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**SGSSS Open Collaborative Competition 2025/26**

Application Form

Please complete this application form and submit it via [*SGSSS Apply*](https://apply.sgsss.ac.uk/)by **5pm on 16 October 2025 (Thursday)**.

Supervisors can only submit one application per supervisor-led competition – that is, a supervisor may apply once to the Open Collaborative, the Skills Development Scotland Collaborative and the Steers Competition. Please note, the single application requirement applies to any position within a supervisory team – that is, an applicant cannot apply to a competition as first supervisor on one application and second (or subsequent supervisor) on another application to the same competition. **Any application submitted to a supervisor-led competition must not be repurposed as a student-led application. Any applications to the Student-led Open Competition viewed to be resubmissions of a supervisor-led application will be withdrawn from the competition.**

**It is strongly recommended that supervisors inform their institution if they are considering applying to this competition.** [**Contact your institution’s HEI Administrative Lead and Deans Network representatives.**](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/governance/)

1. **Applicant Details**

Please input your details below. The person submitting the application should be the first supervisor.

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| **Name:**  *Please include title* |  |
| **Email:** |  |
| **HEI:** | Choose an item. |
| **Challenge-Led Pathway:**  For more on the challenges, [visit here.](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Student-Led-Open-Competition-Challenge-Pathways-FAQs.pdf) | Click here to select Challenge-Led Pathway |

**UoA:** Each university will hold and update a register of eligibility.

To be eligible to be first supervisor in any SGSSS competition, supervisors will

1. Meet any institutional requirements of first supervisors that are not covered below. Contact your [HEI Admin lead](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/governance/) for this information
2. Have undergone supervisor training within your institution within the last 5 years
3. Hold a research and teaching or research only contract expected to last for the duration of the proposed PhD project
4. Work in a department/school/subject area that is administratively aligned to an eligible [Unit of Assessment (UoA)](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/uoas/) for your Higher Education Institution
5. Are a research active Social Scientist with output (papers and/or research funding) that is aligned to your unit of assessment

In order to audit supervisor eligibility, as part of the application process, we ask all first supervisors to provide details of a paper or funded research project that adopts a social science perspective.

**For more on supervisor eligibility,** [**visit our webpage.**](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentships/supervisoreligibility/)

1. **Proposed Degree and Master’s Programmes**

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| **PhD Degree Programme:** | (e.g. PhD Sociology) |

**Availability of ESRC approved Master’s within Home Institution**

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| **Please advise which** [**ESRC approved Master’s programme**](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-ESRC-Approved-Masters.pdf) **will be undertaken in the event of the successful student applicant requiring a 1+3.5 award (ultimately decided by SGSSS)** |
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If the successful student requires a 1+3.5 award and the home institution (first supervisor’s institution) does not have an ESRC approved Master’s programme associated with the [Unit of Assessment](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/uoas/) (under which this application is made), the student will need to attend an SGSSS partner institution where the required training is available. If this pertains to this application, supervisors are required to upload a [**Masters Arrangement Form**](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Masters-Arrangement-Form.docx), signed off by the [SGSSS Deans Group Representative](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/governance/) at the proposed institution, i.e. where the Master’s programme will be undertaken, conﬁrming they are happy to accommodate the student and accept the fee payable, [as agreed by UKRI](https://esrc.ukri.org/skills-and-careers/doctoral-training/prospective-students/what-is-an-esrc-studentship-worth/).

*Please note that students commencing an SGSSS funded PhD from October 2025 onward who need to undertake a Master’s programme will be expected to do so at their home institution.*

**Please indicate if this applies to your application:** YesNo

If yes, please tick to conﬁrm you will upload, as part of your application, a completed **Masters Arrangement Form**, as detailed above

1. **Collaborative Partner Details and Funding Arrangements**

Please input the collaborative partner’s details below for your research project. Please refer to the [competition guidance](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Open-Collab-Competition-Guidance.pdf) for details.

