and comes up frequently in development consulting. We ask that students work closely with the companies to manage expectations while delivering desired results.

What if the company has expectations beyond what we can deliver (like finding them financing)?

We understand that two weeks is a very short time to make vast strides with any company you will be working with. Our goal is to assist with managing expectations of the companies so that they understand what can be accomplished in two weeks' time. Students should not feel pressured to go beyond what is asked of them by UMD, USAID or BGI.

What if we need additional resources (like market research data) that the company can't provide?

This is another real-life challenge that students will need to be flexible with. Because Sri Lanka is a developing country, their businesses are not as sophisticated as in the U.S., and abundant information regarding the firm or the business environment may not be available. Students are asked to do the best they can with the information they are provided and are able to access through their networks.

What work will we be doing in the time before and after the trip?

Before departure, students will be meeting with UMD, USAID and BGI to discuss specifics of the project. In addition, the two-week prep time is meant for gathering research about the company, and developing a strategy to implement upon arrival, with clear steps and goals to achieve. Once students return back to the U.S., the two weeks post-trip will be used to review the work accomplished in Sri Lanka, and write a report summarizing their accomplishments and details of the trip. Students may be asked to present their work as well.

What if we want to continue working with the company pro-bono beyond the period of the internship?

This is allowable; however, costs will only be covered during the allotted timeframe. Students are asked to notify UMD, USAID, and BGI of this as soon as they know they will do this.