# SGSSS ESRC-Funded Student Handbook 2021/22

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We invite students to contact us regarding the information detailed within this Handbook, should they wish to see guidance explained differently, added or corrected. To do so, please email us on team@sgss.ac.uk

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1. Introduction to the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS)

1.1 Welcome from the SGSSS Director

It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to welcome you to the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership (SGSSS-DTP). If you are reading this message then it is likely that you have recently been successful in one of the SGSSS-DTP studentship competitions and are now embarking on your PhD journey. Being awarded a studentship by the SGSSS-DTP is a very significant achievement and I very much hope this success will provide you with a great deal of confidence as you begin to plan your PhD studies.

The SGSSS-DTP is one of the 14 ESRC funded DTPs that are located around the UK and the SGSSS-DTP is the largest of the 14 (by studentships awarded and number of universities). Each year we fund around 60 studentships covering the full range of social sciences disciplines as well as areas of interdisciplinary research crossing over into the remit of other UK research councils. Each year we provide around 700 hours of training covering social science methods, wider transferable skills, collaboration and knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary working, and much more too. Events include our annual Summer School, which takes place each year and provides a great opportunity to meet your fellow social science PhD students from across the disciplines. Keep an eye out for our weekly bulletin (Friday Digest) and the SGSSS social media channels for details of upcoming events.

I very much hope you will make the most out of the opportunities available to you through the SGSSS-DTP including the training events, our internship scheme, and various cohort building activities. We are very keen to make sure that the SGSSS is supporting you in your PhD so please make sure you let us know about what you need from us in your PhD work. A good way to do that is by completing the annual ‘Training Needs Analysis’ and/or discussing with the SGSSS Student representatives. We hope you find this handbook helpful as you learn more about the SGSSS; please take the time to have a read through so you are fully briefed on the many opportunities available to you. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well on your PhD journey and very much look forward to meeting you at the SGSSS-DTP Induction Event.

Jamie Pearce

Professor Jamie Pearce
1.2 What is the SGSSS

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) is an Economic and Social Research Centre (ESRC) funded postgraduate training consortium consisting of 16 Scottish Higher Education institutions. These are:

- University of Aberdeen (DTP member)
- Abertay University (non-DTP member)
- University of Dundee (DTP member)
- University of Edinburgh (Lead institution, DTP member)
- Edinburgh Napier University (DTP member)
- University of Glasgow (DTP member)
- Glasgow Caledonian University (DTP member)
- Heriot Watt University (DTP member)
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Queen Margaret University (DTP member)
- Robert Gordon University (non-DTP member)
- Scotland’s Rural University College (DTP member)
- University of St Andrews (DTP member)
- University of Stirling (DTP member)
- University of Strathclyde (DTP member)
- University of the West of Scotland (non-DTP member)

Within the SGSSS there is a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) of which 12 of the above institutions are members. This is the largest ESRC DTP in the UK offering studentships across a full range of social science disciplines. In addition, we receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), which allows us to open up many of our training and knowledge exchange activities to any doctoral student studying in a social science discipline within Scotland.

This SGSSS Student Handbook (Handbook) is for SGSSS-DTP ESRC-funded students; to outline the key conditions and opportunities associated with a SGSSS ESRC-funded studentship.

SGSSS is governed by the regulations of the ESRC, which can be found here.
1.3 Governance Structure

Due to the size and scale of SGSSS, we have a robust governance structure, which is summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. SGSSS Governance Diagram

The Directorate and Professional Services team are responsible for the everyday operations of SGSSS. They oversee the successful running and strategic development of the SGSSS in line with its objectives. This includes designing and overseeing a studentship allocation system; providing advanced training; ensuring timely financial reporting; and, overseeing the development of partnerships. Academic members of the Directorate come from across the SGSSS partnership, each having a proportion of time allocated to SGSSS. The Professional Services team is based within the University of Edinburgh.

Surrounding this core group are distinct advisory and working groups, who all have important roles to play to ensure SGSSS is delivering on the commitments made to ESRC. For example, the Supervisory Board advise on sector-wide strategic issues as well key financial decisions; the Dean’s group feed into the organisation and operations of SGSSS activities; and, the Pathway Convenors group play a crucial role in developing training pathways and assessing applications to the Studentship competitions. For a full list of current members and descriptions of the various SGSSS governance groups, please see the SGSSS website here.

1.4 Hubs and Pathways

When students apply for a studentship, they aligned their project to a pathway. The ESRC define a pathway as the broad training a student will receive during the course of their PhD; it can be disciplinary, interdisciplinary or thematic in nature. SGSSS has 15 pathways, which are grouped into three Hubs: Economies, Mind and Technologies; Society and Welfare; and, People and Place. The purpose of the Hubs are to identify interdisciplinary training opportunities, ensure a consistent student experience and contribute to the studentship allocation process. As such, many of the training opportunities advertised have been developed by academic colleagues working within pathways and across Hubs. This includes (but is not limited to) the Pathway Training Fund (PTF) and Hub Festival.

Although students are aligned to one pathway, they are welcome to attend events hosted by any of the 15 pathways, where it is relevant. For a full description of each pathway, please see the SGSSS website here.
1.5 Student Involvement
Student Representatives (Student Reps) convey the views of students (both ESRC funded and non ESRC-funded students) to the SGSSS and have input into many different parts of the running of SGSSS. This includes representation within our key governance structures (e.g. Supervisory Board) as well as inputting on strategic initiatives such as student wellbeing and widening access. At the annual Student-led symposium, Student Reps come together to create their own two-day programme, focussing on what they see as the major issues for PhD students. Student Reps work closely with Dr Ashley Rogers (SGSSS Associate Director, Student Engagement) to ensure key issues are given a platform for discussion. Details and contact information for current Student Reps are on the SGSSS website here.

1.6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
The SGSSS believes that all students that have the potential to progress to doctoral study should have equal opportunity to do so, and that all doctoral students should have equal opportunity to succeed in their studies. We believe in the benefits that come from having a diverse population and are committed to facilitating the widest possible applicant pool into doctoral study. We also value the diversity of our population and work hard to ensure that our activities and processes are designed with consideration to the potential barriers to certain groups and that these barriers are minimised.

During 2020/21, Hannah Gormley (SGSSS PhD Intern) conducted research on widening access into PGR study and her findings have formed the basis of our Widening Access strategy that was approved by the SGSSS Supervisory Board in May 2021.

We welcome input from our community on this important topic and we also encourage you to challenge us if you have any experience with SGSSS that goes against our principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Diane Gill (SGSSS Head of Strategy and Operations) leads on our EDI work and can be contact directly at diane.gill@ed.ac.uk.
2. Communication and Cohort Building

Within SGSSS, we have various methods of communication to and from our community. Each method serves its own purpose and allows for one-way promotional information to peer-to-peer interaction.

2.1 SGSSS Apply
SGSSS Apply is where students apply for RTSG, expense claims (for SGSSS events) and other opportunities such as internships – information for which can be found elsewhere within this Handbook. Please note, SGSSS Apply replaced GradHub in July 2021.

Register for SGSSS Apply here

2.2 Social
Social is a Facebook-like website that is geared toward current social science PhD students studying in Scotland that encourages communication and collaboration via one to one conversation as well as topic and discipline based groups. With Social students can:

- Share research with the community;
- Search for researchers with similar interests and/or within their institutions;
- Start collaborative projects and groups;
- Post to personal blogs that are available to share publicly;
- Contribute to discussions;
- Register for and attend training and events.

Social also hosts our ever-growing online training repository where students can discover recordings and materials from past advanced training sessions, purpose built online training, and links to resources from across the web.

Register for Social here

2.3 Friday Digest
The Friday Digest is our weekly summary of all training and opportunities available throughout SGSSS and the wider Social Science community. All current students with a Social account should be receiving this already. If not, please email team@sgsss.ac.uk to be added to the mailing list. We also promote all of our opportunities via Twitter (@SocSciScotland).