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| **Collaborative Partner Name:** |  |
| **Collaborative Partner Sector:**  *(Please select one option)* | Public:  Charity/Third Sector:  Private: Micro  Small  Medium  Large |

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| **Please tick the below funding arrangement that pertains to your application:** | |
| Please tick the below funding arrangement that pertains to your application:   1. \*\* 0% contribution from the collaborative partner (in-kind), 33% contribution from host HEI and 67% from SGSSS ☐ 2. 10% contribution from the collaborative partner, 25% contribution from the host HEI and 65% from SGSSS ☐ 3. 25% contribution from the collaborative partner, 25% contribution from the host HEI and 50% from SGSSS ☐ 4. 33% contribution from the collaborative partner, 17% contribution from the host HEI and 50% from SGSSS ☐ 5. 50% contribution from the collaborative partner, 0% contribution from the host HEI and 50% from SGSSS ☐   \*\*Your institution may require you to seek approval from your HEIs Dean of Graduate Studies representative. Prior to discussing this type of funding arrangement with your prospective collaborative partner, check with your Dean on the arrangement. | |
| **If the contribution from the collaborative partner is in-kind (i.e., you have selected option 1 above), please detail the exact resources being committed:** | |
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| **Total in-kind contribution for studentship (£):** |  |

As part of your application you will be asked to upload confirmation (email or letter) from your [SGSSS Deans Group Representative](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/governance/) confirming that your institution will cover the required share of costs associated with this studentship (if successful), as per your selection above.

Please tick to conﬁrm you will upload, as part of your application, a funding conﬁrmation (email or letter) from your Deans Group Representative, as detailed above

**Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement**

SGSSS have a standard [Collaborative Agreement](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Open-Collab-Agreement-Template.docx) template that all successful supervisors and collaborative partners will need to complete. At the application stage however, supervisors will need to submit a **Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement**, from the collaborative partner. This acts as a precursor to the formal Collaborative Agreement. The Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement should describe how the partner will support the project and should include details of the following:

* How the research project aligns to the priorities of the partner organisation and of the nature of the collaboration already underway (for example, the role of the partner in identifying the research need and in developing the application).
* How the collaborative partner will support the supervision/development of the student and their project.
* The agreed co-funding arrangement.
* Any agreed additional funding, i.e., this may include details of how the travel, subsistence and accommodation costs incurred by the student associated with visits to the non-academic organisation will be covered.
* Any arrangements for special materials and facilities which will be made available to the student.
* Any appropriate arrangements relating to Intellectual Property Rights (please see section 4 of the collaborative agreement template above and indicate your willingness to adhere to the terms. If not, please provide a detailed justification for any proposed changes).
* The details of any previous involvement in social science research by the collaborating organisation. This should include any collaboration that has previously taken place (e.g., former studentship applications) between the two parties.

Please tick to conﬁrm you will upload, as part of your application, a **Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement**, as detailed above

1. **Project Details**

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| **Proposed project title:** |  |

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| **Have you submitted this proposal or a similar proposal in previous years to SGSSS?**  If yes, please summarise the changes to the previous proposal below | Yes  No |
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| **Abstract**  Please summarise the project in under 300 words |
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| **Impact summary**  Please provide an impact summary of 250 words or less, incorporating why this proposal is of societal and/or disciplinary value. |
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**Research Idea and Case for Support**

Please consult the [competitionguidance](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Open-Collab-Competition-Guidance.pdf) before completing the below.

**As of 2024 intake, all ESRC funded students will be expected to submit their PhD within the funded period – that is, the ESRC will no longer recognise the thesis-pending or ‘writing-up’ year. To support student wellbeing and to ensure that our universities are not penalised for non-completion (the ESRC reserves the right to withhold awards from institutions which do not comply), it is vitally important that plans are feasible within the funded component of the PhD). This will be scrutinised by assessors.**

**ESRC provide an additional 0.5 years but this is not for PhD research it comprises research in practice (+ training) and new skills that ESRC wish PhD students to be exposed to.**

The case for support should be a maximum of 2,250 words (not including references, which are to be uploaded separately at submission) and **MUST** include the following:

