

Guidelines for Applicants

These guidelines should help you as you think about applying to the Berlin Mathematical School (BMS). We are pleased that you are considering BMS, and offer you encouragement along with some words of advice.

The Berlin Mathematical School presents exceptional opportunities offering students the academic and intellectual resources of three universities. However, before applying for admission you should determine that the BMS program actually meets your interests and needs. Make sure that our program has scholars working actively in the mathematical fields that you are interested in.

Consult with your previous professors; faculty members here in Berlin may also be of help to you. Visit us on the web where you will find important information about the BMS study program, current seminars, and ongoing activities as well as the home pages of many of our individual faculty members and current students. It is in your interest, as well as ours, that the most highly qualified and motivated candidates find the best match for their research interests.

Working towards a Ph.D. is more than a continuation of your previous studies. During your graduate education you will develop the capacity for independent research by working closely with a scholar, or a small group of scholars, whose work can serve as a model. It is a transition period at the end of which you will have become a colleague to your professors. Achieving this requires more than completing courses, accumulating credits, and passing prescribed examinations. Such a position is earned by commitment to the difficult, but fulfilling, craft of independent research through which you demonstrate the ability to make an original contribution to knowledge.

Meeting this challenge requires personal sacrifice -- of time, of leisure, of immediate rewards. But the achievement is well worth the cost in terms of intellectual satisfaction and the opportunity to expand the boundaries of knowledge.

Before resolving to set out on the path to a doctoral degree, do reflect on the commitment that will be required. If you think you have this commitment -- sufficient to sustain you through several years of intense and concentrated work and study -- we welcome your application.

Konrad Polthier (Chair), Jürg Kramer (Deputy Chair), John Sullivan (Deputy Chair)

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A. GENERAL INFORMATION

These Guidelines are meant for applicants who wish to apply for the BMS Ph.D. program. We hope that you will find them useful when preparing your application. Should we have left out anything that you would like to know about, feel free to contact us at the BMS One-Stop Office. We will be happy to answer any further questions you may have. Address and other contact details of the One-Stop Office can be found on the last page of these guidelines.

Before assembling your application materials, we recommend that you have a look at the BMS Study Regulations to find out about the requirements of our program. You can find the BMS Study Regulations here:

<http://www.math-berlin.de/Courses.html>

The application period for the academic year 2012/13 (winter semester 2012 and summer semester 2013) will start on September 1, 2011 and end on May 31, 2012. Applicants in need of a scholarship must submit their application until December 31, 2011. After that date BMS scholarships are subject to availability.

Please use our online submission form to apply for the BMS program. Note that in order to access the application form, you have to first register: This is a simple procedure -- see the login form on the main page: <http://www.math-berlin.de/>

Students wishing to enter Phase I of the BMS are expected to have a Bachelor degree, Vordiplom, or equivalent. Thus, in particular, Berlin mathematics students in their "Hauptstudium" can apply for membership in BMS. For students who are further advanced, part of the Phase I course requirements may be waived.

For entering Phase II, students are expected to have a Master, a German "Diplom" or an equivalent degree, or to pass the BMS Qualifying Exams. In particular, they thus satisfy the regular admission requirements of the Berlin universities' PhD programs.

It is not necessary that you have completed your degree by the time you submit your application. You need to have a degree by the time you want to start at BMS! For example, you are pursuing a Master degree that will be completed in May 2012. When you submit your application to the BMS in December 2011, you already need to apply for Phase III! If you will have finished your Bachelor degree by October 2012, you are welcome to apply for Phase I even though you currently hold no degree.

Applications handed in before December 31 will be decided in March. You will receive an e-mail notification about the admission decision by the end of March. We ask you to abstain from e-mail or phone enquiries. Please be assured that we will inform you as soon as the decisions will have been taken.

The academic calendar at the BMS is in accordance with its three supporting universities (FU, HU, TU):

Winter semester 2012: October 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013
Lectures: October 15, 2012 - February 15, 2013
Summer semester 2013: April 1, 2013 - September 30, 2013
Lectures: April 15, 2013 - July 19, 2013

B. MATERIALS REQUIRED TO APPLY

1. Online Application Form
2. Personal Statement
3. Curriculum Vitae (pdf)
4. Two Letters of Recommendation
5. Transcripts (pdf)
6. Statement of Financial Resources
7. Proof of Proficiency in English
8. Phase II Applicants only: Research Statement (pdf)

German applicants are allowed to submit their application in German!

Online Application Form

All sections of the online application form must be completed and submitted by the deadline in order for the application to be considered.

To access the online application form, you have to register as a user on the main page: www.math-berlin.de. Once you are registered click on "Application Form" in the main menu to get to the online application form. Please complete all five sections of the form and upload all required documents. If you do not wish to complete the application in one session or plan on attaching documents later, please use the "Save Application" button. This way you can access your application again whenever you want and make changes.

