



# Caribbean Science Foundation

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*"Grooming the next generation of Caribbean science and engineering leaders"*

## Student Program for Innovation in Science and Engineering (SPISE)

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SPISE

#### 1. *What is the Student Program for Innovation in Science and Engineering (SPISE)?*

The Student Program for Innovation in Science and Engineering (SPISE) is an intensive five-week enrichment summer program designed for promising high-school students from the Caribbean who are at least age 16 but less than age 18 on **April 1** of the current year, and are interested in exploring careers in science and engineering. The goal is to help address the low numbers of Caribbean students pursuing advanced degrees and careers in science and engineering, and to help develop the next generation of technology leaders in the Region.

#### 2. *What is the SPISE environment?*

SPISE is a learning environment in which students are trained to think logically and critically, and to develop analytical and logical problem-solving approaches in several disciplines. Rote learning is discouraged. Thus, while getting the correct answers to problems and questions is important, critical and logical thinking, robust methodology, and analytical problem-solving approaches are more highly valued in SPISE. The focus is on understanding the concepts and fundamental principles in each discipline, and on gaining enough mastery to apply these fundamentals to find solutions to complex problems that have not been encountered before.

SPISE, therefore, provides a risk-free learning environment in which students are encouraged to have no fear, insecurity or hesitation in asking questions. That is, there is no penalty for statements such as "I do not know" or "I do not understand", and there is no such thing as a stupid question. Since there is minimal competition between students, students naturally help each other to learn and understand the material, and are continually encouraged to do so.

Teamwork is another essential component of the SPISE experience, as all of the hands-on projects (electronics with microprocessors, computer programming and entrepreneurship) require students to work in groups, to prepare for a final project that is showcased to the public at the end of the program. Students participate with the understanding that the project goal, and not individual egos, must take top priority.

#### 3. *What will be the format of SPISE this year?*

SPISE will be held in a hybrid format with the first three weeks (July 5 to July 24) held virtually via Zoom and the last 2 weeks (July 25 to August 9) held in-person at the University of the West Indies - Cave Hill Campus in Barbados.

#### 4. *Are students required to participate in SPISE for the entire five weeks?*

Yes. Students are required to participate in all virtual and in-person activities for the entire five weeks, including weekend (Saturday and Sunday) activities. If a student is not sure they can stay in the program for the entire five weeks, then that student should not apply. Our precious funding is very limited, and both the sponsors of the students and the CSF want to make sure that our resources are effectively and efficiently used to provide maximum benefit to the Region.

#### 5. *Where will students be staying during the program while in-person, and what supervision provisions does CSF have in place?*

All students will be living in one of the dormitories on the UWI Cave Hill, Barbados Campus for the last 2 weeks of the program. Students will be supervised and chaperoned at all times (24/7) by Teaching Assistants who will also be living in the dormitory, in close proximity to the students.

**6. *What is the waitlist?***

The CSF may offer conditional acceptance to a few highly qualified students for whom we do not yet have sponsorship. The students are placed on a “waitlist” and then the CSF works very hard to secure sponsorship for these students. We realize that this places some uncertainty in the lives of the wait-listed students, so wait-listed students have the option to remove themselves from consideration at any time. Wait-listed students may be asked for family contributions towards the cost of participating in SPISE.

**7. *How much does it cost to participate in SPISE?***

The SPISE is free for most participants. The cost to sponsor one student in SPISE 2026 is US\$ 6500 which includes round trip airfare between the student’s country and Barbados, or US\$ 6000 for students who reside in Barbados. Transportation costs between the Barbados airport and the UWI-Barbados campus will be covered by the CSF. While in-person, all meals are provided for the students. If there are insufficient funds for a student, then they will be placed on the waitlist and may be asked for family contributions towards the cost of participating in SPISE.

**8. *Can I assist with finding my own sponsorship?***

First, you would have to be notified by the CSF of your successful admission to the program or of your placement on the waitlist for admission pending sponsorship. Then all your activities to help us secure sponsorship for your participation must be done in collaboration with the CSF headquarters.

**9. *Can my parents cover my sponsorship?***

Parents who are able to provide the cost of sponsorship are encouraged to do so if their child is waitlisted. The CSF will first assist the most needy students with its very limited funds.

**10. *Do I have to pay my own roundtrip airfare to Barbados?***

No. Your sponsorship will cover your airfare, if you are traveling to Barbados from another country.

**11. *What are the transportation arrangements for the students between the Barbados airport and their accommodations?***

Upon arrival at the Barbados airport, each student will be met at the airport by a Teaching Assistant who will accompany them to their accommodations by taxi. Similarly, at the end of the program, each student will be escorted to the Barbados airport by a Teaching Assistant.

**12. *Does the CSF cover the cost of transportation to and from my home in my home country and the airport in my home country?***

No. The CSF does not cover the cost of transporting students to and from the airport in their home country.

**13. *What should I do if my recommenders have not completed their recommendation forms by the due date?***

You should remind your recommenders to urgently fill out the ‘SPISE 2026 Recommendation Form’ so that we receive them as close to the deadline as possible and no later than 1 week after the deadline. Your application may be removed from consideration if it is missing a recommendation. The link to the ‘SPISE 2026 Recommendation Form’ as well as guidelines for recommenders can be found within the request for recommendation document at <https://caribbeanscience.org/spise-2026/>. Please share this information with your recommenders.

