



Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS)

2025/26 Student Recruitment for Supervisor-Led Projects
Applicant Guidance

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All applications must be submitted via the SGSSS online application platform, [SGSSS Apply](#).

For the full timeline, [please click here](#)

1. Introduction to SGSSS

Thank you for your interest in our DTP (Doctoral Training Partnership), the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (or SGSSS). This document will provide an overview of the application process for our available Supervisor-Led projects and outlines important details on our funding conditions.

The PhD studentship awards made through SGSSS are co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council ([ESRC](#)) and partner universities (institutions) and are governed by the [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#). Some projects may also receive funding from a collaborative partner, and as a DTP we receive funding for training from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Of the 16 institutions in Scotland that are partners of SGSSS, 14 are eligible to receive ESRC funding across 21 Units of Assessment (UoA). Each UoA is analogous to a subject area / discipline. Not all 14 institutions are eligible to hold studentships in all UoAs. A comprehensive list of the eligible institutions and UoAs can be found on the SGSSS website [here](#). The two institutions who are not eligible for funding (Queen Margaret University and Robert Gordon University) are eligible for most training events offered by SGSSS.

From 2024 our training pathways have been organised around a set of key societal challenges. These challenges were developed so that they represent the kinds of social science research that our students do and to reflect the themes of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We want our pathways to give students the opportunity to develop capacity for interdisciplinary connections within the social sciences and beyond. In practical terms, we want our students to be able to communicate key disciplinary concepts and methods emerging from their own disciplines and specific research proposals to other researchers and to that outside academia. We also want students to learn from one another about new methods and theories and knowledge exchange networks. Students from any discipline can apply to any challenge pathway. To learn more about the pathways, [visit this link](#). Each project listed below will have a challenge-led pathway noted.

SGSSS is a fantastic and engaging community in which do a PhD – to see more about what we do, look at our “Year In Review”, [here!](#)

2. 25/26 studentships now open for applications

Below is the full list of studentships open for applications with the details of supervisory team and their contact information. Each project is funded through one of our three Supervisor-Led Competitions (known as Skills Development Scotland, Open Collaborative, and Steers). Before applying, we strongly encourage you to read the full project description (the title contains a link to the full project description within corresponding advert on [our website](#)).

You may direct most questions to the supervisors listed. For any questions about the application portal, technical difficulties uploading references, etc., please email the SGSSS Team at team@sgsss.ac.uk.

2.1 Skills Development Scotland Studentships

Since 2013, SGSSS has worked with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to fund studentships that engage with the academic community to support the creation of new, high-quality research focused on the Scottish labour market. Every year, SDS identifies key careers and skills focused topics which supervisors from across our DTP are then invited to respond by proposing PhD projects.

To learn more about the SDS Collaborative PhD Programme and read about the work currently underway by SDS PhD students, and alumni, and get a quick glimpse on the programme you would have access to as an SDS student, see the [2024/25 programme brochure, here](#). The SDS studentships that are offered in 2025/26 are provided below.

Institution: University of St Andrews

Project Title: Skills in rural Scotland and the green transition

Challenge Led Pathway: Environment, Migration and Demographic Change

SDS Topic: Skills in rural Scotland and the green transition

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr David McCollum, dm82@st-andrews.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Harminder Battu, h.battu@abdn.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Christina Noble, yaji.sripada@abdn.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/skills-in-rural-scotland-and-the-green-transition>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 21 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: What works in supporting secondary school non-attenders? An evaluation of careers provision in Scotland's National Digital Academy for students not in in-person attendance.

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

SDS Topic: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/what-works-in-supporting-secondary-school-non-attenders/>

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor David Lundie, david.lundie@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Emily Oxley, emily.oxley@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/what-works-in-supporting-secondary-school-non-attenders/>

Shortlisting date: 10 April 2026

Interview date: 27 April 2026

2.2 Open Collaborative Studentships

Our funding body, the ESRC, is committed to supporting knowledge exchange and collaboration to ensure that research has a positive impact on society and the economy. We define "collaborative" broadly, so this term encompasses collaboration with private sector companies, public sector bodies or third sector organisations. The Open Collaborative studentships are listed below.

Institution: University of Strathclyde

Project Title: Assessing the political and legal context of safer drug consumption facilities (SDCFs): a case study of the UK's first SDCF, the "Thistle" project in Glasgow.