Only hit the "Submit" button at the end of the form, if you are sure that you do not wish to make changes or add more documents! Once you click "Submit" you will neither be allowed to access it nor upload any further documents nor make any other changes!

In the case of severe technical problems with the online form please contact the One-Stop Office to help you submit your application.

Personal Statement (Motivationsschreiben)

The statement should at least be one and at most two pages long and should describe your academic and career plans as well as your motivation and your scientific interests. When writing your personal statement make sure to answer the following questions:

- what are your mathematical interests?
- how, where, and when did they develop?
- what mathematical fields are you particularly interested in and why?
- why do you think is the BMS the right choice for you?
- with which faculty member would you like to work and why?

Please be prepared to copy+paste the statement text into a text field while filling out the online-application.

Curriculum Vitae

Your CV should be between one and two pages long and list the dates of your education to date together with your personal academic history including academic credential, publication, contribution or other significant achievement. German applicants should submit a "tabellarischer Lebenslauf". Please have your CV ready as a pdf-file, you will be asked to upload it in the online application.

Letters of Recommendation

Two letters of recommendation from faculty members or others well acquainted with your academic work are required. Letters of recommendation can be submitted electronically by using our Web recommendation service available through the online application. When applying, simply supply your recommenders' e-mail addresses. They will then receive an e-mail with directions on how to proceed. Recommenders are strongly encouraged to use the Web recommendation service instead of paper. If not all of your recommenders can access the Web service, then any combination of web and/or paper recommendations are acceptable. Do not send both web recommendations and paper recommendations from the same recommender. If your recommenders choose to submit their paper letters directly to the BMS, it is your responsibility to inform them of the application deadline. Your recommenders should be aware that, if we receive recommendations after the application deadline, it may adversely impact the review of your application and may hinder your chances of admission.

We do not accept recommendations that have been submitted by the applicants themselves!

Transcripts

One official transcript from every college or university you have attended should be submitted. To prevent delays, you should arrange with your registrar to provide transcripts as soon as possible or submit preliminary transcripts with as many grades as possible. Please have your transcripts ready as pdf-files, you will be asked to upload them in the online application.

Statement of Financial Resources

A Statement of Financial Resources is required of all applicants. Please indicate how you plan to finance your studies by answering the following questions.

What steps have you taken to secure funding for your studies?

Which means of support have you explored?

Have you applied for scholarships from other institutions? If so which?

Will a scholarship be necessary to enable you to come to BMS?

Proof of Proficiency in English

If your native language is neither English nor German, you must submit a proof of your English language proficiency. This is not required if you have attended a school, university or college where English is the language of instruction.

If your native language is German, your "Abitur" or "Matura" grade in English will serve as proof of English proficiency. We require a grade of at least "befriedigend" or equivalent. If you cannot submit a copy of your "Abitur" or "Matura" or it does not show a grade for English you will have to submit a result of one of the tests below.

All applicants whose native language is not English nor German and who have not received their previous education in a college or university where English is the language of instruction must submit scores from one of the tests below:

- a) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Scores must not be older than two years. The BMS TOEFL code is 2593, use this code to have your scores sent direct to the BMS.
 - Internet-Based Test (TOEFL iBT - minimum score 79)
 - TOEFL Computer-Based Test (CBT - minimum score 213)
 - TOEFL Paper-Based Test (PBT - minimum score 550)
- b) Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) minimum level C
- c) Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) minimum Level C
- d) International English Language Testing System - Academic Test (IELTS) with a minimum of 6.5. Scores that are more than two years old are not valid and will not be considered.

Research Statement

Phase II applicants should have a detailed idea of their dissertation area and who may be a possible supervisor at the BMS. We expect the research statement to be one page long and to explain the ideas of the candidate with respect to her/his dissertation as well as to outline the underlying research project. This includes mentioning whom the applicant sees as a possible supervisor to her/his dissertation! Please have your research statement ready as a pdf-file, you will be asked to upload it in the online application.

Applications that are not complete by the time of the deadline cannot be considered for admission!

C. ADMISSION DECISIONS

The BMS Admission Committee decides all applications. It comprises of BMS faculty members from the math departments of the participating three universities. Applications handed in before December 31 will be decided in March. You will receive an e-mail notification about the admission decision by the end of March. We ask you to abstain from e-mail or phone enquiries. Please be assured that we will inform you as soon as the decisions will have been taken.

The decisions by the BMS Admission Committee are made based on a careful evaluation of the following criteria:

1. Is the application complete according to section B. Only complete applications will be considered!
2. All grades are converted to the German grading scale according to German Federal Regulations. Only the best 40 applications in each of Phase I and Phase II are considered further.
3. Do the recommenders see potential in the applicant for a PhD and how do the recommenders rank the applicant in her/his cohort?
4. Do the relevant BMS-professors have capacities to supervise the applicant and do we have enough resources in the chosen field to guarantee the completion of the PhD?

