

## BIGSSS-departs: Frequently Asked Questions

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### **1. I cannot find an application form. How do I apply?**

All of the necessary admissions information and application instructions can be found on our webpage. Be sure to read the whole page carefully, including all documents provided for download.

### **2. What are the options for sending my application?**

The only way to apply for our program is via our admissions system, where you can upload your application materials online.

Candidates interested in becoming an Affiliated fellow at BIGSSS should contact our Admissions Officer at [admissions-officer@bigsss-bremen.de](mailto:admissions-officer@bigsss-bremen.de)

### **3. My Master's program was in English. Do I still have to pass the TOEFL exam or an equivalent exam?**

You are exempt from taking the TOEFL, or another test equivalent if:

- you are a native speaker of English
- you have received your A-levels at an institution where the language of instruction is English
- you have earned a higher-educational degree at an institution where the language of instruction is English

### **4. What score do I have to reach on the English proficiency test?**

TOEFL: 100 internet-based test, 250 computer-based, 600 paper-based

IELTS: Band 7.5

Scores should be no older than two years.

We also accept the CAE and CPE (Cambridge exams)

## **5. My Master's Degree was not in the social sciences. Can I still apply to BIGSSS?**

We accept all social science and humanities degrees, as well as disciplines pertinent to at least one of BIGSSS' three Thematic fields, i.e. in Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, or related social science disciplines e.g. Law, Economics or Mass Communication.

All others are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. All applicants must submit a dissertation proposal/research plan which has a social scientific topic. This topic should also relate to one of our three Thematic Fields.

## **6. When do I have to finish my Master's in order to be eligible?**

Applicants interested in a BIGSSS-departs fellowship must have finished their MA degrees by May 31, 2017.

## **7. Can I apply to more than one field?**

No, you should choose one field only.

## **8. Can Non-EU citizens apply?**

Yes, all nationalities are welcome to apply.

However: Due to EU COFUND regulations, applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Germany for more than 12 months during the 3 years immediately prior to the date of their application to BIGSSS-departs. Compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

All accepted researchers are expected to move to Bremen for the BIGSSS-departs PhD Program.

## **9. Is there an age limit for BIGSSS fellowships?**

No.

However: Due to EU COFUND regulations, all applicants shall, at the start of the BIGSSS-departs PhD Program, be in the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience) of their research careers and not yet have been awarded a doctoral degree.

## 10. Should I choose a supervisor before applying?

You should indicate one or two potential supervisors you would be interested in working with in your Statement of Purpose. Please make sure to check the homepages of our faculty for their research interests. **You should not, however, contact the supervisors personally.** We will review your choice(s) during the application process.

## 11. Do I have to speak German in order to be eligible for a fellowship?

No, the language of instruction at BIGSSS is English.

## 12. My TOEFL/IELTS scores will not arrive before the deadline. May I send them after the deadline?

We encourage you to submit all other application materials by the deadline. Send us your scores as soon as you get them. We cannot, however, guarantee that your application will be considered.

## 13. How can my referees send their letters of reference?

Referees should upload their letters directly into the admissions system. The applicants need to enter their contact information into their online application, after which the referees will receive emails with instructions on how to proceed.

BIGSSS reserves the right to ask for hardcopies of all letters sent electronically if an applicant is shortlisted.

## 14. When do I have to be in Bremen if admitted to BIGSSS?

PhD fellows must be in Bremen by the starting date of the BIGSSS-departs PhD Program.

## 15. I am not an EU-citizen. If I am admitted to BIGSSS, how early should I start applying for my visa?

You should start as soon as you are accepted to the program as the visa process can be quite lengthy. BIGSSS will try to support you in this process, but it is ultimately your responsibility to obtain the necessary visa in time for the starting date of the BIGSSS-departs program.

### **16. I cannot find an application form. How do I apply?**

You apply through our online admissions system. Please go to <https://admissions-departs-2017.bigsss-bremen.de/>

### **17. What is the EU Mobility Rule and how to I know if I am eligible?**

The EU Mobility Rule means that you must not have resided or carried out your main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Germany for more than 12 months in the three years prior to the date of your potential recruitment. Please calculate how many months you have/will spend in Germany during this period, if any, in order to determine your eligibility.

