

SME Graduate School – Sustainable Managing Entrepreneurs Fast-Track Ph.D.

Dear Students interested in SME Management,

The Faculty of Business Administration and Economics at Siegen University, with its focus on sustainable SME Management, Family Business and German Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (Mittelstand), invites outstanding students to apply for an innovative Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. program. Our program is designed for students who wish to investigate, in-depth and from different perspectives, the backbone of most economies, and to draw international comparisons of small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups and family businesses. We will prepare you for a successful, research-oriented career. The same holds true for PostDoc applicants to support the organization of the SME Graduate School.

Fast-Track courses are combined M.Sc. and Ph.D. programs for German and international students already in possession of a Bachelor's degree. The SME Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program is intended for especially gifted and motivated students. We offer these students the opportunity to undertake early independent research within the framework of this coordinated program.

What is our SME Fast Track Master/PhD program?

You may enjoy the advantages of our SME Fast-Track program only if you are pursuing a Master's degree within our faculty and choose to combine your studies with participation in the doctoral degree courses or program.

Our SME Fast-Track consists of two stages: 1) the "Master's stage", which takes between two and four semesters at the most; and 2) the "Ph.D. stage", which is usually two to three years.

A Master's degree must be earned parallel to the doctorate, on the basis of the examination regulations for the Master's degree courses; this is required of all participants. Two selection procedures are held, one before the "Master's stage" and the second before finally entering the "Ph.D. stage". Candidates for whom the evaluation procedure, and thus the final selection for the "Ph.D. stage", has not been successfully completed will remain in the Master's degree program, culminating in the award of a regular Master's degree. Those who advance to the Ph.D. stage must successfully complete the Master's degree as well before entering the Ph.D. stage.

Fast-Track students subscribe to one of the Master's programs offered by our faculty. They study the regular modules totaling 60 CP for two semesters (30 CP per semester) – the same as the regular Master's students. During this time they maintain close contact to their selected Ph.D. supervisor's group, working with their advisor in her or his research group as a student research assistant with a contract of 5 - 8 hours per week.

The students attend working group meetings as well as the Fast-Track SME Graduate School meetings and classes. The concept for the Ph.D. thesis must be prepared together with the supervisor at the end of the first year, or by the end of the third semester at the latest. A project or research module must be completed during the third semester. This module prepares the student for the thesis topic and/or methods and totals 30 credit points. Usually a project report on the preparatory work is presented as the Master's thesis.

Admission to doctoral studies is not contingent on a Master's degree but is strongly related not only to the grades of the Master's program but also to the evaluation of the work experience in the supervisory group and in the research project. In the doctorate studies, the Fast-Track candidate can draw on previous work and in so doing can either complete the Ph.D. thesis faster or treat the topic in greater depth. Nevertheless, to earn a contract as Ph.D. student, the applicant must successfully complete the Master's degree, but can attend classes, etc., beforehand.

In the "Doctorate phase", the Ph.D. candidates work in their supervisor's department on a 50-percent contract (TVL-13), if they have successfully completed the Master's Degree and the evaluation by the committee. Fast-Track Ph.D.s must attend SME Graduate School Meetings and earn 20 credit points in the Ph.D. SME Program in addition to the regular 20 Ph.D. points and the Master's-track credits.

Application for the SME Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program and procedure

If you would like to be considered for the Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program, please note the following:

Application to the SME Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program at our faculty takes place solely via the Examinations Office (Prüfungsamt). Please visit the Examinations Office website for the application deadlines for the regular Master's degree. Master students already studying at Siegen can apply directly to the Program:

The program is suitable for two types of applicants: a) academically committed MA students of our faculty at Siegen University who are in the first or second semester of their Master's degree and who have already achieved almost most of the credit points towards the Master's (equivalent to three or four semesters) and who have an average grade of 1.5 or better at the time of application but who have not yet completed the full Master's degree program; or b) students making their initial application to one of our Master's programs. These applicants must have completed their Bachelor's degree with the ECTS grade of A or be in the top 10 percent of the degree cohort at their home university. Applicants must fulfill the required qualifications for the respective Master's degree program in which they wish to study at our faculty. In addition, applicants must also include a letter of motivation and proof of English language skills, at least CEF Level B2. This does not apply if the applicant is a native speaker, if the university entrance test was in English or if the last degree was in English.

Application procedures

Selection process at the Master's stage

Applications for a Master's program within our faculty should be submitted with the addition "Fast-Track" and must be submitted (in general) before the Master's application deadline. This early deadline is necessary due to the two-stage selection process.

