



Supporting, delivering and facilitating high quality opportunities and training by engaging with students, staff and partners to positively impact the social science community in Scotland

# Supervisor-led Studentships Q&A

## Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Competition

*From SGSSS: Professor Alan Marshall (Deputy Director)*

*From Skills Development Scotland: Dr Emma Parry and Dr Patrick Watt*



Scottish Graduate School  
of Social Science  
Sgoil Cheumnaichean Saidheans  
Sòisealta na h-Alba



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council



Scottish Funding Council  
Promoting further and higher education

# What will we cover?

- A brief introduction to DTP2 and its implications for supervisors
- A brief introduction to our SDS Competition Timeline.
- Overview of the SDS Topics (presented by Emma Parry and Patrick Watt)
- Time for Q&A





# Supervisor-led Studentships

## Key changes for DTP2

- **Major change in ESRC Completion Policy for students commencing from October 2024:** completion within the funded period.
  - **Risk assessment** and **feasibility** key in devising, assessing and implementing research proposals
- **The length of the standard PhD** has increased to 3.5 years in recognition of ESRC expectations that students will undertake a 3ms placement (more later) and 3 months for additional new training required by the ESRC. (A reminder that all studentships must be offered as **full-time or part-time** opportunities).
- **Eligibility for first supervision** - First supervisors need to be research-active social scientists who are aligned to a UoA for which their institution has eligibility. SGSSS (and ESRC) will audit supervisor eligibility carefully. For more on eligibility criteria, visit [this page](#).



# Supervisor-led Studentships

## Key changes in DTP2

- **Move to challenge-led pathways:** each applicant must select a challenge-led pathway within which their student will sit.

<b>Communication, AI, and New Technologies</b>	<b>Environment, Migration, and Demographic Change</b>
<b>Governance and Institutions</b>	<b>Health, Wellbeing and Communities</b>
<b>Securities: Justice, Economies, and Conflict</b>	<b>Social Inequalities</b>



# Supervisor-led Studentships

## Introducing “Research in Practice”

Through Research in Practice, SGSSS seeks to equip ESRC funded students to be confident collaborating across sectors and disciplinary boundaries.

- The placement must be separate to the PhD student’s research and be designed to support their researcher development, sector knowledge and transferable skills.
- Students must undertake the placement in the second or third year of their PhD study, with more than 3 months remaining before their funding end date.
- Placements can take place within academia or outside academia.
- Academic placements must not be undertaken with the student’s current supervisor and/or research team.
- Placements must provide opportunity to apply their research skills in new environments
- Students will discuss placement plans with their supervisor team and SGSSS at the Development Needs Analysis.
- SGSSS must approve all placement proposals in advance to confirm that they meet the placement requirements.

For more on placements, click [here](#).



# Supervisor-led Studentships

## Key notes for new supervisors

- In 2021 we introduced a new element to our marking Framework – the Whole Person Approach – all successful applicants to our supervisor led competitions will be expected to use this in recruiting students – you will receive guidance on this following our panel decisions.
- In 2020 the ESRC changed its recruitment policy on international students – we are now able to recruit international students up to a maximum of 30% of our total allocation. This is complex to implement across competitions and so successful supervisors will receive guidance on recruitment.





# Supervisor-led Studentships

There are three separate competitions

## Steers Competition

3 awards in each of the following steers

- Advanced Quantitative Methods
- Dataset
- Interdisciplinary

## 'Open' Collaborative Competition

~15 awards

## Skills Development Scotland Collaborative Competition

4 awards

## Dates for your diary



- **16th October:** Deadline for Collaborative Competition and SDS Collaborative Competition Applications

Please note institutions may set their own internal deadlines

For more on the Steers and Open Collaborative Competitions, we will offer a webinar on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm



# Key tips for securing funding

- Our review will include evaluations by academics outside the discipline area of the student/supervisor
- So, there is a need to communicate clearly the logic, value and broader impact of the research to colleagues in other disciplines
- The ESRC requires PhD research to be completed in 3 years (no writing-up year)
- Our evaluation of applications will consider the feasibility of PhD projects carefully
- Encourage applicants to describe contingency planning if there are delays
- Use the resources on our website!
- If you experience any issues or have questions get in touch.



The logo for Skills Development Scotland is a white rectangular box with a dark teal border. The border has a decorative, scalloped edge on the left and right sides. Inside the box, the text "Skills Development Scotland" is written in a dark teal, sans-serif font. "Skills" is on the first line, "Development" is on the second line, and "Scotland" is on the third line in a bold weight.

Skills  
Development  
**Scotland**

# Skills Development Scotland

Dr Emma Parry  
Dr Patrick Watt

# SDS Collaborative PhD Programme



## How it works

- SDS identifies topics that will contribute to our [strategic objectives](#)
- SDS works closely with the university, academic supervisors and the student to support successful completion of the PhD.
- Up to four proposals are awarded each year, co-funded by SDS and SGSSS
- **The PhD should have a strong focus on policy and practice outcomes that are relevant to SDS**

## Benefits of the SDS Programme

- Engages the academic community in Scotland to support policy-relevant skills research.
- Produces new research aligned to the evolving skills agenda in Scotland.
- Develops a new group of researchers with an in-depth understanding of the unique Scottish skills landscape.

Find out more in our 2025/26 PhD Brochure

# Working with SDS



## Role of student

- Students work closely with SDS
- Monthly meetings with SDS sponsor
- SDS sponsor, student and supervisor meet at least once a year
- Keep SDS up to date with any changes or issues

## SDS offer

- SDS sponsor
- Knowledge exchange programme of seminars, Networking Event, student competitions
- Placement opportunities
- Access to SDS research findings and respondents

# What makes a successful SDS collaborative proposal



- Knowledge and understanding of what SDS does as an organisation
- Strong commitment to working with SDS throughout the duration of the studentship and with the SDS sponsor
- Supporting the PhD student to develop the policy and practice elements of their research
- **SDS is always keen to speak to prospective supervisors about the focus and relevance of their application**

# 25/26 SDS Topics

Skills  
Development  
Scotland



Understanding rural skills  
challenges and opportunities  
in Scotland



Impact of artificial intelligence  
in disrupting occupational  
pathways



What works in  
supporting secondary  
school non-attenders



The role of behavioural science  
in supporting career  
development

# SDS Competition Timeline



Competition Launch	
16 October, 5 pm (Thursday)	Deadline for applications via SGSSS Apply
Outcome of Competition	
05 December, by 5pm (Friday)	SGSSS to communicate the outcome of the Competition to all applicants (successful and unsuccessful), confirming awards





# Q&A

- If you have any additional queries, please email us on [team@sgsss.ac.uk](mailto:team@sgsss.ac.uk)