Challenge Led Pathway: Governance and Institutions

Collaborative Partner: Release

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Jane Scoular, jane.scoular@strath.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Kirsten Traynor, Kirsten.Trayner@gcu.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr James Nicholls, j.c.nicholls@stir.ac.uk
- Fourth Supervisor: Dr Chris McCorkindale, Christopher.mccorkindale@strath.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/assessing-the-political-and-legal-context-of-sdcfs>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 17 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Co-production of an acceptable, valid and reliable measure to evaluate the effectiveness of the MCR Pathways mentoring programme in improving young people's wellbeing

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Collaborative Partner: MCR Pathways

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Stephanie Chambers, stephanie.chambers@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Joanna Inchley, joanna.inchley@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Marianne Etherson, marianne.etherson@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/co-production-of-an-acceptable-valid-and-reliable-measure-to-evaluate-the-effectiveness-of-the-mcr-pathways-mentoring-programme-in-improving-young-peoples-wellbeing>

Shortlisting date: 1 April 2026

Interview date: 23 April 2026

Institution: University of Strathclyde

Project Title: Empirical studies of behavioural and distributional effects of Scottish Income Tax

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Collaborative Partner: Scottish Government

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr João Sousa, joao.sousa@strath.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Otto Lenhart, otto.lenhart@strath.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Professor Stuart McIntyre, s.mcintyre@strath.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/empirical-studies-of-behavioural-and-distributional-effects-of-scottish-income-tax>

Shortlisting date: 8 April 2026

Interview date: 22 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Exploring Alternative Finance for Impact-Driven Deep Tech Ventures

Challenge Led Pathway: Governance and Institutions

Collaborative Partner: Considered Capital

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Jillian Gordon, jillian.gordon@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Gemma Milne, gemma.milne@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: : <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/exploring-alternative-finance/>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 27 April 2026

Institution: University of Stirling

Project Title: How can telephone CPR instructions be more effective and less distressing? Exploring the views of lay-responders with recent lived experience.

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Collaborative Partner: Sudden Adult Death Trust (SADS UK)

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Julia Allan, julia.allan@stir.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Barbara Farquharson, barbara.farquharson2@stir.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Gareth Clegg, gareth.clegg@ed.ac.uk
- Fourth Supervisor: Dr Pam Ramsay, pramsay001@dundee.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/how-can-telephone-cpr-instructions-be-more-effective-and-less-distressing>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 13 April 2026

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Project Title: How should we communicate with individuals with chest, heart and stroke conditions and their support communities to promote physical activity and enhance health and wellbeing?

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Collaborative Partner: Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Graham Baker, graham.baker@ed.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Paul Kelly, p.kelly@ed.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Chloë Williamson, chloe.williamson@ed.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/how-should-we-communicate>

Shortlisting date: 7 or 8 April 2026

Interview date: 14 or 15 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Mirroring Ga/Gael: An Ethnography of Repair and Belonging

Challenge Led Pathway: Governance and Institutions

Collaborative Partner: GalGael

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Gerry McCartney, Gerard.McCartney@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Giovanni Picker, Giovanni.Picker@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/mirroring-galgael/>

Shortlisting date: 28 March 2026

Interview date: 20 April 2026

Institution: University of St Andrews

Project Title: Moving beyond the numbers? Uncovering the 'ideal migrant' to address Scotland's rural demographic challenges

Challenge Led Pathway: Environment, Migration and Demographic Change

Collaborative Partner: James Hutton Institute

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr David McCollum, dm82@st-andrews.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Christina Noble, christina.noble@hutton.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Ruth Wilson, ruth.wilson@hutton.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/moving-beyond-the-numbers-uncovering-the-ideal-migrant-to-address-scotlands-rural-demographic-challenges/>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 20 April 2026

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Project Title: Neurodivergent students' access to education: the role of social inequalities, child and family factors.

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Collaborative Partner: Mindroom

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Katie Cebula, Katie.cebula@ed.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Michael Fleming, Michael.Fleming@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Patricio Troncoso, Patricio.Troncoso@ed.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/neurodivergent-students-access-to-education>

Shortlisting date: week commencing 6 April

Interview date: week commencing 20 April

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Project Title: Redefining Reading: Understanding Reading Engagement within Contemporary Reading Practices

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Collaborative Partner: National Literacy Trust

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Sarah McGeown, s.mcgeown@ed.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Patrick Errington, p.errington@ed.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/redefining-reading/>

Shortlisting date: 10 April 2026

Interview date: 20 or 22 April 2026

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Project Title: The Framing of Corruption in Defence and National Security Policy: A Cross-National Analysis, 1987–2024

Challenge Led Pathway: Securities: Justice, Economies and Conflict

Collaborative Partner: Transparency International: Defence and Security

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Andrew Neal, andrew.neal@ed.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Gerhard Anders, Gerhard.Anders@ed.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/the-framing-of-corruption-in-defence-and-national-security-policy/>

Shortlisting date: 2 April 2026

Interview date: 23 April 2026

The two collaborative projects below are only open to ‘home’ students. For the full eligibility criteria read section 4 below.

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Diet Transition: Understanding the Effectiveness of Community Organisations in Supporting Change

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Collaborative Partner: Glasgow Food Policy Partnership

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Deirdre Shaw, deirdre.shaw@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Stephanie Anderson, stephanie.anderson@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/diet-transition/>

Shortlisting date: 2 April 2026

Interview date: 27 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: The development of a risk assessment tool for under 18-year-olds who display harmful sexual behaviour, both offline and online

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Collaborative Partners: The Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Stop It Now! Scotland

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Juliane Kloess, Juliane.Kloess@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Ruth Lewis, Ruth.Lewis@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/the-development-of-a-risk-assessment-tool>

Shortlisting date: 10 April 2026

Interview date: 21 April 2026

2.3 Steers Studentships

As an ESRC-funded DTP, SGSSS is awarded funding for projects which are tied to a “steer”. A steer is an area that the ESRC has identified as a priority for increasing research skills and capacity. The projects listed below are aligned to one of the three steers: Advanced Quantitative Methods, Datasets, and Interdisciplinary. If you are successful in your application to one of these projects, you will be required to attend specific training every year to develop your skills that relate to the steer of your studentship.