D. DEGREE

It is the declared goal of each BMS student to obtain a Ph.D. at one of three participating Berlin universities. Upon successful graduation from the BMS study and research program, a special Certificate of Excellence will be awarded.

E. BMS STUDY PROGRAM

The BMS Program is divided into two phases:

Phase I				Phase II		
1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester	5th semester	6th semester	...

Basic Courses	Advanced Courses	Qualifying Exam	Advanced Courses
			Thesis Research

Phase I (three to four semesters) leads students from the Bachelor to the Qualifying Exam. Students need to achieve an average grade of at least “good” on the German grading scale in their Phase I courses to be allowed to take the Qualifying Exam. Students must pass the Qualifying Exam with at least a grade of “good” to be allowed into Phase II. Successfully passing the Phase I confirms that the student achieved a satisfactory level on which the dissertation can be built. Students are now ready to undertake independent research. Students who are either not admitted to take the Qualifying Exam or received grade of less than “good” are given the chance to do a Master. The allocation of scholarships for Phase II is based on the student’s performance in Phase I and in the Qualifying Exam. Having had a Phase I scholarship does not guarantee a Phase II scholarship! Students are expected to look for outside funding for Phase II together with their advisor.

Phase II (four to six semesters) is the independent research phase leading to the dissertation. Preferably the student will work in one of the Research Training Groups or International Max Planck Research Schools (IMPRSs), at the DFG Research Center MATHEON, or another one of the BMS certified units that guarantee supervision and an instructive environment for Phase II students.

A list of classes for each semester can be viewed at <http://www.math-berlin.de/Courses.html>

F. USEFUL HINTS

Submit your application as early as possible, at least two weeks prior to the application deadline, to ensure that it receives full consideration. To avoid the holiday mailing rush, we recommend that you file your application by early December, or sooner. Remember that your application and supporting documentation must be received by December 31, 2011 to be guaranteed consideration for a BMS scholarship!

Before you hit the “Submit“ button make sure that a) the documents you have chosen to upload are correct, complete and uncorrupted and b) you filled out the online application form completely. No further documents, except for transcripts, will be accepted once your application has been submitted!

Language tests should be taken well in advance of the application deadline. It is your responsibility to take tests early enough in the fall to ensure receipt of all required test scores by the application deadline.

You are allowed to submit only one application; multiple applications will not be processed.

Generally, BMS admits new students once a year, for entry in October only. However, exceptions for especially highly talented applicants are sometimes possible.

Students who will have finished their Bachelor degree by October are welcome to submit a Phase I application. Students expecting a Master degree before October must submit an application for Phase II!

G. ADMISSION SCHEDULE

Early December

Last opportunity for applicants computer-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), or IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Scores that arrive too late will hinder the ability to complete a comprehensive review of your application. TOEFL test scores are valid for two years.

December 31

Deadline for applicants who wish to be considered for a BMS scholarship (first round).

End of January

Admission decisions are e-mailed to first round applicants at the end of January to allow admitted students to participate in the BMS Days on February 20 and 21, 2012. Decisions will not be released by telephone or fax. Admitted applicants will receive their admit packet in the mail. We will start sending the packets in March. Please allow 10 to 14 business days for receipt of the packet.

Mid-February

Applicants are invited to participate in the BMS Days during which they can get to know their future professors and class mates as well as get an impression of Berlin's mathematical research activities and BMS activities. The BMS will cover travel and accommodation costs for invited applicants.

April 15

Deadline to accept/decline offer of admission. In the admit packet there will be an Admission Reply form which we will need you to send back by April 15.

May 31

Deadline for applications without scholarships (second round).

End of June

Admission decisions are e-mailed to second round applicants at the end of June. Decisions will not be released by telephone or fax. Admitted applicants will receive their admit packet in the mail. We will start sending the packets shortly after the decision e-mails have been sent. Please allow 10 to 14 business days for receipt of the packet.

July 1

Deadline for students admitted in the first round:

*Summer Language Course Registration

*Housing Application Form

July 15

Deadline to accept/decline offer of admission for second round offers. In the admit packet there will be an Admission Reply form which we will need you to send back by July 15.

August 1

Deadline for students admitted in the second round:

*Summer Language Course Registration

*Housing Application Form

September 1

Deadline for Final Official Transcript, indicating receipt of degree received and/or Spring/Summer coursework

H. VISAS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The One-Stop Office works closely with admitted students and guides them with the visa process for entrance into BMS. The BMS Guidebook from the admit package is a great resource for students who might have any questions or concerns about obtaining their visa.

I. CONTACT US

The BMS One-Stop Office is your first contact point for all questions you may have regarding the admission process or studying at BMS. You can contact us by e-mail, call us, or come by in person. We will be happy to answer your questions.

Good luck with your application!

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