2.4 Social Media
In addition to Social and our Friday Digest, students can keep up-to-date with all things SGSSS by following us on Twitter here (@SocSciScotland) or by subscribing to our YouTube channel here.
3. SGSSS Doctoral Training Programme

3.1 Training Vision
Our vision is to provide outstanding opportunities for students studying in the social sciences in Scotland. Annually we offer in excess of 700 hours of training in advanced methods; and support wellbeing and employability. Most of our training is available to all students within the SGSSS community providing a unique opportunity to develop wide-ranging professional networks within and beyond the ESRC cohort.

Figure 3. SGSSS Training Vision

3.2 SGSSS Induction Event
This event is traditionally held in late October/early November for ESRC studentship holders in the first year of their PhD and will orient students to the many opportunities available alongside doctoral research. The event is also an opportunity to meet other students from across Scotland, as well as the SGSSS team.

The 2021 Induction Event will take place between 3 and 4 November (online) and is by invitation only.

|i| ESRC-funded students are expected, as a condition of their studentship, to attend the SGSSS Induction Event for their cohort.|

3.3 Training Needs Analysis (TNA)
All our training is informed by student-need, of which SGSSS have three mechanisms to establish training gaps: through our governance structures; an annual online form completed by students across the SGSSS community during June/July; and, 1-1 meetings between students and a member of the SGSSS Directorate. These meetings are a compulsory part of a studentship and take place at the start of the PhD for all students, and additionally each summer for Steer award holders.

3.4 Advanced Training Programme
Based on the data from our annual TNA process, SGSSS delivers half-day sessions of advanced training opportunities throughout the year, in partnership with the universities across Scotland. These usually focus on advanced methods (taking training beyond the core methods training completed during Master's study). All our training (exception is the Summer School) is free to attend and travel greater than 30 miles can be reimbursed, subject to terms and conditions. The programme is publicised on the SGSSS website here, as well as on Social and twitter a few weeks before the training takes place.

3.5 Spring into Methods (SiM)
The Spring into Methods programme brings together doctoral researchers from across the arts, humanities and social sciences to complete specialist methods training workshops ranging from Feminist Methods to Oral History and Participant Observation. These interdisciplinary workshops are open to doctoral researchers aligned with the SGSSS or the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH).

The Spring into Methods workshops will be advertised from mid-February 2022 on the SGSSS website here, taking place in April and May 2022.
3.6 Hub Festival
This event brings together students from across Scotland to focus on the grand challenges facing social scientists. During the event students have the opportunity to present their work, share ideas, learn about the broader context of social science research and hear from key speakers.

The event is structured around the three Hubs that form SGSSS. These bring together researchers in disciplinary and interdisciplinary pathways to facilitate wider discussion and engagement. Some activities and sessions are run for specific Hubs and some are open to participants from all Hubs and pathways. Please see section 1.4 above for more information on Hubs and pathways.

The 2021/22 Hub Festival will take place in February 2022. More details will be made available from December 2021 on the SGSSS website here.

3.7 Pathway Training Fund (PTF)
The Pathway Training Fund (PTF) is designed to support the delivery of advanced and specialist disciplinary training for PhD students across Scotland. Training is advanced when compared to the core training received at Masters level, both in terms of research methods and substantive content. It is developed by academic representatives from across all 15 SGSSS pathways and a calendar of approx. 10 events are offered each year.

Although students are not eligible to apply for PTF, the training developed and delivered is for the benefit of social science students across Scotland.

3.8 Student-Led Training Fund (SLTF)
The Student-Led Training Fund (SLTF) is a training initiative open to all social science PhD students, regardless of funding status (as well as ESRC-funded students currently in their Master’s year of a 1+3 award), studying in Scotland. As well as allowing students to lead on deciding what events they would find most value, student-organisers will gain leadership and management skills, all while delivering the highest quality advanced training. The overall fund is £5,000 per year and the typical maximum amount that can be applied per training event is approx. £1,000.

There are two calls for applications per academic year, of which the 2021/22 deadlines are as follows:

- **Friday, 30 July 2021** (for events taking place between 1 September 2021 to 23 December 2021)
- **Monday, 28 February 2022** (for events taking place between 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2022)

Please see here for further details on all things SLTF, including how to submit an application.

To view the current SLTF training events on offer, please visit our online community platform, Social.

3.9 Student-Led Symposium
The symposium is organised by a team of student representatives with support from SGSSS. Each year the students host the event they feel would be of most value, and traditionally the two-day symposium has focused on well-being and looking forward to postdoctoral opportunities. The Symposium will take place in the Summer of 2022.

3.10 Summer School
The Summer School is the largest event in the SGSSS training calendar, spanning across three consecutive days and delivering advanced training in methods, wellbeing and employability as well as opportunities for networking. Students can select up to six half-day events to produce a bespoke programme that meets their individual training needs. All social science postgraduate students studying in Scotland are welcome to attend and usually a small fee is charged to cover training, accommodation and meals.
The 2022 Summer School will take place in mid-June at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. More details will be made available from April 2022 on the SGSSS website [here](#).

*ESRC-funded students are expected, as a condition of their studentship, to attend the annual Summer School during the life of their studentship.*

### 3.11 Steer Event
This event is aimed at researchers on an ESRC steers studentship (datasets, advanced quantitative methods, interdisciplinarity, and industry awards). It is designed to help these students meet the requirements of their steers funding and make the most of the opportunities that the studentship offers.

The 2022 Steer Event will take place soon after Summer School within Edinburgh (venue TBC) and is by invitation only.

*ESRC-funded steer students are expected, as a condition of their studentship, to attend the annual Steer Event during the life of their studentship.*

### 3.12 Final Year Conference
The annual Final Year Conference takes place during summer and is designed for students in the final year of their ESRC funding. The 2021 event included workshops on non-academic careers, completing a viva, and Postdoctoral Fellowships. Eligible students will be invited to attend the 2022 Final Year Conference.

### 3.13 Business Booster
The [UK Industrial Strategy](#) drives the development of advanced data skills and industrial partnerships with research. In the annual SGSSS Business Booster programme, researchers work with business leaders to solve business challenges. Students can apply to participate in the Business Booster programme in years 1, 2 or 3.

The 2021/22 Business Booster programme will take place online from January to March 2022. Applications will open in November 2021 with more information available on the SGSSS website [here](#).

### 3.14 RSE Mentoring Scheme
The RSE mentoring scheme is designed to support ESRC-funded students to explore the interdisciplinary potential of research, develop their skills and confidence in collaborative work, and develop networks beyond their immediate subject area. The scheme matches ESRC funded students to an experienced mentor from the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s extensive network. The scheme is advertised annually and is open to students in years 1, 2 or 3.

Applications for the 2021/22 mentoring scheme will open in November 2021. More details will be made available from October 2021 on the SGSSS website [here](#).
4. ESRC Training Funds

4.1 Stipend
ESRC funding for students’ tuition fees, maintenance stipends and research training support grants are paid by SGSSS to the institutions which have ESRC-funded students. If a student is in receipt of a full award (fees plus maintenance) they will receive stipend payments from their institution at which they are registered.

The standard stipend for full-time students in 2021/22 is £15,609.

It is important students notify their HEI Admin Lead (see section 10.2 below or the SGSSS website here for details) at their institution of any changes to their bank details to ensure no delays to their payments. Any overpayment of maintenance stipend must be returned to the relevant institution upon notification.

4.2 Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)
All students are eligible for RTSG which is to be used to pay for expenses which the student, their supervisor or their department deem to be in direct support of the student’s PhD research.