- **AQM – Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM):** These projects aim to encourage the development of advanced quantitative methods skills in relation to the norms of the discipline. The aim of this steer is to provide training and develop research capacity in the use of advanced quantitative methods in the social sciences. The research and training for students on an AQM studentship is expected to be at a level over and above the basic generic and subject-specific methods requirements for that discipline.
- **Datasets:** These projects aim to encourage the development of secondary data analysis skills. The focus of this steer is to develop researchers with the skills to exploit fully the increasing volumes of large and complex data for social science research purposes.
- **Interdisciplinary:** These projects aim to encourage conceptual and methodological creativity through research that spans disciplinary boundaries. Students on these projects will receive training and undertake research that is genuinely interdisciplinary in nature that straddles the social sciences and other research council remits.

For more on the ESRC’s guidance on Steers and Targets [visit this link](#).

Advanced Quantitative Methods

Institution: University of Strathclyde

Project Title: Bias and Inclusion in Survey Data: Modelling Respondent Effort Across International and Youth-Focused Surveys

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Steer: AQM (Advanced Quantitative Methods)

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Thomas Scotto, tom.scotto@strath.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Professor Robert Mattes, robert.mattes@strath.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Joe Greenwood-Hau, Joe.Greenwood-Hau@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/bias-and-inclusion-in-survey-data/>

Shortlisting date: 01 April 2026

Interview date: 08 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Random Fields in Continuous-Time Overlapping Generations Models: Wealth Inequality and Macroeconomic Dynamics

Challenge Led Pathway: Securities: Justice, Economies and Conflict

Steer: AQM (Advanced Quantitative Methods)

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Christian Ewald, christian.ewald@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Professor Charles Nolan, charles.nolan@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Yihan Zou, yihan.zou@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/random-fields-in-continuous/>

Shortlisting date: 6 April

Interview date: 23 or 24 April

Datasets

Institution: University of St Andrews

Project Title: The mobilities slowdown and the reproduction of socio-spatial inequalities

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Steer: Datasets

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Nissa Finney, Nissa.Finney@st-andrews.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr David McCollum, David.McCollum@st-andrews.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/the-mobilities-slowdown-and-the-reproduction-of-socio-spatial-inequalities/>

Shortlisting date: 3 April 2026

Interview date: 13 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Evaluating the effects of Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit as a public health intervention using natural experimental methods

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Steer: Datasets

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Professor Jim Lewsey, jim.lewsey@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Andy Baxter, andy.baxter@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Olivia Hamilton, olivia.hamilton@glasgow.ac.uk
- Fourth Supervisor: Professor Peter Craig, peter.craig@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/evaluating-the-effects-of-scotlands-violence-reduction-unit/>

Shortlisting date: 01 April 2026

Interview date: 20 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: Intersecting Vulnerabilities: Mapping the Care Journeys of Opioid-Exposed Children in Scotland using administrative data

Challenge Led Pathway: Social Inequalities

Steer: Datasets

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Louise Marryat, Louise.Marryat@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Professor Helen Minnis, Helen.Minnis@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Martha Canfield, martha.canfield@gcu.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/intersecting-vulnerabilities/>

Shortlisting date: 7 April 2026

Interview date: week commencing 20 April 2026

Interdisciplinary

Institution: University of Edinburgh

Project Title: Immune memory: How can Black Caribbean historical narratives inform understandings of low vaccine uptake across the lifecourse?

Challenge Led Pathway: Health, Wellbeing and Communities

Steer: Interdisciplinary

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Sudeepa Abeysinghe, sudeepa.abeyasinghe@ed.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Professor Diana Paton, Diana.Paton@ed.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Dr Ben Kasstan-Dabush, ben.kasstan-dabush@ed.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/immune-memory/>

Shortlisting date: 01 April 2026

Interview date: 13 April 2026

Institution: University of Glasgow

Project Title: National Security and the “new” industrial policy: A comparative political economy of quantum technology strategies

Challenge Led Pathway: Communication, AI and New Technologies

Steer: Interdisciplinary

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Scott Lavery, scott.lavery@glasgow.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Professor Douglas Paul, douglas.paul@glasgow.ac.uk
- Third Supervisor: Ms Gemma Milne, gemma.milne@glasgow.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/national-security-and-the-new-industrial-policy/>

Shortlisting date: 27 March 2026

Interview date: April 2026

Institution: University of Strathclyde

Project Title: Spatial Open-Source Intelligence (S-OSINT) in the Age of Misinformation and Disinformation: Developing a Best Practice Framework for Law and Engineering

Challenge Led Pathway: Communication, AI and New Technologies

Steer: Interdisciplinary

Supervisory Team:

- First Supervisor: Dr Birgit Schippers, birgit.schippers@strath.ac.uk
- Second Supervisor: Dr Annalisa Riccardi, annalisa.riccardi@strath.ac.uk

Link to full advert: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentship/spatial-open-source-intelligence/>

Shortlisting date: 7 April 2026

Interview date: 13 April 2026

You are welcome to apply to more than one of the projects open for applicants.