### **18. Can I apply if I have already completed a PhD?**

The BIGSSS-departs Program is only open to applicants who have not yet received a doctoral degree.

### **19. How do I find the contact details for my potential supervisors?**

Please refer to our faculty list to determine the appropriate supervisors for your research area. Include their names in your application, but please do not contact them directly.

### **20. What is the difference between the BIGSSS-departs program and the Regular PhD program?**

The major differences are that the BIGSSS-departs program lasts for 42 months, including a six month period spent at an external partner institution. The BIGSSS-departs program also adheres to the EU Mobility Rule (EUMR) and the Early Stage Researcher (ESR) regulations. Successful BIGSSS-departs applicants receive employment contracts for 42 months.

The Regular BIGSSS-PhD program lasts for 36 months, does not include a compulsory period spent at an external institution, and does not adhere to the EUMR and ESR regulations. Successful Regular BIGSSS PhD applicants receive stipends for 36 months.

**21. I have been working in a research institute but have not been conducting research. Am I still considered an Early-Stage Researcher?**

Provided that you have not been working full-time in a research career for more than four years and have not already received a doctoral degree, you would still be eligible under the ESR regulations.

**22. I completed my Master's degree several years ago. Am I still considered an Early-Stage-Researcher?**

Yes. The year when you graduated from your Master's degree does not affect your eligibility for the program.

**23. Can I visit BIGSSS when I am in Bremen and meet the faculty?**

Due to the busy schedules of our faculty and staff, we cannot facilitate visits to our offices.

**24. Can I receive detailed guidelines for the research proposal?**

We do not expect you to have an ultimate version of your research proposal upon application. Nonetheless, we ask for a well-developed version of your preliminary dissertation proposal. It should be written in English, encompass between 5 and 10 double-spaced pages and include the following elements:

- (1) Summary
- (2) State of research (highlighting theoretical and empirical debates on your topic and deficits in the literature that your project would address)
- (3) Your research experience/competence in the field
- (4) Objectives, methods and work plan (be very specific about the methods used and the stages of the work plan)
- (5) Bibliography

Please note: By submitting your application, you consent to have your dissertation proposal checked for plagiarism.

## **25. Do I need to provide academic referees?**

At least one of your references should be from a professor that has instructed you. The second reference may be from someone who knows you either professionally or academically.

## **26. My TOEFL/IELTS score is slightly lower than the required score. Will my application be rejected?**

Unfortunately we cannot guarantee that your application will be considered if your score is lower than the score stated on our list of Application Materials.

## **27. Is there any additional funding for dependents?**

There is no additional family allowance (for children or a partner) on top of the work-contract salary. However, depending on your civil/family status (single vs. married; number of children), your income is taxed less when you have children. This means that your net income will be higher than when you do not have children.

## **28. I wish to conduct research on a case study outside of Europe. Is this possible at BIGSSS?**

Yes, we accept research proposals based on both European and non-European contexts. However, please ensure that your proposal fits with the research interests of your potential supervisors. Please also make sure to fill in the Ethics form and upload it in the admissions system.

## **29. I created an account in the admissions system, but cannot log in. What did I do wrong?**

Please make sure that you are in the right admissions system:

Applications for the first call for the BIGSSS-departs Program (application deadline Sept 15, 2016 / program start Feb 1, 2017): <https://admissions-departs-2016.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Applications for the second call for the BIGSSS-departs Program (application deadline Jan 31, 2017 / program start Sept 1, 2017): <https://admissions-departs-2017.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Applications for the call for the Regular PhD Program (application deadline Jan 31, 2017 / program start Sept 1, 2017): <https://admissions.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Applications for the call for the Postdoc Program (application deadline Jan 31, 2017 / program start Sept 1, 2017): <https://admissions.bigsss-bremen.de/>