If you are already studying at Siegen in a Master's program, please submit your application to the Directors of the SME Graduate School.

Written applications

Certificates and other documents from former training and educational establishments, signaling that the applicant has in-depth, subject-specific knowledge as well as the necessary skills and motivation must be submitted with the application. Applicants require a recommendation letter from a former professor. In addition, a letter of motivation is recommended, stating why the applicant considers her/himself to be suitable for a doctorate in the SME Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program. The applicant should also explain an ability to think of her/himself in connection with a scientific job in the respective research area. Applicants should demonstrate having learned to work scientifically, and that she/he has sufficient English-language skills at an appropriate level. Finally, applicants should identify up to three Ph.D. supervisors from among the members of the SME Graduate School with whom they could imagine working, providing reasons for their choice. The best-rated applicants will be invited to an assessment interview.

Assessment interview

Applicants should plan at least 30 minutes for the assessment interview, which will be carried out by two professors affiliated with the graduate school. These will be lecturers from the relevant Master's degree courses, at least one of whom is also an examiner in the respective Ph.D. program. Moreover, one of the directors of the Graduate School should be involved as well as one of the three potential supervisors. The assessment interview serves to discuss the applicant's motivation and to better understand whether the applicant has a realistic idea about the specific requirements of the Fast-Track Program. The interview should make apparent that the applicant already has the necessary subject-relevant fundamental knowledge and above-average knowledge of scientific research methodologies, or a demonstrated interest and motivation to acquire this knowledge. The assessment interview is usually carried out four to six weeks after the application has been submitted and takes place either in Siegen or as a telephone or video conference.

Suitability for the Master's Program will be reviewed and evaluated by the Fast-Track Admissions Committee based on the result of the assessment interview. The supervisor of choice must also indicate her/his acceptance of the applicant. Written acceptance must also be submitted in order to apply for third party-funding with this Ph.D. candidate. A candidate's eligibility to earn a Master's degree in the Fast-Track will be decided based on the sum total of all information collected.

Screening process for the Ph.D. stage

Outstanding Master's examination results and successful completion of the Master's degree at a level well above average are preconditions for entry to the independent research stage, followed by a consultation with the prospective supervisor, at least one person involved in the

assessment interview and a member of the directorate of the Graduate School. The applicant must submit the thesis topic, a work plan, the supervisor's confirmation of support and the names of the members of the thesis committee. The members of the thesis committee may attend the consultation, at the request of the candidate. Moreover, to apply for third-party funding, the supervisor and the applicant are obliged to submit the first draft of their research proposal. Eligibility is determined by the Admissions Committee, provided the proposal has the support of a majority of its members.

Not accepted to the SME Fast-Track?

Applicants not accepted for the Fast-Track option of the program are entitled to keep the application for the regular Master's degree program open, or they can remain in the Master's Program if they are already in the Master's track. If the applicant does not object, the documents will be forwarded to the regular Master's degree Admissions Committee.

Fast-Track students not admitted for the doctoral stage remain in the Master's degree program, finishing with a regular Master's degree. No study time is lost, and a degree in the standard period of study is possible. All other applicants earning the Master's degree and successfully passing the evaluation process will enter the Ph.D. stage of the program.

The application deadline for the Master's stage of the Fast-Track is the XXX for the Winter Semester of the same year. The assessment interview is usually carried out in July or August. A different deadline will apply for 2016.

Program information

The SME Fast-Track Master's/Ph.D. Program offers its students structure and consultation via the SME Graduate School. Following successful completion of the Master's program, applicants immediately enter the Fast-Track Ph.D. stage of the SME Graduate School.

Candidates are selected by the SME Committee based on the application documents submitted at the beginning/end of each semester. The SME Graduate School promotes students who have completed their undergraduate studies expeditiously with above-average grades and who seek to take part in a research-oriented study program.

Special features of the program include:

- Systematic coursework: the program offers in-depth knowledge of theories in SME and sustainable management using the various methodologies best suited for each individual Ph.D. candidate's field of specialization
- High-quality academic monitoring: Ph.D. candidates consult with two advisors, both renowned scholars, throughout the dissertation period
- Practical experience: the program includes various courses in research management, think tank projects and internship opportunities
- Networking: students gain access to an exciting international academic network of SME researchers
- Successful candidates will enroll in fall 2015, spring 2016 or fall 2016.

Best regards,

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Volker Wulf and
- Dean-

Directors of the SME-Graduate School
Petra Moog Friederike Welter