3. Timeline

Date	Action
<p>24 February (Tuesday)</p>	<p>All studentship projects open for applicants on the SGSSS Apply portal. Both international and home students may apply for these opportunities (please note there are two projects that are only open to home students).</p>
<p>24 March (Tuesday), 5 p.m. BST</p>	<p>Deadline for applicants to submit their applications. If one or both references are missing, the Apply portal will still allow for application submission.</p> <p>Referees have until 26 March to complete their recommendation. If you need to update the reference information to a new one, after submitting your application, please contact team@sgsss.ac.uk as soon as possible.</p>
<p>26 March (Thursday), 5 p.m. BST</p>	<p>Deadline for references to submit their response within SGSSS Apply.</p> <p>We do not accept references via email. References must be anonymised, instead of using the applicant's name they must indicate the applicant's application ID. For equity purposes, there is also a word limit of 175-250 words for the references.</p> <p>Late submissions for references will be NOT accepted and an application cannot proceed without references.</p>
<p>27 March (Friday) – 28 April (Tuesday)</p>	<p>Communication of decisions on shortlisting for interview will occur between 27th March and 28th April. This will vary for each project. This shortlisting process takes place internally at the institution: the supervisory teams will indicate within the Apply portal if applicants are shortlisted for interview or not. Regardless of the outcome, applicants will receive an automatic message from the system informing them of this.</p> <p>If an applicant is shortlisted, the institution and supervisory team will contact them separately to schedule an interview. SGSSS will not play a role in contacting applicants for interviews.</p>
<p>27 March (Friday) – 28 April (Tuesday)</p>	<p>If you are shortlisted for an interview, it can occur anytime during this period.</p> <p>For Home Students:</p> <p>If you are interviewed and nominated for the position, the supervisory team will let you know this shortly after the interview. SGSSS will review your candidacy and have the final approval. If you are successful, a preliminary award notification will come via email through SGSSS Apply. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified by the supervisory team.</p> <p>For International Students:</p> <p>As a DTP funded by the ESRC, SGSSS have a 30% cap on the number of international studentships that can be funded. In the event that more than 30% of studentships nominate international students as the top candidate, SGSSS will use a lottery to decide which international students receive awards. Our Governance groups have approved this as the fairest approach to allocate international studentships.</p>

	<p>Note: a lottery will only be used to allocate studentships to international candidates in the event in the international cap is exceeded. Should a lottery be needed then it will take place on 29 April. See full process for the lottery on page 15).</p> <p>If you are successful in the lottery you will be offered a studentship as per the process above. Unsuccessful candidates will also be informed by the supervisory team.</p>
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4. Application Process

4.1 Eligibility Criteria

As per [guidance](#) published by UKRI in 2020, a minimum of 70% of all studentships awarded by SGSSS will be made to [home](#) students, while a maximum of 30% of all studentships awarded can be made to [international](#) students. Please note, it is not a requirement for 30% of studentships to be awarded to international students, as the quality of applications will always remain the primary assessment criterion during the Competitions. Due to the cap, unfortunately some highly ranked international students may not be able to receive an award.

Residential Criteria

To be classed as a home student, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK national (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter.

If you do not meet the criteria above, you will be classed as an international student.

To establish if you would be classed as a home student, please see pages 4 and 5 of the UKRI eligibility guidance [here](#).

Where to reside during the duration of your studies

As per our [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#), (see pg. 5), ‘all activity undertaken as part of the ESRC award must be carried out within the UK, except as part of overseas fieldwork which is an integral part of the study, conferences, or training. All students **must reside within a reasonable travel time of the Research Organisation** at which they are registered and we would expect there to be direct contact between the student and supervisor.’

For this reason, **we do not offer our studentships on a remote basis.**

International Students, Fees, Visa Costs

The funding arrangements for international students are the same as that of home students, for **most** institutions, i.e., you are eligible for the full ESRC studentship package and are not required to pay any additional international tuition fees (“top up” fees).

****For projects based at Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Dundee or University of Stirling, successful international applicants are liable for full international fees. These universities will not waive the difference between home and international fees. This means that if you are successful and accept a studentship at one of these universities, you will be liable to pay additional fee costs, and funding will not be available from SGSSS beyond the home fee level already covered.** Please note that for visa purposes, you will have to demonstrate that you can pay the difference in fees (the exact amount will vary by university, but this could be around £15,000 per annum). **

If you are an international student considering a studentship, please be aware of this potential additional cost and the implications for the financial requirements aspect of any visa application. If necessary, please contact the university in advance to discuss this. Contact the HEI Administrative Lead at that institution, their contact details can [be found here](#).