RTSG should not be considered as a personal allocation for each individual ESRC funded student as the RTSG funding is pooled for flexible use across all ESRC-funded students from which funds are allocated on the basis of student needs and priorities. That being said however, students are entitled to a notional amount of £750 per academic year, over the course of their studentship.

Students applying for RTSG can spend more than £750 in a given year, so long as the overall spend does not exceed the notional RTSG allowance of £2,250 over a 3-year studentship award (£3,000 for a 1+3). In exceptional cases where students seek higher amounts of RTSG funding, SGSSS approval is required. It is advised for students to keep a record of how much RTSG funding they have claimed.

Applications for RTSG funding should not be made retrospectively, but rather in advance of the activity. Applications are made via our application system, SGSSS Apply (RTSG and SGSSS Expense Claims), and are approved via this system by the HEI Admin Lead at a student’s institution. All applications which are over £200 require a Supervisor Statement of Support, from their lead supervisor and should be reflected in a student’s Training Needs Analysis (TNA).

Receipts are required for all claims. In addition, claims can be submitted up until a student’s PhD submission date (assuming the initial claim/expense occurrence took place prior to the end of the funded portion of the studentship).

Examples of RTSG expenses are:
- UK fieldwork expenses;
- UK, EU and overseas conferences and summer schools;
- Language training courses usually undertaken in the UK prior to an overseas fieldwork trip;
- Reimbursement of interpreters, guides, assistants;
- Survey costs e.g. printing, stationery, telephone calls;
- Purchase of small items of equipment e.g. cameras, tape recorders, films;
- Gifts for local informants;
- Books and other reading material not available through libraries.

If a student is unsure as to whether they may claim for a particular item, they should contact their HEI Admin Lead at their institution.

SGSSS regards it the responsibility of a student’s institution to provide computing facilities. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider requests from award holders to purchase laptop or other computer equipment from this allowance. Such requests must be clearly rationalised based on the requirements of the research and
the successful completion of the PhD. In such circumstances, any equipment purchased in excess of £200 will remain the property of Research Organisation (RO) following the end date of the award.

In certain circumstances, RTSG can be combined with funds available for overseas fieldwork, should the requirement be justifiable. In addition, as per ESRC guidance (see Additional Costs) home working equipment can now be purchased using RTSG during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Claiming Expenses for SGSSS Events

ESRC-funded students can claim for costs associated with attending SGSSS events, e.g. advanced training or SGSSS Summer School, and do so via the same application program located on SGSSS Apply (SGSSS Expense and RTSG Claims). These claims will not be deducted from a student’s RTSG allowance. For SGSSS events, it is acceptable to claim after the event, however claims must be in line with the SGSSS Expenses Policy.

### 4.3 Overseas Fieldwork (OFT)

SGSSS receives an annual amount from the ESRC towards the costs of OFW undertaken by our doctoral students.

Only full-time PhD students undertaking the +3 element of their award are eligible for this allowance, i.e. Masters’ students (including those in year 1 of a 1+3 award and the first stage of a 2+2 award) cannot apply for OFW until in their first year of their PhD. Part-time students can become eligible for an overseas fieldwork grant if they transfer for a fixed period to a full-time status for the duration of the fieldwork.

Only one claim for OFW expenses can be made during a studentship award (funding cannot be provided for students in their writing-up year). This one claim can consist of more than one trip overseas, as long as this can be adequately justified in the research plan.

ESRC students are eligible to apply for this funding if they are:

- In the doctoral (+3) phase of their award;
- The overseas fieldwork was outlined in the original research application. Exceptions to this regulation will be considered on individual merit.

The purpose of the visit should be to carry out fieldwork that is essential to the successful completion of a student’s thesis and be an integral part of the PhD. Applications will only be considered where the supervisor’s case for support provides evidence that the Overseas Fieldwork is essential to a student’s research.

Please note, as there are limited funds available for OFW, not all costs will necessarily be met, but rather a contribution towards the costs. The ESRC provides funding for a notional cost of £450 per student per year; however, it is unlikely that all students will undertake overseas fieldwork. The actual allocation of funds towards fieldwork is at the discretion of SGSSS, based on the funding available - typically for fieldwork up to a maximum of 12 months (52 weeks). Students may use their RTSG to supplement the costs associated with overseas fieldwork, entirely at the student’s own discretion. Standard allowable expenses are as follows:

- **Airfares:** The expectation is that students travel economy, try to use low-cost airlines where possible, and book well in advance. In order to avoid problems with monitoring airfare costs and the possibility of overpriced quotes, students should accompany their request with a print-out or screenshot of possible airfares for a given itinerary and dates from established websites (Opodo, Expedia, etc.).
- **Internal Travel:** The expectation is that students use public transport unless it is deemed unsafe to do so. In this and also in cases of particularly remote settings where there are no practicable public transport options, a separate case will have to be made for alternative arrangements.
- **Related Travel and Health Expenses:** Visas, research permits, vaccinations and insurance will typically be covered. Students should check with their own institution first for insurance as University policies should cover student travel.
• **Accommodation:** The expectation when fieldwork lasts between 6 to 12 months is that students move out of their UK address to cover overseas accommodation with their stipend. Exceptions to this rule may be considered on a case by case basis depending on individual circumstances and should be discussed with SGSSS prior to application. Students are to look for economically priced accommodation abroad and evidence this where possible.

• **Subsistence:** The expectation is that students cover these expenses with their stipend. Requests for partial support in cases where the cost of living is significantly higher than in the UK will be considered.

• **Research Assistance:** These expenses (e.g. translation and transcription) should be met more appropriately through other sources, e.g. RTSG.

• **Communications and Equipment:** Students may need to buy a mobile phone sim card for the country they are visiting, however the SGSSS will not cover the cost of phone contracts, calls or internet access, etc.

If a student’s application for a contribution towards OFW is successful, a student may not change the dates or details of the OFW without first informing the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered. Students should also seek approval from the SGSSS, as changes to the research plan will likely affect costings.

Students may include visits to more than one country on their one application however it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate visas etc. are obtained. Students should consult the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) guidance regarding their intended destination(s). If the FCDO advises against visiting the country, or countries, specified in the student’s application, payment of any contribution towards the fieldwork costs will not be authorised. All students must comply with their institution’s policy on Health & Safety while undertaking fieldwork, completing any appropriate risk assessments.

Students are required to have travel insurance to cover their period of fieldwork and should check with their institution’s insurance office in the first instance. If for any reason the OFW is cut short or cancelled, the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered must be informed immediately. The institution may wish to request a refund less any reasonable expenditure already incurred.

Students must comply with their institution’s auditing processes and provide receipts upon their return from their Overseas Fieldwork– their HEI Admin Lead will be able to provide detail on the process for submitting expense claims. If the costs incurred are found to be less than the contribution provided, the return of said funds will be required. Where costs are incurred in advance, receipts must be provided before the reimbursement of funds.

**How to apply**

As of July 2021 there are no longer set deadlines for OFW as applications will be assessed as and when they come in throughout the academic year. That being said however, applications must be made at least 3 months in advance of the intended OFW, e.g. if an application was received on 25 January, the earliest a student would be able to commence their fieldwork would be 25 April. Application forms must be submitted via email to team@sgsss.ac.uk. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and it is strongly encouraged to liaise with institution’s HEI Admin Leads for advice and guidance. Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission date.

**OFW Application Guidance:**

1. The SGSSS-DTP Directorate will prioritise those applications where OFW was highlighted in the original research proposal.
2. Students and their supervisors must take responsibility for submitting applications that are based on reasonable and accurate costings, including appropriate justification of costs where applicable. There...
have been considerable variability in supporting statements provided by supervisors, of which those with more detail regarding the research plan better aid in the assessment of applications.

3. Any variations from original plans in the research proposal should be explained in the application.

4. ESRC guidelines relating to fieldwork advise that one visit for no more than 12 months to be the appropriate norm – and communication with supervisors should and can be maintained via Skype or similar, eliminating the need for a return visit during fieldwork.

