

Application requirements

BIGS-DR's main selection criteria are:

- an excellent master's or equivalent degree (G.P.A. higher than 3.0 in the American system, or a grade higher than 2.0 in the German system or equivalent);
- relevant work experience;
- an excellent research proposal;
- certified proficiency in English (TOEFL more than 79-80iBT or equivalent).

There is no age limit for applying to BIGS-DR. However, the applicant's last academic degree should have been obtained less than six years ago.

The entire program is conducted in English. International students can attend a two-month German language course prior to the study program, starting on August 1 each year.

BIGS-DR starts on October 1 annually. The application deadline for DAAD scholarships for enrollment in the subsequent year is August 31. Applicants for other scholarship schemes or candidates with individual funds can submit their application to BIGS-DR at any time.

Applying for BIGS-DR involves two steps:

- Online registration at www.zef.de
- Submission of all required application documents in digital form per e-mail to docp@uni-bonn.de



zef
Center for
Development Research
University of Bonn

Contact

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Donors

The main donors of BIGS-DR are: the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), State funds of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Foundation fiat panis and the Robert Bosch Foundation. BIGS-DR receives further financial support from other generous organizations and governments.

Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIGS-DR)



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BIGS-DR: Conducting doctoral research at ZEF

The Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIG-DR) was founded by the Center for Development Research (ZEF) at the University of Bonn, Germany, in 1999. Since its inception, the doctoral program has had over 660 students participating in the program. It is unique in Europe in terms of interdisciplinary set-up, internationality (with students from over 90 countries), and size (around 130 participants at any time). The interdisciplinary research agenda of ZEF tackles issues relevant to the developing world such as global change and poverty reduction.

ZEF has three departments:

- **Political and Cultural Change** (ZEF a)
- **Economic and Technological Change** (ZEF b)
- **Ecology and Natural Resources Management** (ZEF c)

ZEF's current research areas cover

Innovation, knowledge, and science policy; Markets and public services; Mobility, migration, and urbanization; Governance, conflicts, and natural resources; Health, nutrition, and ecosystems; Land, water, food, and energy.

Local setting: International Bonn

ZEF is located in Bonn on the banks of the Rhine River. Bonn is a hub for international organizations such as the United Nations and several research and development policy institutes. This stimulating setting enables students to participate in joint conferences and workshops and they benefit from cooperation arrangements and interaction with professionals from these organizations.

Target groups : Who can participate?

The program aims at educating highly qualified scientific staff, advisers, and managers for both the private and the public sector in a development-oriented context. Therefore, the main target group of BIGS-DR are young scientists from all over the world with an outstanding master's or equivalent degree in economics, political science, agricultural and resource economics, agronomy, biology, ecology, forestry, mathematics or earth sciences. Candidates should have work experience in national or international research institutions, governments or the private sector. Interest in interdisciplinary research is essential for a successful application.

Program set-up: What to expect

BIGS-DR offers a broad, interdisciplinary approach to development research and a sound training in theories and methods of selected disciplines. The doctoral students conduct practice-oriented field research in developing countries or development related institutions. Combining theories, methods, and practical experience in the areas of social, economic, and ecological change enables students to explore new fields and be competitive on an international job market.

Time frame: How long does it take?

BIGS-DR has a time frame of three years. During the first six to 12 months, the students participate in a doctoral course program at ZEF and work with their supervisors on their research plan. After their supervisors approved their plan, the students travel abroad to conduct field research, which takes one to two years. Subsequently, the students return to ZEF to write up their doctoral theses during the last six to 12 months of the program.

Tuition and scholarships: What does it cost?

BIGS-DR raises no tuition fees. However, students need a scholarship or adequate resources to finance their study period of three years. Living costs in Germany amount to approximately 1,000 Euros per month, in addition to costs for field research. BIGS-DR offers a limited number of scholarships to candidates from developing countries, made available by the EPOS program through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and other donors.

The doctoral courses

During the first year, students participate in a set of block courses offered by ZEF professors and senior researchers, as well as professors from the University of Bonn and visiting international and German scholars. The courses provide students with interdisciplinary skills and disciplinary knowledge as well as with tools for their development-related field research.

The courses are split in modules:

- **Module I:** A two-month interdisciplinary course;
- **Module II:** Disciplinary courses in economics, social sciences and ecology;
- **Module III:** Courses on specific topics or training for individual students provided in laboratories; Special short courses: Statistics, remote sensing, geographic information systems, modeling, field research methods, leadership skills, intercultural seminar, research ethics.

Obtaining your doctoral degree

After completing BIGS-DR, students obtain a doctoral degree granted by the respective university faculty affiliated with ZEF. Students may pursue their doctoral studies under direct supervision of ZEF professors but can also be associated with ZEF while being supervised by a professor from another university.