**14. *Who can apply to the SPISE Program?***

SPISE is open to high school students who are citizens or permanent residents of the English-speaking Caribbean (excluding U.S. territories), are at least age 16 but less than age 18 on April 1 of the current year (2026), and have been enrolled in a high school within the Caribbean for the past 4 years (2022-2025). The program is also open to students from Bermuda. Applicants from the Dutch, French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students may be enrolled in a public or private school or be homeschooled. Students from all economic backgrounds can apply to the SPISE. Girls are especially encouraged to apply. Students from U.S. territories in the Caribbean are eligible for and should apply to the MITES program at MIT (<http://oeop.mit.edu/programs/mites>).

*15. I do not have a passport. Can I still apply?*

If you do not live in Barbados, you must have a passport that is valid through August 11, 2026 to participate in SPISE. The absolute latest date we will accept a photocopy of a valid passport is April 1, 2026. After that, your application may be removed from consideration.

*16. I am interested in a career in medicine. Can I apply?*

Consistent with the mission of the CSF to assist with the diversification of the economy of Caribbean countries, SPISE by design is more geared to assisting students interested in science and engineering than those interested in other disciplines such as medicine. Thus, while students interested in pursuing careers in medicine may apply, admissions preference will be given to students interested in science and engineering careers, all other factors being equal.

*17. I am homeschooled and am essentially doing the work of a 5<sup>th</sup> former. Can I apply?*

You must submit documentation of your current curriculum to the SPISE program, proving that you are recognized as a 5<sup>th</sup> former. These documents must be uploaded as a part of your application.

*18. I have applied for citizenship and expect to be a Caribbean citizen by the start of the program. Can I apply to SPISE?*

You must have proof of your Caribbean citizenship or permanent residence when you apply to the SPISE. If you are still in the process of obtaining your CARICOM citizenship or permanent residence at the time of applying, you are ineligible for the program. However, if you have been enrolled for at least the past 4 calendar years (2022-2025) in a school in the Caribbean at the time you submit your application, then you may apply (see the next question).

*19. I am not a citizen or a permanent resident of the Caribbean, but I have spent several years in the Region enrolled in Caribbean schools. Can I apply to the SPISE program?*

To be eligible for SPISE, you must show proof that you have been enrolled for at least the past 4 calendar years (2022-2025) in a school in the Caribbean at the time you submit your application.

*20. I am a US citizen. Can I apply to the SPISE program?*

US citizens are eligible and are encouraged to apply to the MITES program at MIT. SPISE is modeled after the MITES program. The website for the MITES program is <http://web.mit.edu/mites>. Caribbean citizens are ineligible for the MITES program at MIT. US citizens may apply to SPISE if they have been enrolled for at least the past 4 calendar years (2022-2025) in a school in the Caribbean at the time of application submission.

*21. I am a citizen of the UK, and at least one of my parents is a Caribbean citizen. Can I apply to the SPISE program?*

CADSTI-UK has negotiated a special agreement with the CSF, so that you are eligible to apply to SPISE if you meet the age requirement.

*22. I will be enrolling in a university in the fall, am I still eligible to apply?*

Yes, you are still eligible to apply, but preference will be given to students who have not yet been accepted at a university.

*23. My current term grades will not be released by the application deadline. What should I submit?*

You are required to submit your transcripts to cover the period January 2022 to December 2025. If your grades for the term which ends in December 2025 are unavailable, then please upload your previous term grades, via the application form, by the deadline. Then send us an unofficial copy of your grades for the term which ends in December 2025 as soon as you receive it, by emailing [applications.csf@gmail.com](mailto:applications.csf@gmail.com). Officially signed grades should be e-mailed in PDF format to [applications.csf@gmail.com](mailto:applications.csf@gmail.com) from your school, and must reach the CSF within 1 week after the deadline to be considered as part of your application.

*24. I will be taking my CSEC, CAPE/Associate Degree, or SAT exams just before the application deadline. Can I still apply to the SPISE Program?*

Yes, you may still apply. All application materials must be submitted by the deadline. If possible, you should schedule your exam so as to receive your scores by the deadline. However, we will accept results from exams if they reach the CSF by e-mail within one week after the deadline, i.e. by March 8.

**25. In my country we do not take the CSEC, CAPE or SAT exams. Can I still apply?**

Yes, you may still apply. However, you must submit via the application form enough supporting information, i.e., the syllabuses for your science (physics, chemistry, or biology) and math courses along with your grades/scores so we can compare the exams you have taken with the CSEC, CAPE and SAT exams.

**26. Can I have extra recommendations that I feel will make my application stronger submitted on my behalf?**

Due to the expected high volume of applications, we are unable to accept extra recommendations.

**27. Do my recommendation forms have to be submitted by my current math or science teacher?**

Your recommendation forms must be submitted by your current or recent (see below) math and science teachers. Recommendation forms from computer science or IT teachers are not acceptable. Similarly, recommendations from tutors are strongly discouraged.