5. The expectation is that students will work with their supervisors and HEI Admin Lead when completing an application and that supervisors will check for completeness. It is preferable when applications come in well ahead of fieldwork start dates.

*OFW applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis for viability, dependent on how the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions develop. In order for an application to be considered, a student must secure travel insurance, approval from their institution and supervisor, and travel to the intended destination(s) must be permitted by the FCDO.*

### 4.4 Difficult Language Training (DLT)

DLT applications are for PhD students to apply for a funded extension (stipend) to the length of their PhD registration period for the purpose of learning a difficult language as an integral part of their research. For costs associated with undertaking DLT, students should apply for RTSG (UK based training) or OFW (training which will be undertaken in the field, typically abroad).

The SGSSS-DTP will only consider paying up to one year’s additional support, i.e. an extension of stipend payments, if a student has a requirement to acquire or develop a working ability with a difficult language in order to carry out fieldwork (including for the purposes of UK fieldwork) or other parts of their research; this is over and above the funded length of the studentship. Students should consult with their supervisor and HEI Admin Lead regarding any request for Difficult Language Training.

ESRC students are eligible to apply for this allowance if they are:

- In the doctoral (+3) phase of their award;
- The proposed language training was outlined in the original research application. Exceptions to this regulation will be considered on individual merit.

The length of the extension is determined by the type and nature of the language to be learnt, taking into consideration the student’s individual circumstances. Extensions beyond six months are only normally allowed if the student needs to spend an extended period overseas in order to obtain these language skills. Please consult the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide for guidance on how to calculate the length of Difficult Language Training extension.

**How to apply**

As of July 2021 there are no longer set deadlines for DLT as applications will be assessed as and when they come in throughout the academic year. That being said however, applications must be made at least **3 months in advance** of the intended DLT, e.g. if an application was received on 25 January, the earliest a student would be able to commence their language training would be 25 April. Application forms must be submitted via email to team@sgsss.ac.uk. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and should contain sufficient detail to show that their home institution agrees with the need for Difficult Language Training and should be reflected in the Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission deadline date.

**DLT Application Guidance:**

1. The SGSSS-DTP Directorate will prioritise those applications where DLT was highlighted in the original research proposal;
2. Any variations from original plans in the research proposal should be explained in the application.
3. Retrospective claims will not be accepted, including where an extension has been further lengthened once training has begun.

A DLT funding extension will require institutional approval for an equivalent extension to the PhD registration period.

4.5 Overseas Institutional Visit (OIV)

The primary purpose of an OIV is to support and encourage the international engagement of ESRC funded students. SGSSS wishes to encourage students to spend a period of time abroad to undertake activities and take advantage of opportunities that would not be available in their home institutions. The aim of the visit is to support timely completion of a student’s PhD; to enhance employability post-PhD and to reflect on impact potential of the project.

Students should use their TNA and the VITAE framework to underpin the rationale for their proposed trip. Please note syllabus development is not included in the purpose of the award and seminar/conference attendance should be funded via RTSG.

The SGSSS will only fund an OIV, and the subsequent funded extension, for a maximum of 4 weeks. The maximum OIV award that can be awarded in 2021/22 for the cost of your trip is £3,000.

The award should be used to provide financial support to allow the student to undertake two or more activities during their OIV. Examples of appropriate activities are:

- Draft a peer-reviewed publication;
- Undertake additional specialist research training not available in the UK;
- Establish research links that will be beneficial to their current or future academic career;
- Disseminate early research findings and interpretation with experts;
- Attend and participate in expert seminars where directly relevant to the student’s research.

If a student’s application for a contribution towards OIV is successful, a student may not change the dates or details of the OIV without first informing the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered. Students should also seek approval from the SGSSS, as changes to the research plan will likely affect costings.

Students should consult the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) guidance regarding their intended destination. If the FCDO advises against visiting the country specified in the student’s application, payment of any contribution towards the visit’s costs will not be authorised. All students must comply with their institution’s policy on Health & Safety while undertaking OIVs, completing any appropriate risk assessments.

Students are required to have travel insurance to cover their period of their visit and should check with their institution’s insurance office in the first instance. If for any reason the OIV is cut short or cancelled, the HEI Admin Lead at the relevant institution where the student is registered must be informed immediately. The institution may wish to request a refund less any reasonable expenditure already incurred.

Students must comply with their institution’s auditing processes and provide receipts upon their return from their OIV – their HEI Admin Lead will be able to provide detail on the process for submitting expense claims. If the costs incurred are found to be less than the contribution provided, the return of said funds will be required. Where costs are incurred in advance, receipts must be provided before the reimbursement of funds.

OIV Design

We know that some students have commitments or barriers that may prevent prolonged overseas travel. We welcome applications for hybrid or completely virtual visits, which meet the aims of an OIV. Examples may include:
• Participation in a tailored online schedule of activities developed with a host at an overseas institution that meets the OIV aims outlined above.
• Series of joint events with an overseas institution that supports international engagement whilst meeting the OIV aims outlined above.

Special Needs Support

Additional funding beyond the maximum grant is available for students and staff whose physical, mental or health-related conditions are such that their participation in an OIV would not be possible without extra financial support. Areas that could be eligible for support include but are not limited to: adapted accommodation, travel assistance, medical attendance, supportive equipment, adaption of learning material, an accompanying person, etc.

FAQs

Can students stay for longer than 4 weeks?
Yes, however this is not recommended and we will only grant a 4 week stipend extension. If a student wants to stay longer than 4 weeks, they must ensure that the extended stay does not interfere with normal PhD activities and their ability to submit on time. It is acceptable for students to schedule a holiday in the country they are visiting at the end of their OIV, however the costs associated with this holiday must be covered by the student and time used for the holiday must come out of the 8 weeks annual holiday allowance an ESRC funded student is entitled to.

Can students apply for funds from elsewhere?
Yes, students are entitled to apply elsewhere for additional funding if their costs are likely to exceed the maximum amount awarded by SGSSS.

Can students take their immediate families with them?
Yes, however their costs will not be covered by the SGSSS. If a student is traveling with their child/children on their own however, they can contact the SGSSS to discuss possible support with childcare costs.

Can students attend a conference while visiting their host institution?
Yes, however this should be funded via RTSG (registration, additional accommodation and additional local travel etc.). However if the event is a gathering of experts to which the student’s PhD topic directly relates (e.g. a workshop on their topic or a consensus conference) then students may include such an event as one of their OIV activities. Such examples should be outline clearly in their application, clearly detailing why their participation would be beneficial to their research.

How to apply

Applications for an OIV should be made at least 3 months in advance of the intended visit, e.g. if an application was received on 25 January, the earliest a student would be able to commence their visit would be 25 April. There are two application windows during an academic year. For 2021/22, the dates to apply by are 14 October 2021 and 13 April 2022 (subject to change dependent on how travel restrictions persist due to COVID-19). Application forms must be submitted via email to team@sgsss.ac.uk. Applications must include a supporting statement from the student’s supervisor and host institution. Applications will be assessed by the SGSSS-DTP Directorate, after which students will be informed of the outcome of their application via email, typically within 3 weeks from the submission deadline date.

OIV Application Guidance:

1. There are two application deadlines for OIV per academic year;
2. During the course of a studentship, students are entitled to receive OIV funding once, should their application be successful;
3. Applications must be student-led although the applications should also include a statement from both the student’s supervisor and the overseas host institution;
4. Visits must be beneficial and impactful to the completion of the student’s PhD and should not commence during the first or last three months of the studentship (+3 component), including the during the OIV extension period;

5. The purpose of the visits funded must not be for overseas fieldwork.

6. A longer trip of up to 3 months (12 weeks) will be considered if a case can be made that the additional time at the host institution is absolutely necessary to the completion of the student’s PhD. If a longer visit is granted, please note:
   - The SGSSS will only fund a visit lasting 4 weeks. Should the student require additional funding, they must secure this via other means.
   - The maximum stipend extension permitted is 4 weeks.
   - A clear plan of how the student will continue with their PhD and supervision during the extended visit must be clearly detailed within the application, supported by a rationale from the student’s supervisor.