* Overview and rationale for project, aims, research questions and methodologies/methods/techniques employed. Anticipated project outcomes in terms of research output and for the collaborative partner including likely impacts
* Timetable (ensuring that the proposal is feasible within a 3-year funded PhD)
* Knowledge exchange activities
* Any plans for dissemination of research outputs
* Ethical issues associated with this proposal (including those that may impact on formal ethics committee approval **and** those requiring ongoing consideration in the field/during analysis) and proposed actions to mitigate these
* Any appropriate arrangements relating to Intellectual Property Rights
* Supervision and ﬁt with project and proposed training arrangements (please make reference to experience of supervisors including in relation to successful collaborative research, combination of supervisory skills, research environment e.g. how the research ﬁts within the HEI and School, and how the training needs will be met)

Please Note: When assessing applications, equal weight of 40% each will be given to the research proposal and the supervisory team/research environment, and 20% weighting will go to collaborative ﬁt and engagement of collaborating partner; both must demonstrate specific benefits to the student and the project.

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**Risk Assessment**

Please indicate the aspects of your proposal that may be at risk of non-implementation. Indicate the likelihood of such risks and the approaches that you will take to manage such risks in order to ensure that timely completion of your studentship **within the funded period** is not compromised (250 words max).

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1. **Supervisory Experience and Training**

The ESRC will audit SGSSS to check that all first supervisors are research active social scientists within a [Unit of Assessment](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/uoas/) for which an institution has eligibility.

The eligibility questions (see Apply, and our webpage, for [full list of questions](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentships/supervisoreligibility/)) allow us to determine eligibility and SGSSS will audit the information provided carefully. We will remove an application if criteria are not met.

Note a second supervisor need not meet our full criteria assuming the first supervisor does. Second supervisors may work within any of the SGSSS 16 partner HEIs. You can find full information about our partner universities online [here](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/governance/).

**Please respond to those questions here. For any questions email** [**team@sgsss.ac.uk**](mailto:team@sgsss.ac.uk)

​​☐​ **I acknowledge I meet any institutional requirements of first supervisors that may not be covered in the other questions. If I am unsure of what they may be, I acknowledge I will contact my HEI Admin Lead for this information.**

**I have undergone supervisor training within my institution within the last 5 years**

☐​ Yes

☐​ No

If “no”, evidence of training will need to be provided prior to an award letter being issued, if successful.

**I hold a research and teaching contract or a research-only contract expected to last for the duration of the proposed PhD project**

☐​ Yes

☐​ No

If ‘no’ - you are not eligible to be a first supervisor but are eligible to be 2nd/3rd supervisor. Please email team@sgsss.ac.uk if you have any questions.

**I work in a department/school/subject area that is administratively aligned to an eligible UoA for my Higher Education Institution (HEI)**

☐​ Yes

☐​ No

If ‘no’ - you are not eligible to be a first supervisor but are eligible to be 2nd/3rd supervisor. Please email team@sgsss.ac.uk if you have any questions.

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| **REF Unit of Assessment (UoA) of Primary Supervisor (please see full list of eligible UoAs for your HEI** [**here**](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/challenge-led-pathways/)**):** | Click here to select REF Unit of Assessment |

**Have you ever served as PI of a research project funded by ESRC, Nuffield or another funder of Social Science research? Please indicate the agency below and the title of the project or indicate N/A if non-applicable**

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**Give the reference for one paper where you are a first or co-author, that involves social science research and is aligned in a disciplinary sense to your selected UoA**

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**First Supervisor Details**

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| **Name:**  *Please include title* |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **HEI:** | Choose an item. |
| **Existing students and their PhD projects:** | |
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| **Past student submission on time and completion rates:** | |
| *For example: Past student submission on time and completion rates: 9 students supervised to completion (100% completion rate); 8 of these submitted within four years or equivalent for P/T (89%).* | |
| **First supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to this studentship application:** | |
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**Second Supervisor Details**

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| **Name:**  *Please include title* |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **HEI:** | Choose an item. |
| **Existing students and their projects:** | |
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| **Past student submission on time and completion rates:** | |
| *For example: Past student submission on time and completion rates: 9 students supervised to completion (100% completion rate); 8 of these submitted within four years or equivalent for P/T (89%).* | |
| **Second supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to this studentship application:** | |
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**Third Supervisor Details (if applicable)**

