

Advanced Training Fund (ATF)

Guidance Notes

2026/27 Competition

1. Purpose

The Advanced Training Fund (ATF) supports the delivery of advanced and specialist training led by one or more specific academic disciplines. The ATF also contributes to helping the SGSSS deliver the highest quality inclusive advanced training to postgraduate students in Scotland, forming part of a year-round programme of training.

What can it be used for?

- Training which deepens students' skills, knowledge and engagement with specific academic disciplines. It should bring together students across Scotland to foster and strengthen disciplinary and cross-disciplinary links. The training must go beyond that typically delivered at Masters level, and be distinct from any training already regularly provided at PhD level in individual institutions.

What can it not be used for?

- The fund is not to be used for core training delivered through postgraduate taught/ Masters level modules, or to provide standard training that higher education institutions deliver to their PhD students.

2. Eligibility- who can apply?

The ATF is open to:

- Members of staff based in our 16 partner universities: Aberdeen; Abertay; Dundee; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Glasgow Caledonian; Heriot-Watt; Highlands & Islands; Edinburgh Napier; Queen Margaret; Robert Gordon; SRUC; St Andrews;

Stirling; Strathclyde; West of Scotland.

- Students are not eligible, but can apply through the Student-led Training Fund (SLTF). See guidance and how to apply [here](#).

3. What types of training we would like to fund

- **Supporting regular ongoing discipline-led training.** We recognise the value of regularly-run discipline-led training events that are well received by students, such as annual workshops and retreats that contain training on important and emerging disciplinary topics. These should bring together students across Scotland for focussed disciplinary learning that goes above and beyond what would be offered in individual HEIs.
- **New initiatives.** We warmly welcome new proposals for innovative disciplinary-led training that has not been delivered before in Scotland. These could be of two forms:
 - **Single-discipline training:** as above, workshops, retreats, and other forms of learning that deepen students' engagement and specialism in a single discipline.
 - **Cross-disciplinary training.** This is jointly conceived training that will meet the needs of students across a number of social science disciplines, and should be orientated around one or more of the [SGSSS Challenge-led Pathways](#). This should foster interdisciplinary understanding, practice and community building across disciplines and bring together students from across Scotland. These applications should describe the disciplines involved and how disciplines are working together to organise the event.

4. Delivery format and materials

We support in person, hybrid and online events.

Online asynchronous resources

We are committed to developing online learning resources for all our students and all event proposers should consider how their event can make a contribution to this. It might be possible to film or record presentations on the day of the event. Alternatively, it might be possible for the event speaker to create a short podcast of particular aspects of the training for us to make more widely available, alongside associated learning materials. We realise that it will not always be possible to incorporate an online learning dimension to the event, however we strongly

support attempts to do this as part of our commitment to provide training opportunities and resources accessible to all Social Science PhD students in Scotland.

5. How the funding can be used

You can apply for funding to cover in person, online or hybrid events (see details below), or for developing an online asynchronous course.

Applications should include justification for the proposed format and explanation of how this will be successfully delivered (taking into account any equality, diversity and inclusion considerations). In particular, we will seek reassurance that hybrid sessions are being appropriately resourced and facilitated, for example by the use of appropriate technology and the use of both in person and online facilitators.

Funds could cover:

- Related logistical costs involved in running events, which might include speaker's travel, catering and (in some circumstances) venue hire. Please note, where possible we recommend holding events in host HEIs and room hire costs are expected to be reduced or waived by the hosting institution.
- Payments to facilitators or speakers who are academic colleagues can be included where the activity is over and above the regular expectations of their role: please provide detail in your application.
- **Please note this change in policy for 2026/27:** If group travel/accommodation is being arranged in advance by facilitators, this cost can be included in your budget. Individual attendee travel expenses using public transport (e.g. train travel for a one day event), in addition to costs for caring expenses and individually booked accommodation for multi-day events, do not need to be included in your budget and will be processed separately by SGSSS in accordance with our [standard events expenses policy](#).
- The normal maximum amount that can be applied for to deliver an event is £2,500. For events that actively involve more than one discipline in the planning and delivery of the event, aim to attract students from a range of disciplines, and are two days or longer, the maximum funding limit has been raised to £3,500. On the ATF application form, we require a breakdown of how the requested funds will be used.
- Funding will not cover extra expenses such as software; we expect applicants to utilise software packages that are available to them through their institution.
- Events must take place between November 2026 and August 2027.

6. What is the deadline for applications, and timeline for delivery?

The competition timeline is shown below:

Timeline

July 31 2026

2026/27 call launched

September 11 2026

Deadline for applications to the 2026/27 Advanced Training Fund

End September

Decisions made and communicated to applicants

The competition launches on the 31st July 2026.

Applicants should complete the application form via the link on the website.