Additionally, regardless of where the project is based, SGSSS funding cannot be used to pay for UKVI visa fees or the National Health Insurance surcharge which international students would be required to pay if they are successful. This is a requirement of the UKRI/ESRC funding that SGSSS receives.

4.2 How to Apply

When applying to our Supervisor-Led projects, there is no limit to the number of projects to which you can submit an application. A separate application is needed for each studentship you apply for. Regardless of the number of applications you submit, in order to be considered you must make sure the following items are submitted for each application by the deadlines detailed below.

Application Components

1. **To start an application**, you must have an account in our application portal, SGSSS Apply. To start one or log in to your existing account, visit apply.sgsss.ac.uk. Click “Register” in the top right-hand corner of the screen, completing the details as prompted.

If you are new to the portal, after you create an account you will be asked to answer the question, ‘Please select the category below which is applicable to you.’ Your answer to this question will enable you to see the right programme in the portal to apply to these positions.

In order to apply for a supervisor-led studentship you must select ‘Prospective ESRC-Funded PhD Student (SGSSS)’. Note: Please note the application portal will list the due date under the time zone the United Kingdom is currently in. When the call opens for applicants, it will list it under GMT, on 29 March it will change to BST due to the daylight-saving hour change.

It is IMPERATIVE that you note this difference in your own personal time zone if you are outside of the country. Closing time for all due dates will be 5 p.m. BST. No late applications or references will be accepted. We recommend that you do not leave submission of your application till the final day of the deadline.



**Check
your time
zone!**

2. **Next**, your dashboard will show you ‘25/26 SGSSS Supervisor-led PhD Studentship Opportunities’. Select this to start an application.
3. **Within the application, you will be asked to complete the following tasks:**
 - a. **Equality Opportunities Monitoring Form** - The first section you will be asked to complete is our Equality Opportunities Monitoring Form. Please note, this information is kept private and is not considered by reviewers during the competition process. For more on this, visit the section in the next page titled ‘Equalities Opportunities Monitoring Form’.
 - b. **Supervisor-led Student Recruitment Pre-Application Questions** - This will let you and us know if you are eligible to apply and/or if you are a home or international student (according to UKRI guidance).
 - c. **Supervisor-led Student Recruitment Applicant Information (Part 1)** - Here you will answer questions on previous and current address; nationality; and other applicant information questions.
 - d. **Supervisor-led Student Recruitment Applicant Information (Part 2)** - Here you will indicate your will indicate your award length, fee status, and study mode.
 - e. **Supervisor-led Student Recruitment Application Information** - Here you will answer three prompts: ‘Preparedness to undertake and complete a PhD and to flourish as a result of PhD funding’; and ‘Personal Statement’. Additionally, you will be asked about ‘Contributing to a positive and diverse PhD community’ and the Stuart Hall Foundation, but these questions are not part of the marking framework. **Please read section 8 for more.**

- f. **Student Recruitment References (please complete ASAP, so your referees have sufficient time to provide you with a reference)** – here you will provide us with the full name and email address of two (2) referees who will provide you with a reference. For more on references, **please read section 5.**
- If any of your referees are no longer available to provide a reference, please use [this visual guide](#) to update the contact details in the portal. For any questions, contact us at team@sgsss.ac.uk



Please remember that applications that are not accompanied by references will not progress or be considered. It is your responsibility to agree with your referees that they will provide a reference by the published deadline.

- CV (for uploading)** – here, you will upload your latest CV.
- Transcripts¹ (for uploading)** – here you will upload your undergraduate and graduate transcripts (if applicable).
- Additional Documentation (for uploading)** – here, you can upload any awards, recognitions, which may support your application.
 - NOTE: Some projects may require additional documentation. You must review the advert in detail before submitting to ensure that no additional documents are missing.
 - NOTE: as part of the application process, you will not be asked to submit a full project proposal. You may be asked to submit a response to the project abstract, etc. However, this will depend on any additional documentation (if any) that the supervisory team may request.
- Declaration & Artificial Intelligence Statement** – here, you will sign off on the content of the application. For more on the AI Statement, **read section 6.**

Any documents you upload must be in PDF format, only. Word documents will **not** be accepted.

Application Anonymisation

Please note, applications may be anonymised for reviewers and as such all documents you upload as part of your application may be redacted i.e., any documents you upload as part of your application must not contain your name and/or any identifiable information.

For more on anonymisation, use [this quick guide](#).

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

SGSSS commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

SGSSS believes in the benefits that come from diverse student, supervisor and staff populations. We are committed to facilitating inclusion and removing any barriers to participation during applications and throughout the PhD experience. We actively work against any forms of discrimination in relation to the [Equality Act 2010](#) protected characteristics, alongside characteristics that are not covered by the Act.

Purpose of this form and how we use this data

Through the following form we collect a range of data that are used in an aggregated and anonymised format to monitor trends, identify potential areas for improvement and report statistics related to EDI to our funders. We ask that you complete the form as fully as possible, but you may of course skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

¹ Undergraduate transcripts and Master's transcripts (if applicable), combined as one pdf document.