**28. I do not have a math or science teacher this term. What should I do?**

If you do not have a science (physics, chemistry, or biology) or math class this term, then please ask a science or math teacher from within the past 2-3 years to submit your recommendation form. We must have a recommendation form submitted by a teacher for each of these two subject areas.

**29. I am having trouble uploading images or documents to the application form. What should I do?**

- a) Access the form using the most up-to-date version of the Google Chrome browser (preferably on a laptop), ensuring you are not using a VPN.
- b) Ensure that you have enough space/storage on the Google Drive linked to the Gmail address you are using to fill out the form.
- c) Ensure the file size limit is not being exceeded (the maximum file size is displayed on the form).
- d) Ensure you are uploading the correct file type (usually an image, PDF or Word document. The form will indicate the file types allowed).
- e) Try clearing your cache (press 'ctrl+shift+delete' or 'cmd+shift+delete', then select 'cached images and files' and press 'delete data').

**30. I was not able to submit my application form by the deadline. Can I still turn it in?**

All applications must be received electronically by the application deadline of March 1, 2026, 11:59 PM AST. There are no exceptions.

**31. When will I find out whether or not I was accepted into the SPISE?**

Decisions for SPISE will be communicated to applicants around April 15. You may receive a request for an interview via videoconference in early April, prior to the decision.

**32. Will I receive secondary school or college credit or grades if I participate in SPISE?**

Although there will be homework, quizzes and exams, the grades received will not count for secondary school or university credit. All students will receive both qualitative and quantitative evaluations during SPISE, as well as final evaluations at the end of the program. Upon request, the SPISE Directors will provide letters of recommendation for your future university and scholarship applications in which they will comment on your SPISE performance. It should be noted that SPISE should not be viewed as preparation for CAPE.

**33. Can students drop any classes in SPISE?**

No classes can be dropped. Students must stay with all of their classes for the duration of the five-week program. Moreover, we expect all students to try their best in all classes, even those they may be less interested in. STEM is highly multi-disciplinary and it is very useful to have some basic knowledge of all areas of STEM. Furthermore, many students change their majors before or during their 1<sup>st</sup> year in university. You may find yourself very interested in a subject you had not previously encountered or thought would be of interest.

**34. How much homework are students given?**

The amount of homework in each course is determined by the instructor of that course. In addition, the core courses (calculus, physics, and biochemistry) will also have final exams. The electronics hands-on course

requires students to work in groups and to design and fabricate modules, components and systems for a final project that is showcased to the public at the end of the program. The computer programming (Python) course and entrepreneurship workshop have team project components as well. **On average, students should expect to have about 5 hours of homework and/or project work every evening.**

*35. Will I have any free time during the SPISE?*

SPISE includes time for classes, eating, studying, special seminars during the week, and planned social activities on the weekend. During the week, students are in class (including lab) from 9 am to approximately 5 pm. On Saturdays, students have classes in the morning. Students will have some time to relax on Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

*36. I am a practicing Jewish or Seventh Day Adventist student and observe Saturday as the Sabbath. Will provision be made for me if I attend SPISE? Will I be able to make up any missed classes?*

Classes are held on Saturday mornings until 12:00, after which there are scheduled student group activities and tours. Unfortunately, the resources of the CSF are too limited to cover the additional assistance needed for students to make up a significant number of missed classes, such as the weekly Saturday morning classes.

*37. Can I be excused from SPISE to visit friends/family or attend church/social activities?*

You should not plan to be away from SPISE during scheduled class or activity time, including evening or weekend office hours, review sessions or team meetings. These additional meetings outside of classes are a key component of the program, which has been carefully designed to provide maximum benefit to the students. It is an absolute requirement for you to attend **ALL** classes and SPISE activities (both virtual and in-person) unless you are ill.

In general, while you are in Barbados, we do not allow attendance of non-SPISE social activities off-campus. This means that you will only be allowed off-campus for a medical emergency or pre-planned SPISE activity such as a tour.

*38. Can SPISE be compared to a sleep-over summer camp?*

**SPISE is NOT a summer camp.** Students should not apply unless they are mentally and physically prepared to be intensively immersed in challenging and rigorous course work for five weeks. Every student will be challenged just outside his/her comfort zone, and students are expected to give their best effort for all five weeks.

*39. Is an interview required as part of the application process?*

Students should expect to be interviewed by the Director of SPISE before acceptance into the program.

*40. Will I be required to provide any equipment or books?*

A laptop is considered an essential learning tool for SPISE, and it is expected that each participant will have one. You will need to use your own stationery during the first 3 weeks when SPISE is being held virtually, but we can provide stationery for you once you are in Barbados. However, you may bring any additional items you think will be useful.

*41. Is there anything specific that I need while participating virtually?*

Other than a laptop and stationery, you will need a quiet location free from distractions and good internet connection.

*42. Do I need to be vaccinated against COVID-19?*

Vaccination against COVID-19 is highly recommended though not absolutely required.

*43. How do I contact the SPISE office?*

E-mail: [applications.csf@gmail.com](mailto:applications.csf@gmail.com)