After an application is submitted, the next steps are:

1. Applications are reviewed by an SGSSS panel which will normally include three of the following: Deputy Director (Training), Deputy Director (Studentships and Partnerships), an Associate Director and the Student Experience and Development Coordinator.
2. As part of the process, we may request a call to find out more details and to help us finalise our decision.
3. Successful applicants are then issued an award letter and be asked to write up a description of the event, including the preliminary programme which can be advertised to students. SGSSS will provide guidance about to support event planning, with a particular focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.
4. SGSSS sets up a registration system for each approved event to allow for attendance booking, monitoring and data collection via our events platform. We must have all registration for ATF events organised through our SGSSS events platform, Portal, to collate the data needed for our funders.
5. We will also publicise the event through external channels, as appropriate to the event and in collaboration with the event organiser who is also expected to undertake active dissemination of their event through their networks.
6. Event proposer holds the event (NB must be between November 2026 and August 2027) and covers any local costs. **SGSSS can only receive one invoice from one institution for the event.**

7. Within two weeks of the event, event proposer submits a list of attendance (this can be a scan of the sign-in sheet).
8. Event proposer submits a post-event evaluation form and an invoice for the SGSSS contribution as per the agreed limits on the Award letter. Please use the Purchase Order number on the invoice that you were provided with when the event was agreed to help us track our events. **We must have the invoice submitted within 2 months of the event date. We will not be in a position to reimburse funds for invoices received later than this.**
9. We then process invoice and transfer funds. **Invoices cannot be processed without an event evaluation.**

If you have any queries about this new guidance, or wish to discuss a planned event, please email the team at team@sgsss.ac.uk

7. Examples of events suitable for ATF

Below are some examples of past successful ATF training events with example budgets.

Event 1

Educational Reform in Scotland. An event co-hosted by practitioners and academics, with a keynote from the Scottish Minister for Education or senior Scottish Government official. A series of sessions within this day-long event will focus on substantive changes to the policy field in the last 2 years, and consider the grand challenges facing Scottish Education over the next period.

1 day, Education pathway only max budget £2500

Event 2

SCOTDOC: A one-day colloquium for accountancy and finance students. An event hosted by an SGSSS-aligned institution, and welcoming 80+ PhD students to give and hear presentations and learn about best practices and new ideas in their discipline. Guest speakers come from across the DTP and beyond, and students are invited to consider their work in the context of grand societal challenges. Prizes are given for best presentations, and networks are developed for future collaborative working. Single discipline, one day event: Max budget £2500.

Event 3

STAR1: Social Anthropology and Sociology

A pre-fieldwork training event for social anthropology students, who have specific disciplinary needs and processes in data collection. This is a multi-day residential event incorporating a range of sessions and keynotes from which students can develop their fieldwork confidence and build a network of contacts, as well as share their ideas and hear about existing work in their areas. This training requires some complex organisation and SGSSS part-funds the event alongside institutional resources. Multi-discipline, multi-day event: Max budget £3500.

Event 4

Theorizing the 'margins': This three-day hybrid event is hosted by an International Development disciplinary team, but genuinely open and relevant to all social science PhD students. The event invites them to investigate the methods, concepts and skills for studying "other" places. The event comprises dedicated writing seminars, sessions on highly theoretical concepts and the application of appropriate methods, and guest speakers. Due care is given to online attendees to ensure parity of experience. Multi-discipline, multi-day event: Max budget £3500.

Event 5

Emerging from the Field: This training is focused on several aspects of returning from intensive or overseas field work. It is ideal for students who have researched in overseas locations where they used a language other than English, where they have spent more than 3 months 'away' and particularly where research has taken place in a conflict zone. The training is available to any student who qualifies and as well as Politics and International Relations students this may attract Social Anthropologists, Geographers and those in Language-Based Area Studies. The training will take place over 3 days and will include sessions on writing up ethnographic data; building resilience through writing; managing difficult emotions; using Bourdieu's notions of habitus to acclimatise home.

3 days, genuinely inclusive of multiple pathways, max budget £3500

Example Budget

This budget is indicative of how funds could be spent and should not be considered as a mandate. Footnotes have been used to explore the parameters of what we would normally expect. Do reach out to team@sgsss.ac.uk if you have any questions about the following, or if you'd like to discuss an exceptional format.

Expected cost of event (based on above student numbers, cost of event per student) and basic budget breakdown (estimated catering, room hire, speaker costs, materials and other costs).

Please provide sufficient information for us to be able to assess the value for money of your application.

Cost of Venue Hire¹ - £350

hire for 2 days of conference suite in a major urban library and with direct access to their archive

Catering - £1,156

includes lunch and morning/afternoon coffees for 2 days for 30 students plus 4 course leaders (cost £17 per person per day). Includes access to water throughout both days.

Academic Leads – £400

- 3 course hosts are based at Scottish HEIs and their time is given as part of the SGSSS Memorandum of Understanding as a full partner.
- 1 course host is travelling from the University of Sheffield, to offer additional expertise and widen networks - includes travel using public transport and 2 nights in a hotel.

Materials

Printing and stationery - £94

Total Budget sought: £2000

¹ To keep costs manageable, we would normally expect events to be hosted on HEI premises, and to have free room use. Where a case can be made to travel somewhere outside of a host HEI (for example a course on Curating in Economic and Social History based at a major Library with room hire costs), then include the venue costs here.