7. Visits must include a visit to a Higher Education institution or an organisation with a substantive research office outside of the UK.

8. Visits must not be undertaken if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against visiting the country concerned.

9. The SGSSS will not fund:
   - Registration fees at the host institution;
   - Travel insurance (unless this is unavailable through the student’s home institution);
   - Mobile phones, sim cards or phone contracts (calls and data);
   - Clothing.

OIV application windows will be reviewed for viability, dependent on how the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions develop. In addition, in order for an application to be considered, a student must secure travel insurance, approval from their institution and supervisor, and travel to the intended destination(s) must be permitted by the FCDO.

4.6 Disabled Students Allowances (DSA)

DSA are intended to help with additional expenditure for the costs of study-related requirements that may be incurred as a result of disability, mental health problems or specific learning difficulties that means additional support is needed to undertake a UK Research and Innovation funded studentship. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items of specialist equipment, extra travel costs and general expenses.

The Research Councils have adopted a harmonised approach to DSA. Additional guidance is available on the UKRI website here.

Institutions will undertake the assessment of need and provide costs for the student where required. The institution will then claim back eligible costs at the end of the academic year from the ESRC by submitting a completed DSA claim form to SGSSS, before the deadline of 31 October.

Students should contact the Disability Adviser or named contact on disability matters at their institution for advice.
5. Knowledge Exchange, Employability and Impact

SGSSS is committed to supporting students to create impact while developing their employability through their PhD studies and research. Impact is the positive contribution that students can make to society, academia, and the economy. This is achieved through knowledge exchange activities and research projects with non-academic partners. Through these activities, and with the help of professional and career development support, PhD researchers are more likely to pursue successful career paths. Our target from the ESRC is that at least 30% of funded students engage with collaborative activity during their PhD: SGSSS doctoral researchers regularly exceed this.

Our vision is to:

- Equip doctoral researchers with transferable skills and expertise that will enable them to create impact in their future academic or non-academic careers;
- Support doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to develop a high level of readiness and self-awareness to identify and articulate the impact they can have through their research;
- Support doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to explore career paths and engage with available opportunities with confidence;
- Create a culture that celebrates and promotes collaboration and knowledge exchange across the DTP’s network.

To achieve this, we run a variety of structured activities that boost knowledge exchange and employability alongside the academic work. These activities help students to work with non-academic organisations, develop collaborative research links, and build their confidence and experience as they prepare for their future.

If students have any questions about knowledge exchange and employability within SGSSS or if they would like to discuss the opportunities below, please contact our Employability and Partnerships Manager at team@sgsss.ac.uk.
5.1 Collaborative Studentships

For collaborative studentship award holders, this programme gives students an opportunity to produce highly relevant social research through collaboration with non-academic partners. In the scheme, academics work with non-academic partners in the public, third and private sectors to produce studentship proposals. The SGSSS awards more than a dozen of these studentships annually through an open competition. Since the DTP began in 2017, we have recruited around 60 collaborative studentships with partners in universities and organisations across Scotland.

If students would like advice on the relationship with their collaborative partner, please contact our Employability and Partnerships Manager at team@sgsss.ac.uk.

5.2 SGSSS Internships Scheme

Through the internships scheme, PhD social science researchers can work within a non-academic organisation for up to 3 months (full-time) or 6 months (part-time). The internships take place with non-academic organisations across the private, public and third sectors. The internships are paid opportunities, with students receiving a stipend payment equivalent to doctoral stipend levels.

Since SGSSS began, we have supported more than 250 internship placements with non-academic organisations including The Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, RBS, IOD Parc, The Young Foundation, and Historic Environment Scotland.

Why undertake an internship through SGSSS?

Completing an internship through SGSSS is an excellent opportunity for a student to apply their research skills in a professional context, develop their transferable skills, and grow their professional network. Students have previously used their experience gained via internships to win funding through our Impact Competition (see section 5.4 below) or as a route for publication and employment.

How to apply for an internship?

There are two main routes to undertake an internship through SGSSS:

1. **Open Call Competition:** The SGSSS advertises internship placements that have been designed by non-academic partner organisations. Students can apply for a placement that looks right for them, and may be interviewed by the non-academic organisation.

2. **Student-led Internship Scheme:** Doctoral researchers can apply for the Student-led Internship Scheme, whereby they would design an internship placement with a non-academic partner organisation and request funding support from SGSSS.

Additionally, ESRC-funded students can apply for an internship through the UKRI Policy Internships Scheme. This annual competition offers an opportunity for doctoral students to work for three months in highly influential policy organisations. Internship placements are paid at doctoral stipend levels. Students can find out more about the terms and conditions and any upcoming calls on the UKRI website here.

Who is eligible to apply for an internship?

The SGSSS Internship Scheme is open to any social science PhD student registered at a Scottish University. However, students are only eligible to undertake an internship in their second and third years of study (provided the internship will not start in the final 3 months of their third year funding).

For more information on internships, please see our Internship FAQs or the internships pages on the SGSSS website here.
5.3 Training Opportunities
The SGSSS training programme includes a number of sessions that are focused on supporting students to develop skills that will support collaborative work and knowledge exchange with non-academic organisations. Our aim is to help students develop or hone skills that will create impact through academic or non-academic careers.

We embed training to support knowledge exchange across key SGSSS events such as the annual Summer School. Up to 30% of sessions at the Summer School focus on knowledge exchange and employability. The 2020 Summer School included workshops on working with policy-makers, effective collaboration with non-academic partners, and an introduction to impact in research. We encourage students to attend the Summer School in years 1, 2 and 3 of their PhDs.

In addition, SGSSS run training opportunities that are specific to knowledge exchange: the Business Booster, RSE Mentoring Scheme and the Final Year Conference. We also strongly encourage students to submit applications for funding to develop training that would support knowledge exchange via the Student-led Training Fund (SLTF). Please see section 3, (SGSSS Doctoral Training Programme) above for more information on our training opportunities.

5.4 Impact Competition
The SGSSS Impact Competition is an annual opportunity for doctoral researchers across Scotland to demonstrate the impact from their research.

The competition invites students to submit examples of their impact in a written application which is reviewed by an expert panel. Shortlisted candidates are then invited to showcase their work at our annual Collaboration Showcase. The top entries to the Impact Competition receive a £500 Impact Fund to further develop the impact of their research.

The 2020/21 Impact Competition included two winning PhD projects. One focused on developing an online, searchable web-based tool that will enable users to access information about climate change litigation, legal pathways and barriers in various jurisdictions, making this type of information more readily accessible. The other focused on understanding and evidencing the efficacy of parent-infant art therapy groups as a model to improve early attachment relationships while contributing to wide-ranging impact on policy and public health strategy. Students can find out more about previous competitions and see some of the fantastic projects that have been completed by Scottish social science researchers here.

In 2021/22 the Impact Competition will launch in March 2022, with the winners announced in June 2022.

5.5 Collaboration Showcase
The Collaboration Showcase is a flagship event which brings together academic and non-academic partners of SGSSS to celebrate the work that social science students are doing across Scotland and to share knowledge. More than 100 guests attend from across the third sector, public sector, private sector and academia.

