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**Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Collaborative Studentship 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, with any applications to the Student-led Open Competition which are assessed to be resubmissions of a supervisor-led application being withdrawn from the competition.**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 |

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 Masters’ 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 pathway (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, you 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 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. **Funding Arrangement**

As per the [competition guidance](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-SDS-Competition-Guidance.pdf), all SDS studentships are co-funded by SGSSS, the host institution and SDS as per the below:

SGSSS: 50%; HEI: 17%; SDS: 33%

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 the above.

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

1. **Project Details**

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| **SDS topic:**  *Refer to topic descriptions* [*here*](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-SDS-Competition-PhD-Topics.pdf) |  |

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| **Proposed project title:** |  |

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| **Abstract**  Please summarise the project in under 300 words |
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**Research Idea and Case for Support**

Please consult the [competition guidance](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-SDS-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 the ﬁt with SDS; 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 following 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/uoas/)**):** | 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:** | Click to select HEI |
| **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%).* | |
| **First supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications relevant to the 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 relevant to the 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 relevant to the 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 relevant to the 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 is an optional question and will not be used in the evaluation of the studentship proposal.  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 £750 per annum? If not, please explain why and specify any likely additional costs and how these costs would be met. |
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1. **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, and  ​​☐​ A member of the supervisory team will attend an induction event on November 2026. |