This data is not used for application review: it will be held confidentially and separately from any applications you submit to us. Your individual information will not be passed on to academic departments, universities or to anyone else such as a supervisor. Data will only be kept until our Training Grant expires.

Support for individual disability related adjustments

The data supplied is very helpful to SGSSS for informing actions that may encourage people with disabilities to apply and participate in PhD study. As the information supplied is only used in an aggregated anonymised way however, it cannot be used by us to inform individual circumstances. SGSSS encourage students to consider disclosing disabilities, or other circumstances that may require support, to their supervisors and aligned university services, e.g. Disability Support Services. This will then enable appropriate and confidential discussion of what additional support measures may help you.

Helpful information about Disabled Students' Allowance, is also available through our [Handbook](#). For SGSSS events, we will request information on an event-by-event basis specific to the type of activity, so you can highlight any adjustments or requirements necessary to ensure your ability to participate. **Completing this form helps us and others to better understand issues of selection, participation and under-representation in postgraduate research. We are grateful for your time in completing it. For any questions, please email us at team@sgsss.ac.uk**

5. References

Each applicant is required to provide the details of two referees. To do this, applicants need to click into the "Student Recruitment References (please complete ASAP)" section within the online application process via SGSSS Apply.

References are due on 26 March (Tuesday), 5 p.m. GMT

Your application deadline (24 March, 5 p.m. GMT) is before the date for references (26 March, 5pm GMT), and submitting your application **WILL NOT** prevent your referees from submitting their references, as long as they do so before their deadline. If you need to update the reference information after submitting your application, please contact team@sgsss.ac.uk as soon as is possible.

We do not accept references via email. References can be anonymised, instead of using the applicant's name they can indicate the applicant's application ID. For equity purposes, there is also a word limit for the references. Late submissions or references sent via email will **NOT be accepted**.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of references?

We ask for references as this is an opportunity for an academic, or line manager from work, known to you to provide our reviewers with an overview of you as an individual, as well as how you perform academically (or within your workplace). In addition, a reference is a good way for reviewers to try to gauge if you are ready to undertake a PhD.

2. What is SGSSS asking within the reference template, which will be sent to my referees?

References will be asked to provide us with an assessment of the applicant's preparedness to undertake and complete a PhD and to flourish as a result of PhD funding, bearing in mind their academic work and other life experiences. To encourage equivalence amongst applicants, we ask referees to submit between 175 to 250 words in this section.

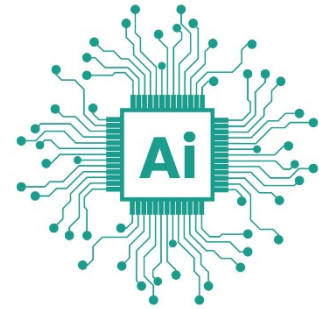
3. Who can provide my references?

Where possible your references should include an academic familiar with your work (this can be, but does not have to be, a member of your supervisory team). Both references can be from academics, but you may include a work reference, especially if you have been out of academia for more than 5 years.

4. What happens when I submit my referees' details as part of my application via SGSSS Apply?

Once you submit your two referees' details (full name and email address) online via *SGSSS Apply*, the system will automatically send them an email invite asking that they complete an online reference to support your application. They then need to follow the link detailed within the email to create an *SGSSS Apply* "recommender"

account (this takes a few minutes), at which point they can then complete the online reference template. Once completed and submitted online by your referee, the reference will be 'attached' to your application automatically. You will receive an email confirming when this has been done. In addition, you will be able to see when your references have been returned via your application on *SGSSS Apply*. Please note, you will not be able to read your references, you will just be able to see when they have been completed.



5. When should I request my references?

As you can request your references well before you submit your full application, **we encourage you to submit both of your referees' details as soon as possible to allow them as much time as possible to respond.** If you only request your references shortly before the application deadline, this may not be enough time for your referees to respond, whereas if you do this well in advance of the deadline, e.g. a month, you are giving yourself a higher chance that your references will be submitted by the deadline and your application can progress to the next stage.

6. I am concerned one or both of my referees might not respond to my reference request; what should I do?

As an automatic reference request will be issued to your referees via *SGSSS Apply* as soon as you submit their details online, it is imperative that you have sought their permission **before** you send them a reference request.

If you have sought permission from your referees and you are still worried one or both may not complete the reference template on time or may forget, you can manage your reference requests yourself via your application within *SGSSS Apply*. The system will allow you to send reminders to your referees as well as change who your referees are (by withdrawing your reference request and deleting it, before submitting a new reference request). **Once you fully submit your application you will no longer have the permissions to make changes to your reference requests. If you do, however, and need to update the reference request, please email us at team@sgsss.ac.uk as soon as possible.**

As the application system will allow you to prepare the rest of your application, i.e., you can save your application and return as many times as you like without fully submitting it, it is possible to manage your references and have your application ready for submission well before the application deadline.

7. What if my referee submits my reference late?

We will not provide referees any additional time to submit their reference. This deadline is final and should references still be outstanding, applications will automatically be marked as unsuccessful.