Students that are shortlisted in the Impact Competition may be invited to the Collaboration Showcase to showcase their work. This involves designing a poster based on their research impact and potentially presenting their work. The next Collaboration Showcase is expected to take place in May 2022 (venue TBC).
6. SGSSS Expenses Policy (incl. travel, accommodation, internships, and other expenses)

The SGSSS Expenses Policy sets out the rules for claiming travel, accommodation, subsistence and other expenses incurred in connection with SGSSS purposes. The policy applies to social science doctoral researchers (students) registered at a SGSSS member Higher Education institution (HEI) and academic participants of SGSSS events, meetings and training. This policy applies to all expenditure not related to the individual funding status of the student. For the avoidance of doubt, this policy supersedes any other SGSSS guidance on claiming expenses. Minor changes may be made during the year and relevant parties informed where appropriate.

To view our full Expenses Policy, please click here.

6.1 Summary of SGSSS Expenses Policy

- Students from any of our 16 partner institutions, including non-SGSSS students, can claim for the reimbursement of travel (lowest cost public transport available) and/or accommodation (£65 maximum claim per night) to attend an SGSSS training event. Terms and conditions apply.
- Childcare expenses can be claimed by a student if attendance at an SGSSS event has resulted in additional childcare costs (i.e. additional costs directly related to participation in the event, not costs that would be incurred by the student normally). Terms and conditions apply.
- Student Reps (Representatives) may claim travel expenses where they have attended an SGSSS function in their capacity as a Student Rep. Terms and conditions apply.
- Students can claim up to a maximum of £2,400 for a 3-month internship arranged through SGSSS to cover all reasonable travel and accommodation costs for the period of the internship. For example, commuting or relocation costs. Travel expenses will be negotiated depending on the individual student’s needs. Terms and conditions apply.
- SGSSS does not expect any claims to be made for subsistence as food and drink is typically provided at SGSSS events. If breakfast is included in an accommodation rate and is within the maximum accommodation spend permitted (£65 per night), this will be covered. Terms and conditions apply.

6.2 Claiming Expenses for SGSSS Events

ESRC Students can claim for costs associated with attending SGSSS events, e.g. advanced training or the SGSSS Summer School, and do so via the SGSSS Expense and RTSG Claims program located on SGSSS Apply. These claims will not be deducted from a student’s RTSG allowance. For SGSSS events, it is acceptable to claim after the event, however claims must be in line with the SGSSS Expenses Policy, and if more than 3 months old will not be honoured. For more information on RTSG, please see section 4.2 above.

All expenses claim forms and methods are detailed within the full SGSSS Expenses Policy.
7. Studentship Regulations

Below are a list and summary of the primary regulations relating to an ESRC-funded studentship. For full details on these regulations and more, please consult the [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#).

7.1 Transfers

It is possible, under certain exceptional circumstances, for a student’s studentship to transfer to another institution, for example if their primary supervisor moves institution and the current institution and/or pathway is unable to provide appropriate alternative supervision.

This will only be approved if the transfer is to an approved subject pathway within an accredited ESRC [Doctoral Training Partnership](#) (DTP) or ESRC [Centre for Doctoral Training](#) (CDT). If a student wishes to transfer to a university and/or pathway which is not accredited by the ESRC, or to a subject outside the ESRC’s remit, then they will have to withdraw from their ESRC studentship.

In order to apply for a transfer the following documentation must be submitted to ESRC (via SGSSS) for prior approval:

**Transfers within the SGSSS-DTP**
Permission to transfer a studentship must be obtained in advance from SGSSS by the Deans of Graduate Studies Network representative from the HEI which the student will be leaving. In order to apply for a transfer the following documentation must be submitted to team@sgsss.ac.uk at least three months in advance of the proposed transfer:

- A request from the student confirming the grounds on which the transfer is being requested, when it is being requested from and the pathway and HEI to which they intend to transfer.
- A statement from the SGSSS Dean’s Group representative at the original HEI relinquishing the studentship and confirming that alternative supervision is not available within their HEI.
- A statement from the SGSSS HEI admin at the original HEI confirming RTSG spend to date.
- A statement from the SGSSS Dean’s Group representative at the new HEI confirming their acceptance of the studentship and acknowledging and agreeing to take over any match funded contributions from the original HEI.

**Transfers from SGSSS-DTP to another DTP**
SGSSS must obtain permission from ESRC to transfer a studentship to another DTP. In order to apply for a transfer the following documentation must be submitted to team@sgsss.ac.uk by the Deans of Graduate Studies Network representative from the HEI which the student will be leaving at least three months in advance of the proposed transfer:

- A request from the student confirming the grounds on which the transfer is being requested and the pathway and DTP to which they intend to transfer.
- A statement from the SGSSS Dean’s Group representative relinquishing the studentship and confirming that alternative supervision is not available within their institution.
- A statement from the Pathway Convenor confirming that alternative supervision is not available across the DTP.
- A statement from the SGSSS HEI admin at the original HEI confirming RTSG spend to date.
- A statement from the new DTP confirming their acceptance of the studentship and acknowledging and agreeing to take over any match funded contributions from the original HEI (SGSSS can broker this relationship if required).

*Please see page 26 of the [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#).*
7.2 Extensions and Suspensions
Studentships are intended to be held on a continuous basis. Sometimes, however, a student may need to interrupt their studies, for example as a result of their own persistent health problems or those of dependants, or to take up the opportunity of a temporary, short-term post which can be justified as being highly relevant to their thesis or research training.

Please note that suspensions can only be considered during the funded period of the studentship. If a student interrupts their registration after their ESRC funding has finished a suspension cannot be considered.

The period of suspension cannot exceed one calendar year in any one instance, and the total periods of suspension should not exceed one calendar year during the lifetime of the award. The student’s supervisor must approve the suspension, as well as the non-HEI partner supervisor in CASE Studentships. The student’s supervisor must confirm that the suspension of studies will not delay the submission of the final thesis by more than the length of the suspension. Retrospective requests cannot be considered.

Due to the nature of training received in the Master’s year of a 1+3 award (and equivalent structures), suspensions should be for 12 months to allow the student to re-join the course at the same point at which they left it.

*Please see Section 4: Managing the studentship starting on page 24 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.*

7.3 Sick Leave and Sick Pay
SGSSS Students can take up to 13 weeks sick leave within any 12 months period, and their studentship will be extended accordingly. Beyond 13 weeks, studentships should be suspended. Suspensions on account of illness cannot normally exceed 12 months. This cannot be applied retrospectively.

Due to the structured nature of most Master’s programmes, the above sick leave policy does not apply during the master’s year of a 1+3 studentship. Students who are taken ill during the master’s for more than a few weeks will normally need to request a one-year suspension, and return to the programme at the same point the following year.

*Please see page 31 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide and page 15 of the UKRI Training Grant Guide (TGC 8.2).*

7.4 The ‘Taking Space’ Policy
SGSSS is committed to supporting our students to successfully complete their studies. We understand that there may be occasions when short-term time off or a period of more flexible working is needed to deal with unexpected life events or when circumstances make it difficult to continue working. We also understand that there are times when it is not that simple to just provide ‘proof’ about a situation. As such, we have developed the ‘Taking Space’ policy.

This policy exists to support people who find themselves in this situation and may result in either paid or unpaid leave (in one block or over a longer time period), a funding extension and/or access to additional support. Examples of where this may apply could be as a result of bereavement, family emergency, domestic abuse, sexual assault, hate crime, etc. This is by no means an exhaustive list and we encourage anyone having difficulties to let us know. Even if you do not anticipate needing time off, informing us of the situation will help as there may be specific resources or support available to you, and if in future the challenges persist, it will help that we have a record of it.

If you are faced with such challenging circumstances, please do inform your HEI Admin Lead as soon as possible. If you are not familiar with this person and/or do not feel comfortable contacting them, please speak to someone you are comfortable with (e.g. your supervisor) and ask them to get in touch for you. They can then communicate with SGSSS on your behalf to establish the best course of action, keeping any disclosures confidential if necessary or requested. If for any reason you are uncomfortable sharing your personal challenges
with your institution, please contact Diane Gill (SGSSS Head of Strategy and Operations), directly via email on diane.gill@ed.ac.uk.

