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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 the BIGSSS/DAAD-GSSP homepage. 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 this program is via the email address: application@bigsss-bremen.de.

3. Are there any exceptions with regard to the language certificate?

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

- a) You are a native speaker of English.
- b) You have received your A-levels at an institution where the language of instruction is English.
- c) 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: paper-based 600, computer-based 250, internet-based 100
- IELTS: Band 7.5
- Cambridge Certificate: pass CAE

Scores should be no older than two years.

5. My Master's Degree was not in the social sciences. Can I still apply for the BIGSSS/DAAD-GSSP Program?

We accept all social science and humanities degrees. 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 the research topics or questions from the supervisors involved in the program.

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

Applicants interested in the BIGSSS/DAAD-GSSP Program must have finished their Master's degree by January 1st of the year of the program start.

7. Can Non-EU citizens apply?

Yes, all international candidates are welcome to apply and we particularly encourage applications from the Global South. However, when applying you must not have resided in Germany any time after December 1, 2024.

8. Is there an age limit when applying for the BIGSSS/DAAD-GSSP Program?

No.

9. Am I eligible if I already have a PhD-degree?

The DAAD Graduate School Scholarship Program is directed towards early career researchers which means we cannot consider applications of researchers who already have a PhD degree.

10. How do I know which supervisor to choose?

On our website you can see a list of supervisors each stating one or multiple research interest(s) in the focus of the GSSP program. Your project proposal needs to be compatible with one (or several) of these research interests. Please refer to the section "Faculty and Research" on the GSSP website to find out more about the research program and your potential supervisors.

11. Can I use one of the exemplary research questions in my application?

The exemplary research questions as provided by our faculty are intended to give you an idea of potential research projects that could fit within their individual research interest. In your application, you can follow the exemplary research question more or less closely or propose another research question, which fits within the research interests of the supervisor indicated in your application.

12. Should I choose a supervisor before applying?

You should indicate one potential supervisor from the faculty list that you would be interested in working with in your application and in your statement of purpose. You should NOT, however, contact the supervisor personally. We will review your choice(s) during the application process.

13. Do I have to speak German in order to be eligible for the program?

No, the language of instruction at BIGSSS and of the DAAD-GSSP Program is English. The DAAD-

GSSP funding foresees a German language course in Bremen.

14. 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. However, we cannot guarantee that your application will be considered.

15. How can my referees send their letters of reference?

Applicants should have their referees send letters of recommendation directly to the stated email address (admissions-officer@bigsss-bremen.de) or by mail (Noha Mahmoud, Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences (BIGSSS), University of Bremen, Postfach 33 04 40, D – 28334 Bremen, Germany). A template can be found at:

<https://www.daad.de/medien/deutschland/stipendien/formulare/recommendation.doc>

BIGSSS reserves the right to ask for hardcopies of all letters and to contact referees directly if an applicant is shortlisted.

16. When do I have to be in Bremen if admitted to the program?

PhD fellows must be in Bremen by the start date of the program. Please consult our website or contact the Admissions Officer for more information. The official start of the program is scheduled for September 1, 2026.

17. I am not an EU-citizen. If I am admitted to the program, 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.

18. What does the two-tier application process of the program mean? Is it possible my application will get rejected in the second stage?

Upon submitting your documents to BIGSSS, we will evaluate all aspects concerning your eligibility to the program. At the end of the review process, the selected applicants are asked to apply again with the DAAD (more info provided by the Admissions Officer in due time). This second tier is a non-academic review, which is fully independent from BIGSSS and therefore we cannot guarantee the overall acceptance, however the chances for a rejection are very low.

19. Who will provide for my funding?

Once an applicant is granted access to the BIGSSS-GSSP program, s/he will have to register with the DAAD. All financial support will be directly provided by the DAAD, including additional allowances and the funding for the language course. All office supplies, office space, IT hardware and general working materials will be provided by BIGSSS. Additional courses and fees resulting e.g. from a stay abroad do need a separate application with the DAAD. Upon arriving at Bremen, there will be a detailed introduction to funding processes of the program with the BIGSSS administration.

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