

**SGSSS Steers Studentship Competition 2025/26**

Stage 2 Application Form (full application)

Please complete this application form and submit it via [*SGSSS Apply*](https://apply.sgsss.ac.uk/) by **5pm on 17 November 2025 (Monday)**.

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to the Student-led Open Competition which are assessed to be resubmissions of a supervisor-led application being withdrawn from the competition.**

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 |
| **REF Unit of Assessment (UoA) of first supervisor (see note below):** | Click here to select REF Unit of Assessment |

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 UoA 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/)

**2. 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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A **Masters Arrangement Form** is required when an institution does not have an ESRC approved Master’s programme in place (for the relevant pathway) for 1+3.5 studentships, and as such the successful student would be required to undertake their Master’s training (if applicable) at an [SGSSS partner institution](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/challenge-led-pathways-units-of-assessment/), where an appropriate ESRC approved Master’s programme is currently in place. To view a full list of the ESRC approved Master’s provisions at our SGSSS-DTP institutions, please click [here](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-ESRC-Approved-Masters.pdf).

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

**3. Funding Arrangement**

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

SGSSS: 67%; HEI: 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

**4. Project Details**

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| **Proposed project title:** |  |

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| **Type of application:**  Please tick all that apply. Please note that for Stage 1 you may have applied for more than one steer. At Stage 2, you should only select those steers for which you have been shortlisted. |
| AQM  Datasets Interdisciplinary |
| **Research Council(s):**  If Interdisciplinary, please advise which other Research Council(s) this project will span |
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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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**5. ESRC Steers**

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| **How this Project fits with AQM and/or Datasets and/or Interdisciplinary Steer**  In no more than 250 words (per steer) and using the [ESRC Guidance on Steers and Targets](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/ESRC-Steers-Guidance.pdf), please describe how the proposed approach and supervisory team meet the relevant steer(s) to which you are applying to (a separate statement needs to be completed for each relevant steer).   1. **Interdisciplinary:** Please specify which research council(s) the proposal spans in addition to the ESRC. 2. **Datasets:** Please specify the exact dataset(s) you propose to use. In addition to the [ESRC Guidance on Steers and Targets](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/ESRC-Steers-Guidance.pdf) criteria, where applications involve the use of datasets created through their own research, you should evidence that:  * The primary project funding period has ended; * At least one publication deriving from the funded project has appeared in a peer-reviewed journal; and, * The project through which the dataset has been generated has been externally funded and awarded through a peer-review process.   **AQM:** Since 2019, there has been NO enhanced stipend for AQM awards. |
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1. **Feasibility of Project within ESRC PhD Funding Time Constraints**

**Please note that attention to feasibility of research proposal to be completed within the funded PhD is exceptionally important since the ESRC have announced that the thesis-pending or ‘writing-up’ year will no longer be acceptable – ie, submission within a fourth unfunded year will be counted as a late submission). The research of the PhD must be done in 3 years (or part-time equivalent). 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.**

Please comment on the feasibility of the proposal being implemented within the funded period. You may wish to reflect on the implications of acquiring specialist training, working across disciplines and on access to data (max 250 words).

If you are applying for a **Datasets** award, please confirm you are confident that the necessary data as outlined in the proposal will be available to the student in a timely fashion AND where there are costs associated with accessing the data (including required specialist subsets), how these costs will be met.

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**7. Research Proposal and Case for Support**

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 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
* Supervision and fit with project and steers and proposed training arrangements (please make reference to experience of supervisors including in methods training, 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 consult the [competition guidance](https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/files/SGSSS-Steers-Competition-Guidance.pdf), which contains the 2025/26 Marking Framework (pages 11 to 13), before you complete this section.

Please Note: When assessing applications, equal weight will be given to the research proposal and the supervisory team/research environment; both must demonstrably fit the steer(s).

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**8. 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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**9. 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 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/).

**Within SGSSS Apply, first supervisors were prompted to answer these questions at Stage 1 and do not need to answer them again at Stage 2. Please email** [**team@sgsss.ac.uk**](mailto:team@sgsss.ac.uk) **for any questions.**

**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 of relevance to the studentship application:** | |
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**Second 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%).* | |
| **Second supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to the studentship application:** | |
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**Third Supervisor Details (if applicable)**

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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%).* | |
| **Third supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to the studentship application:** | |
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**Fourth Supervisor Details (if applicable)**

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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%).* | |
| **Fourth supervisor’s top three funded projects and/or publications of relevance to the studentship application:** | |
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**Supervisory Team as a Whole**

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| In no more than 350 words please outline the key strengths of the proposed supervisory team including how they will contribute to ensuring that the appointed student would emerge from the PhD with enhanced skills. Please note, SGSSS strongly support supervisory teams that build supervisory capacity through the inclusion of Early Career Researchers. Applications should set out the role of all supervisory team members including how Early Career Researchers will be supported. 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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**10. 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). 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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**11. 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.**  This part of the form is optional and will not be used in assessment. 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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**12. 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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**13. 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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**14. 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. |