7.5 Change of Supervisor

At SGSSS it is important that we are kept up to date with students’ supervisory teams - this means that we need to be kept informed of all proposed permanent changes to supervisory teams. As such, it may be useful for you to see what advice (see below) we provide our supervisors on keeping us up-to-date.

SGSSS should be informed of all proposed permanent changes to supervisory teams. This is of particular importance because the makeup of supervisory teams is a key component of the assessment of all studentship applications and because, as funders, we need to be in a position to identify quickly which students are supervised by which members of staff.

Temporary changes due to sick leave or study leave should be discussed with Pathway Reps/Convenors and agreed with Heads of Subjects/Schools. Institutions should retain a record of these changes. SGSSS does not need to be informed of this temporary change.

Where a proposed change involves a like-for-like pathway/institutional replacement (for example, a supervisor in sociology is to be replaced with a colleague in sociology at the same institution), then this should be discussed with Pathway Reps/Convenors, agreed by the Head of Subject/School and by the Dean. SGSSS should be informed of the change prior to the change taking effect.

Where a proposed change involves a replacement with a colleague from a different pathway and/or institution then a request should be made to SGSSS 6 weeks in advance of the proposed change with the same discussions and agreements at a local level.

Please note, Pathway Reps/Convenors should remind staff within their disciplines and institutions of the policy relating to change of supervisors. This policy should also be considered in conjunction with that relating to transfer of supervisors to another institution.

Please see page 32 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

7.6 Thesis Submission

All students are encouraged to submit their thesis by the end of the three year funded period. Students can no longer access RTSG expenses, or apply for additional DTP funded opportunities, after the end of the studentship. Students will have to pay for any fees, including Submission Pending fees, if relevant, incurred after the studentship ends. If a student submits their thesis before the end of the studentship, the date of submission will become the studentship end date and no further payments will be made. Any overpaid maintenance will be reclaimed.

All full-time students must submit no later than one year after their funding end date and part-time students must submit within two years of their funding end date.

Please see pages 32 and 33 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

7.7 Part-time and Full-time Study Arrangements

SGSSS students can undertake their programmes on a part-time or full-time basis. Stipend payments will be pro rata for part-time students.

It is possible for an SGSSS student to apply to transfer between part-time and full-time studentship award, or vice versa. Students need to apply via the transfer of registration process at their home institution. The ESRC recommends that, where possible, changes of mode of study should take effect from the beginning of a quarter, i.e. 1 October, 1 January, 1 April, or 1 July.
Whilst it is expected that transfers would only occur once during the life of an award, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances, such as changes to domestic arrangements or undertaking fixed term part-time employment, where a student needs to revert to their original status. Such fixed-period transfers will be considered on a case-by-case basis by SGSSS and ESRC. As above, students should apply for a temporary change of status via the transfer of registration process at their institution, who will then refer this onto SGSSS to seek approval from ESRC.

The ESRC rules governing change of registration are:

- A case cannot be considered if it is made in the last six months of the award or will apply only to the last six months of the award except in very exceptional circumstances, i.e. illness or students returning from maternity leave. SGSSS must refer all such cases to the ESRC for approval, so please allow sufficient time for this to be processed.
- Holders of Collaborative awards will require the agreement of the collaborating partner before any request can be considered.
- A transfer will not normally be allowed for acute health problems where suspension of the award is the appropriate course of action. However, where a health problem might prevent a student from permanently studying on a full-time basis, a case for a transfer to part-time can be considered.
- A transfer from part-time to full-time cannot involve employment that would prevent the student from working on the PhD on a full-time basis.
- A transfer from full-time to part-time will be considered where a change in domestic circumstances means that a dependant requires more of the award holder’s time, or where the award holder has taken up part-time employment.
- Fixed-period transfers are unable to be considered within a pre-described Master’s programme reserved for the research training element of the studentship.

Please see pages 26 to 28 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

7.8 Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption Leave
ESRC funded students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity/adoption leave. The first 26 weeks are paid at full stipend rate. The following 13 weeks are paid at a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks would be unpaid.

Partners are entitled to up to two weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave on full stipend.

Partners are entitled to unpaid parental leave up to a maximum of 50 weeks.

Please see pages 25 and 26 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide and page 15 of the UKRI Training Grant Guide (TGC 8.1).

7.9 Working While Studying
ESRC SGSSS studentship award holders are permitted to undertake a certain amount of paid teaching or other research work during their studentship provided that they spend a minimum of 1,800 hours each academic year on their doctoral research and research training. Their programme of postgraduate training must be compatible with such work and their primary supervisor must formally approve this.

Where SGSSS students undertake demonstration or teaching, or other types of employment at their home institution, they should be paid for this in addition to any stipend they receive from SGSSS. It should not be treated as a compulsory element of the award or of any research training.

Students may undertake a small amount of other paid work either in term time or during holidays, but the ESRC does not encourage such work, especially during the times when students are expected to be fully engaged in research training and thesis preparation.
Full-time studentship award holders cannot hold either a full-time job, or a permanent part-time job, during the period of their award. Part-time ESRC studentship award holders cannot hold a full-time job. Full-time studentship award holders cannot change to part-time for reasons of employment during the final six months of their studentship.

Please see pages 34 and 35 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

7.10 Annual Leave

Full-time students are allowed up to eight weeks’ holiday (including public holidays) each academic year as approved by their supervisor. If a studentship covers a period of less than 12 months in any academic year, a student's holiday entitlement will be reduced on a pro-rata basis.

Please see page 16 of the UKRI Training Grant Guide.

7.11 Changes of Thesis Title and/or Research Direction

Minor changes to thesis titles and research outlines do not need to be referred or approved by SGSSS. Significant changes to the title and/or focus of research need to be approved in advance by SGSSS. Such approval will not be given unless a clear justification is provided.

It is recognised that research outlines and proposed titles are likely to change during the Masters programme of a 1+3 studentship, prior to the commencement of the PhD. Students should still notify SGSSS of any significant changes. Only in exceptional circumstances will a major change in topic or direction be approved during a +3 studentship, or during the +3 phase of a 1+3 studentship.

Please see page 32 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide and page 12 of the UKRI Training Grant Ts&Cs (TGC 7.2).
8. Post Thesis Submission

8.1 Researchfish

Researchfish® is the system that the UK Research Councils use to gather feedback from all Research Council funded researchers about the outcomes from their work. The Research Councils agreed that it was important for Research Council funded doctoral students to also be able to report on their activities and successes, how they contribute to their respective areas of research and how they engage with partner organisations and communities.

SGSSS-DTP students are responsible for providing information about the outcomes from their studentship. Once a studentship has been added to Researchfish (typically during the 3rd year of funding), students will be invited to enter and submit data every year until three years after the studentship has finished (since many outcomes occur towards or past the end of studentships). Primary supervisors should also have been given access to the studentship details on Researchfish (added as a ‘team member’) and will be able to help in providing the outcomes information.

Students can enter outcomes data at any time, but will specifically be asked to confirm that all of their information is accurate and complete during the annual Submission Period. The Submission Period falls between early February and mid-March each year.

Research Councils will not use Researchfish data to assess the performance of individual students or review the progress of individual studentships. In addition, there is no expectation that doctoral students will necessarily have specific outcomes or outputs to report.

If any student has problems accessing their Researchfish account, please refer to the UKRI website here for guidance or contact the Researchfish support help desk at support@researchfish.com.

8.2 First Destination Data

The ESRC requires DTPs to provide data on the first employment destinations of all ESRC-funded students. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects destination data on behalf of all the research councils and Universities must ensure that they complete the research council funding fields accurately. DTPs are also required to provide some first destination data for their students as part of the annual report.

