

BIGSSS Regular PhD: Frequently Asked Questions

1. I cannot find an application form. How do I apply?
2. What are the options for sending my application?
3. My Master's program was in English. Do I still have to pass the TOEFL exam or an equivalent exam?
4. What score do I have to reach on the English proficiency test?
5. My Master's Degree was not in the social sciences. Can I still apply to BIGSSS?
6. When do I have to finish my Master's in order to be eligible?
7. Can I apply to more than one field?
8. Can Non-EU citizens apply?
9. Is there an age limit for BIGSSS fellowships?
10. Should I choose a supervisor before applying?
11. Do I have to pay taxes on my stipend? How do I pay for health insurance?
12. Do I have to speak German in order to be eligible for a fellowship?
13. My TOEFL/IELTS scores will not arrive before the deadline. May I send them after the deadline?
14. Should my referees send my letters of recommendation via e-mail or by post?
15. When do I have to be in Bremen if admitted to BIGSSS?
16. I am not an EU-citizen. If I am admitted to BIGSSS, how early should I start applying for my visa?
17. I created an account in the admissions system, but cannot log in. What did I do wrong?

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

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 PhD fellowship must have finished their MA degrees by May 31st of the year of the program start.

7. Can I apply to more than one thematic field?

No, you should choose one thematic field only.

8. Can Non-EU citizens apply?

Yes, all nationalities are welcome to apply.

9. Is there an age limit for BIGSSS fellowships?

No.

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 online application. 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 pay taxes on my stipend or my work contract? How do I pay for health insurance?

BIGSSS offers several doctoral programs, with different regulations in the payment models (stipends vs. employment contracts etc.). For specific questions on these topics, please contact the BIGSSS Admissions and Administration Officer, the Director of Studies or other members of BIGSSS' administration team.

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

No, the language of instruction at BIGSSS is English.

13. 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.

14. 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.

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

PhD fellows must be in Bremen by the starting date, September 1st.

16. 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 September 1st starting date.

17. 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 call for the Regular PhD Program: <https://admissions.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Applications for the call for the Postdoc Program: <https://admissions.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Applications for the BIGSSS-departs PhD Program: <https://admissions-departs-2017.bigsss-bremen.de/>

Do you still have questions about the admissions process? Please contact our Admissions Officer at admissions-officer@bigsss-bremen.de