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| **Name:**  *Please include title* |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **HEI:** | Choose an item. |
| **Existing students and their projects:** | |
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| **Past student submission on time and completion rates:** | |
| *For example: Past student submission on time and completion rates: 9 students supervised to completion (100% completion rate); 8 of these submitted within four years or equivalent for P/T (89%).* | |
| **Third supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to this studentship application:** | |
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**Fourth Supervisor Details (if applicable)**

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| **Name:**  *Please include title* |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **HEI:** | Choose an item. |
| **Existing students and their projects:** | |
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| **Past student submission on time and completion rates:** | |
| *For example: Past student submission on time and completion rates: 9 students supervised to completion (100% completion rate); 8 of these submitted within four years or equivalent for P/T (89%).* | |
| **Fourth supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to this studentship application:** | |
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**Supervisory Team as a Whole**

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| In no more than 150 words please outline the key strengths and roles of the proposed supervisory team Please note, SGSSS strongly support supervisory teams that build supervisory capacity through the inclusion of Early Career Researchers. All supervisory teams should include one supervisor who is experienced in supervision of PhDs to completion (a minimum of two completions is required). |
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1. **Development Needs Analysis**

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| Summarise your initial assessment of the student development needs associated with this project and how you will plan to meet these (drawing on potential inputs from the host institution as well as those provided by SGSSS and broader networks including your collaborative partner). Development needs refer to skills/knowledge etc that will support completion of the PhD programme as well as supporting broader career trajectories. These might include methods, disciplinary knowledge, or broader career skills /exposure like working with policy makers. In addition, please summarise the development needs of the supervisory team (new and experienced supervisors). Development needs might include supervision specific knowledge/skills, methodological or theoretical advances that will help with supervising this specific proposal or network development and other impact skills. (250 words maximum) |
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1. **Research in Practice - Placements**

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| This is an optional question and will not be used in the evaluation of the studentship proposal.  All ESRC funded students will be expected to undertake a **3 ms placement** within an academic institution (either working within a research centre or with a professional services team), or with a public, private or third sector organisation. The aim of the placement would be to develop transferable skills and sector knowledge that will assist career development. Students would work with the SGSSS team to identify relevant opportunities following award.  To help SGSSS with its planning for placement support, please indicate your current thinking on the type of placement that might be best suited to this particular project and highlight if you have identified a placement partner already (there is no requirement for you to have an identified partner at this stage, for more on this – [visit this link](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/RinP-Placement-Overview.pdf)). (100 words maximum) |
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1. **Recruitment**

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| This part of the form is optional and will not be used in assessment.  Please advise on challenges you anticipate when recruiting a suitably qualiﬁed candidate and how you intend to advertise the studentship to ensure the best chance of recruiting a qualiﬁed candidate?  **If you are successful, SGSSS will post your studentship on FindAPhD.com. As such, please do not include a budget for advertising on this site within your response.** |
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1. **Additional Costs for Overseas Visits/Fieldwork**

Please tick if the proposal is expected to beneﬁt from the following:

**Overseas Fieldwork**  **Difficult Language Training**  **Overseas Institutional Visit**

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| **Domestic Fieldwork**  If this proposal does not require overseas ﬁeldwork, please conﬁrm that any proposed UK based ﬁeldwork can likely to be undertaken within the student’s notional RTSG amount of £940 per annum? If not, please explain why and specify any likely additional costs and how these costs would be met. |
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**10. Applicant confirmation**

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| **Please confirm:**  ​​☐​ The first supervisor will attend a development needs analysis meeting with the student and SGSSS following award announcement,  ​​☐​ If awarded, the first supervisor (in collaboration with the rest of the team, will submit the Collaborative Agreement which will need to be completed and signed off by the lead institution and your collaborative partner by **13 March 2026.** Once a student has been appointed, they will also be required to also sign the agreement and submit the updated agreement by no later than **28 August 2026, and**  ​​☐​ A member of the supervisory team will attend an induction event on November 2026. |