6. Artificial Intelligence Statement

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science emphasises the importance of academic integrity and personal intellect in developing all submissions. While AI tools may support the research and writing process, it is crucial that the studentship application is a reflection of the applicant's own intellectual endeavour and critical thinking.

Misrepresenting AI-generated content as original work is strictly prohibited. Any use of AI must be transparently acknowledged, ensuring that the final submission remains a true and honest representation of the applicant's own intellectual contributions.

As part of your application, you will be asked to confirm if you used AI when creating the application. If you confirm 'yes' we will ask to elaborate on your answer.

7. Application Questions

Below are questions you will be asked to answer online via *SGSSS Apply* within the "**Supervisor-led Student Recruitment Application Information - Part 1**" section of your application, relating to your project proposal. Should you prefer to download a Word version of the below to use to develop your research proposal/application responses,

[please click here.](#)

PLEASE NOTE, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UPLOAD THIS APPLICATION FORM - ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE MADE USING THE ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM, i.e., the Word version can be used to develop your application offline and to share with your supervisors for feedback, but cannot be submitted as an attachment or via email. You will be able to copy across from the Word version to the online application system (SGSSS Apply).

If you need an alternative route to submitting your application, please contact us at team@sgss.ac.uk so we can assist you.

1. Preparedness to undertake and complete a PhD and to flourish as a result of PhD funding

Successfully undertaking a PhD requires not only academic ability but also resourcefulness, commitment and resilience. It involves a range of skills including the ability to communicate complex ideas (about why a research question is of societal and academic importance, why it can be addressed using particular methods and why your findings matter), planning and organisation (including within changing circumstances), working with others (inside and outside of universities) to increase the chances of your research making a difference. You may find it useful to refer to the [Researcher Development Framework](#) in thinking about this question.

Drawing on your own background (including your life experiences, journey to/through university, work experiences or volunteering) please provide a summary of why you are ready to undertake a PhD now and how you will flourish as a result of PhD funding. You might include, for example, personal challenges that you have overcome or achievements that you are proud of in your work, study or life experiences and how these map onto the skills required to flourish in a PhD programme. Challenges could include, but are not limited to, protected characteristics, socio-economic status and of being first-in-a-generation to university or care-experienced. (400 words max)



2. Personal Statement

Please provide a personal statement of approximately 750 words specifying how your skills, experience and academic interests align with the aims of this studentship project.

3. Contributing to a positive and diverse PhD community

SGSSS aims to attract and support a positive and diverse PhD community where everyone can reach their full potential; Research and Development (R&D) is a supportive and fulfilling sector to work in; and is seen as a shared endeavour across society rather than only the concern of professional researchers. You may find it useful to refer to the UK Government's [R&D People and Culture Strategy](#) when thinking about this question.

Reflecting on your own background and/or proposed approach to PhD study and the opportunities which it will present, how will you support diversity and inclusion in the PhD community? (250 words max)

Note, this information is not used to evaluate your application. Rather SGSSS use this information so that we can best support and develop our student cohort.

8. Things to know if you are successful following your interview

For Home Students:

If you are interviewed and nominated for the position, the supervisory team will let you know. If you are approved, you receive a preliminary award and further details on next steps.

For International Students (Lottery System):

As per the information above, a DTP funded by the ESRC, we have a 30% cap on the number of international studentships we can fund and as such these will be awarded on a lottery basis.

All international applicants who are found successful will be added into a lottery drawing for one of our available slots

Lottery day (29 April) will involve randomly selected studentship applications to fill the quote of international studentships that we can offer. All applicants will be informed of the lottery outcome on 29th April. If you are successful in the lottery, our team will be in touch to offer a studentship. Applicants will have 1 week to accept or decline the studentship offer.

Applying for a visa

If you are an international applicant and are successful through this recruitment process, as part of your university and studentship admission process you will be required to apply for a visa. SGSSS is **not involved** in this process, and you must coordinate this with the institution you will be expected to study at.

As a DTP, we cannot cover visa costs for international students. This includes the visa application fees and the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). For any visa or immigration advice, please speak to your institutions visa compliance team. If you are successful, we recommend you contact the [HEI Administrative Lead](#) at the institution your studentship is housed at: they will be able to direct you to that team.

8.1 Language requirements and admissions into a PhD programme

Although you **can** apply for our studentships before securing an offer from the institution where the position will be, you must have secured an unconditional offer by the time the studentship starts in October 2025 (please note that some institutions start their academic year in September).

SGSSS play no role in institutional admissions processes, and each institution will have varying application processes and eligibility requirements. This includes the language requirements you may be asked to provide proof of in order to receive admission. If you have any questions about your eligibility for this admission process, please email the HEI Administrative Lead at the institution the project will be held in, **preferably, before you submit an application your project(s) of interest**. A full list of HEI Administrative Leads can be found [here](#).

8.2 Educational / professional background & Development Needs Analysis

Applicants must hold or be predicted a First or a 2:1 undergraduate degree in a social science subject, or have relevant comparable experience. Additionally, if you are applying for a +3.5 award then you must also hold or be completing a Masters degree in the social sciences, which satisfies the ESRC 2022 methods training requirements. To learn more about the award lengths, [visit this guidance](#).

