

Guidelines for Applicants

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

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. Please make sure that our program has scholars working actively in the mathematical fields that you are interested in.

Consult with your previous professors; or faculty members here in Berlin may also be of help to you. Visit our website 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 will 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, please 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 very much welcome your application.

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

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A. GENERAL INFORMATION

These Guidelines are meant for applicants who wish to apply for the BMS doctoral 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/students/program-information>

The application period for the academic year 2014/15 (winter semester 2014 and summer semester 2015) will start on 15 September 2013 and end on 15 May 2014. Applicants who require a scholarship must submit their application **by 15 December 2013**. After that date BMS scholarships are subject to availability.

Please use our online submission form to apply for the BMS program, but in order to access the application form, you first have to register. This is a simple procedure via the login form on our homepage: www.math-berlin.de.

Students wishing to enter Phase I of the BMS program are expected to have a Bachelor degree, "Vordiplom", or equivalent. Berlin mathematics students in their "Hauptstudium" can apply for membership to the 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 Exam. In particular, they must satisfy the regular admission requirements of the Berlin universities' PhD programs.

It is not necessary to complete your degree before you submit your application, but you must have completed your degree by the time you start at the BMS! For example, if you are scheduled to finish your Bachelor degree by October 2014, you are welcome to apply for Phase I even though you hold no degree at the time of application. If, however, you are pursuing a Master degree that will be completed by May 2014, you must apply for Phase II when you submit your application to the BMS!

The result of applications submitted by 15 December will be decided in March. You will receive notification by email about the admission decision by the end of March. Please be assured that we will inform you as soon as a decision has been made and kindly ask you to abstain from email or phone enquiries about your result.

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

Winter semester 2014/15: 1 October 2014 – 31 March 2015
Lectures: 14 October 2014 – 14 February 2015
Summer semester 2015: 1 April 2014 – 30 September 2014
Lectures: 14 April 2015 – 18 July 2015

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. Research Statement (pdf) - Phase II Applicants only!

German applicants may 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 our main webpage: www.math-berlin.de. Once you have 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. That way you can access your application again later and make changes.

Click the "Submit" button at the end of the form **only** 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 your application file 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, please make sure it answers 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 the BMS is the right choice for you?
- which faculty member would you like to work with and why?

Please be prepared to copy and paste your text into a text field on the online application form.

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 credentials, publications, contributions or other significant achievements. German applicants should submit a "tabellarischer Lebenslauf". Please have your CV ready as a pdf file, as you will be asked to upload it to your 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 using our Web recommendation service available via the online application. When applying, you simply have to supply the recommender's name, institution and email address. Once you have submitted your online application, they will receive an

email directly from the BMS 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 a recommendation on paper or via email is also acceptable. If your recommenders choose to submit their 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 as you will be asked to upload them to your online application.

Statement of Financial Resources

A Statement of Financial Resources is required from 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. In this case, please submit a certificate from the institution to confirm this.

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 neither 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) TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). 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.

- TOEFL Internet-Based Test (iBT - minimum score 79)
- TOEFL Computer-Based Test (CBT - minimum score 213)

- TOEFL Paper-Based Test (PBT - minimum score 550)
- b) CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English) minimum level C
- c) CAE (Certificate in Advanced English) minimum Level C
- d) IELTS - Academic Test (International English Language Testing System) 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! While applicants should be familiar with the research of potential supervisors prior contact with faculty members is not necessary!

Please have your research statement ready as a pdf-file, as you will be asked to upload it to your online application.

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

C. ADMISSION DECISIONS

The BMS Admission Committee decides all applications. It comprises BMS faculty members from the math departments of the three participating universities. The result of applications submitted by 15 December will be decided in March. You will receive notification by email about the admission decision by the end of March. Please be assured that we will inform you as soon as a decision has been made and we therefore ask you to abstain from email or telephone enquiries about your result.

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

1. Has the application been completed 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 the Phase I and Phase II categories will be considered further.
3. Do the recommenders see potential in the applicant for a PhD and how do the recommenders rank the applicant amongst her/his cohorts?
4. Do the relevant BMS professors have the capacity to supervise the applicant and does the BMS have enough resources in the chosen field to guarantee the completion of the Ph.D.?

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 completed Bachelor degree to the BMS 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 Phase I confirms that the student has 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 complete a Master degree. The allocation of scholarships for Phase II is based on the student's performance in Phase I and the Qualifying Exam. Having a Phase I scholarship does not guarantee a Phase II scholarship! Students are expected to look for external 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/academics/courses>

F. USEFUL HINTS

Submit your application as early as possible! At least two weeks prior to the application deadline is recommended. This will not only give your recommenders time to write a letter for you, it will also ensure that your application will receive full consideration. Remember that your application and all supporting documentation, including the letters of recommendation must be received **by 15 December 2013** in order 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; b) you have 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 a test early enough in order to ensure receipt of all required test scores by the application deadline.

You may submit only one application; multiple applications will not be processed.

Generally, the 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 may submit a Phase I application. Students expecting a Master degree before October must submit an application for Phase III!

G. ADMISSION SCHEDULE

November

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

15 December

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

End of January

Preliminary admission decisions are emailed to first round applicants at the end of January to allow admitted students to participate in the BMS Days and Student Conference events from 17-21 February 2014. Admission results will not be released by telephone or fax. Admitted applicants will receive an admissions package in the mail by the end of March.

Mid-February

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

15 April

Deadline to accept/decline offer of admission. In the admissions package there will be a "Statement of Acceptance" form, which you must return to the BMS by 15 April.

15 May

Deadline for applications without scholarships (second round).

End of June

Admission decisions are emailed to second round applicants at the end of June. Decisions will not be released by telephone or fax. Admitted applicants will receive an admissions package in the mail. We will start sending the packets shortly after the admission emails have been sent. Please allow 10 to 14 business days for receipt of the packet.

1 July

Deadline for students admitted in the first round for:
*Summer Language Course Registration

15 July

Deadline to accept/decline offer of admission for second round offers. In the admissions package there will be a "Statement of Acceptance" form, which you must return to the BMS by 15 July.

1 August

Deadline for students admitted in the second round:
*Summer Language Course Registration

1 September

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 through the visa process for entrance into the BMS. The BMS Guidebook sent with the admissions package is a great resource for students who might have 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 email, call us, or come by in person. We will be happy to answer your questions.

Good luck with your application!

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