Development Needs Analysis (DNA) Meeting & Award Letters

As part of your application, you will be asked to answer a question regarding the award length you expect to have. The standard options available are: 'PhD Funding' or 'Masters + PhD Funding'. To learn more about the award lengths, [visit this guidance](#).

If you are successful following your interview, your nomination will be sent to our team for further review and confirmation of award and award length. At this point, the SGSSS academic team will determine a preliminary award length. We may request additional information: if this is the case, you will receive an email from us (team@sgsss.ac.uk).

This preliminary award will be made available to you via the application portal where you will be able to review it and answer your Pre-DNA meeting survey and book your DNA meeting.

This is all part of the "At-Award Development Needs Analysis" (DNA) process. The DNA is a conversation between you, your supervisor(s) and a member of the SGSSS Directorate, to develop a bespoke plan of training and development for you that covers the entire lifecycle of the PhD (including a Masters year if applicable). The DNA process also ensures your training plan delivers the skills in the ESRC Postgraduate training guidelines, which are detailed here: [2022 guidelines](#). To read more about the DNA, [click here](#).

It is during this meeting that your final award length will be determined. An award letter is issued after this, at which point you may start the admissions process and/or visa process (for international applicants). See section 3.1 about the visa process.

8.3 Study Mode & Residential Requirement

All of our studentships can be awarded as either part-time or full-time study. The funding and award lengths are pro-rated accordingly, in accordance with the [ESRC funding guidance](#).

When completing their application, applicants will be asked to indicate if they wish to complete the studentship on a full or part-time basis. Part-time students must spend **no less** than 50% of their working time (i.e. 18.75 hours, using the ESRC definition of a 37.5 hour working week), on their PhD research. To read more about this, review the [ESRC funding guidance](#).

For any further questions, email team@sgsss.ac.uk before submitting your application.

As per the [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#), (see page 5), 'all activity undertaken as part of the ESRC award must be carried out within the UK, except as part of overseas fieldwork which is an integral part of the study, conferences, or training. All students **must reside within a reasonable travel time of the Research Organisation (the institution where the studentship will be in)** at which they are registered, and we would expect there to be direct contact between the student and supervisor.'

For this reason, **we do not offer our studentships on a remote basis**. Each of our institutions have different internal policies as it relates to 'reasonable travel time' so we recommend you check with the [HEI Administrative Lead](#) at the institution are you are interested in applying to for more on this.

8.4 Thesis Submission Expectations

In line with ESRC guidance, students holding SGSSS studentships from October 2024 onwards will be required to submit their thesis **within their funded period**. There will not be any 'writing up' or unfunded period during which a student can submit.

8.5 Funding Arrangements and Stipend Distribution

The SGSSS DTP funding operates within the standard [ESRC studentship package](#):

1. Tuition fees;
2. Maintenance stipend;
3. Research Training Support Grant (RTSG);
4. Overseas fieldwork support (where applicable to the student's project).

Estimates for 1+3.5 award (based on a full-time award):

Full award	2025/26*	2026/27*	2027/28*	2028/29*	2029/30*
Stipend	£20,780	£21,383	£22,003	£22,641	£11,649
Fees	£5,006	£5,111	£5,213	£5,317	£2,712
OFW	£450	£450	£450	£450	£225
RTSG	£940	£940	£940	£940	£470
Cohort Development	£3,330	£0	£0	£0	£0
Totals	£30,506	£27,884	£28,606	£29,348	£15,056

Estimates for 3.5 award (based on a full-time award):

Full award	2025/26*	2026/27*	2027/28*	2028/29*
Stipend	£20,780	£21,383	£22,003	£11,321
Fees	£5,006	£5,111	£5,213	£1,274
OFW	£450	£450	£450	£225
RTSG	£940	£940	£940	£470

Cohort Development	£3,330	£0	£0	£0
Totals	£30,506	£27,884	£28,606	£13,290

*Assumed figures at a 2.9% increase for stipends and 2.1% for fees, year on year. Please note, the percentage increases are decided by UKRI annually who consider UK inflation rates (taking into account the UK Government's annual [GDP deflator index](#)) and market conditions. Due to the current economic situation in the UK, we suspect that the annual percentage increases are likely to vary from those assumed above.

Stipend Distribution

As per the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide, all our studentships officially start on 1 October of each year. However, depending on your DNA meeting, you may be asked to partake in additional training (e.g., some courses / Masters programme). In this instance, some universities may require for you to start before 1 October as some courses may start as early as mid-September.

Regardless of your situation, the studentship stipend will commence on 1 October. Stipend distribution schedules may vary between institutions. Recipients should confirm the details with the HEI Administrative Lead at the university where their studentship is based.

If you are awarded one of our studentships, you will be asked to review and acknowledge that you have read our SGSSS Student Handbook, the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide and the UKRI Terms and Conditions. However, we strongly encourage you to read this guidance in advance to submitting an application as it can answer questions that may come up after you are successful. For any other questions, email us at team@sgsss.ac.uk.