Please see page 14 of the UKRI Training Grant Guide (TGC 7.2).

8.3 Publishing Research

Decisions on whether the results of a student’s work are published are at the discretion of the student and supervisor.

Students are advised to refer to the ESRC Research Data Policy available on the ESRC website here. ESRC-funded students are strongly encouraged to offer copies of any machine-readable data created or repurposed during the lifetime of the award for deposit in the UK Data Service. Further guidance on data deposit with the UK Data Service is available here.

ESRC-funded students who are likely to produce data of any kind as a result of their grant are recommended to read the UK Data Service data management guides found here.

8.4 SGSSS Alumni Community

Upon graduation, students will be invited to join the SGSSS Alumni Community. This network brings together students that have completed ESRC-funded PhDs in Scotland, some of whom will have continued to work in academic and some of whom will have moved on to work in the public, private or third sectors.

The SGSSS Alumni Community provides a forum for social scientists to continue coming together, to share ideas, and to contribute to the landscape of social science research. All members of the SGSSS Alumni Community
receive a biannual newsletter with relevant training events and opportunities, and are invited to participate in social and networking events. More information is available on the SGSSS website here.
9. SGSSS Privacy Statement

The information students provide will be used by SGSSS in accordance with instructions from our Lead Institution, the University of Edinburgh.

For our full privacy statement, please visit our website here.

9.1 Purpose

We may collect and process the following information:

- Information that students provide by filling in forms or surveys;
- Information in correspondence that students send us;
- Details of student visits to our website including, but not limited to, traffic data, location data, weblogs and other communication data, and the resources that are accessed.

The information provided may be used by SGSSS to:

- Administer studentships and internships;
- Maintain our IT system;
- Administer events and monitor participation in training and events;
- Provide students with support and services requested;
- Monitor equal opportunities;
- Make funding arrangements;
- To gather feedback;
- Guide strategic planning;
- To provide students with information about SGSSS news, events, activities, programmes, opportunities (requested from us or we feel may be of interest), where students have consented to being contacted for such purposes;
- Contribute to our reporting purposes.

9.2 Legal Basis

The legal basis for processing students’ personal information falls under:

Consent: When students enter their information in a form, we specify the purpose and future use of this information. By submitting information to a form, students are consenting for their details to be used according to the purposes stated within each form. As this information is provided on the basis of consent, students are free to withdraw their consent for such use of their information at any time.

We also collect some personal information (like the address of a student’s computer) through the use of website cookies. Users can set their preferences for these cookies through our cookie consent banner or when viewing some content. These preferences can be changed at any time.

Performance of Contract: If students apply for ESRC funding or internships through SGSSS it is necessary for us to process information for the preparatory steps needed to enter into a contract. If students are in receipt of ESRC studentship funding through SGSSS it is necessary for us to process personal information in the performance of a student’s contract with us.

Legitimate Interest: We process information about academic and professional services staff and students at SGSSS member institutions because processing is necessary for legitimate SGSSS business, for example contacting students about new guidance or funding opportunities where relevant.

If an individual becomes a student rep or staff member of one of the governance meeting groups, their name and institutional contact email address will be published on the SGSSS’ internal and external websites. If a student feels the publication of this information will cause them potential harm, contravene conditions of any
funding arrangement and/or be harmful for another valid reason, they should contact the SGSSS team on team@sgsss.ac.uk.

9.3 Sharing Personal Data
Info...
10. Complaints

Complaints about any aspect of doctoral studies should be routed through a student’s institution’s procedures. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) have published guidance for students about how to deal with complaints about universities online here.

Complaints about any aspect of SGSSS’ operations should be raised informally with the SGSSS Head of Strategy and Operations in the first instance (diane.gill@ed.ac.uk) or the SGSSS Director (jamie.pearce@ed.ac.uk). If the complaint is unresolved, it will then be escalated to the full SGSSS Directorate and, if still unresolved, the SGSSS Supervisory Board.

Any complaints about how we have handled a student’s data or any aspect of GDPR should be directed to the University of Edinburgh Data Protection Officer (dpo@ed.ac.uk) who will investigate the matter. If a student is not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing their personal data in accordance with the law, they can complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) here.
11. Key SGSSS Contacts

11.1 SGSSS Directorate

SGSSS Director
Jamie Pearce

SGSSS Deputy Director (Training)
Jo Ferrie

SGSSS Deputy Director (Studentships)
Mhairi Mackenzie

SGSSS Associate Directors (Hub Leads)
Rachel Shanks, Kiril Sharapov, Melanie Simms

SGSSS Associate Director (SOCIAL AI)
Monika Harvey

SGSSS Associate Director (Interdisciplinarity)
Andrew Manches

SGSSS Associate Director (Methods)
Alan Marshall

SGSSS Associate Director (Student Engagement)
Ashley Rogers

11.2 SGSSS Office

Head of Strategy and Operations
Diane Gill

Knowledge Exchange and Partnerships Manager
Anna-Marie Linnell (on maternity leave)

Employability and Partnerships Manager
Flaminia Raiteri (maternity cover)

Studentship and Widening Participation Coordinator
Jared de Bruin

Communications and Engagement Coordinator
Ross Hoffie

Knowledge Exchange Coordinator
Rachel Webb

Administrative Assistant
Becky Lambert

Team Mailbox
team@sgsss.ac.uk

Address
25 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LN

11.3 HEI Admin Leads

Each institution has a primary SGSSS administrative contact known as an HEI Admin Lead. These individuals and their contact details are detailed below, however the most up-to-date list can be found on our website here.

Students should contact their institution’s HEI Admin Lead for any administrative type queries they may have regarding their studentship in the first instance, e.g. to request a suspension or to inform their institution of sick leave etc.

University of Aberdeen
Ann Marie Johnston

University of Dundee
Judith Miller

University of Edinburgh
Lorna Shiel

Edinburgh Napier University
Wendy Steven

University of Glasgow
Kiran Faisal

Glasgow Caledonian University
Ivana Covic

Heriot-Watt University
Susan Smith

Queen Margaret University
Alison Basford-Thomson

Scotland's Rural University College
Dawn Latto

University of St Andrews
Laura Bayley
11.4 Pathway Representatives

As detailed earlier in section 1.4 above (Hubs and Pathways), there are 15 pathways within SGSSS. Each pathway has an academic Pathway Representative (Pathway Rep) at each institution accredited in said pathway. One Pathway Rep will also act as the overall Pathway Convenor for each pathway, representing their pathway at meetings, training events, within their Hubs and during competition panels etc. A full up-to-date list of Pathway Reps and Convenors can be found on the SGSSS website here.

Pathway Reps act as pathway and student champions within their pathway and institution, thus ensuring all ESRC-funded and, where relevant, all social science research students receive timeous information on key processes and opportunities associated with their studies.
12. SGSSS Abbreviations, Terms and Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQM</td>
<td>Advanced Quantitative Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDT</td>
<td>Centres for Doctoral Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>A Dean is an academic who represents their institution in SGSSS matters. All 16 institutions are represented, forming our Deans of Graduate Studies Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLT</td>
<td>Difficult Language Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSA</td>
<td>Disabled Student’s Allowances</td>
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<td>DTC</td>
<td>Doctoral Training Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTG</td>
<td>Doctoral Training Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTP</td>
<td>Doctoral Training Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDI</td>
<td>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>SGSSS Student Handbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education institution, also known as a university</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI Admin Lead</td>
<td>Institutional administrative contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>A Hub is a grouping of five pathways. SGSSS has three Hubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hub Lead</td>
<td>A Hub Lead is a member of the SGSSS Directorate who leads on Hub matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<td>KE</td>
<td>Knowledge Exchange</td>
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<td>OFW</td>
<td>Overseas Fieldwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIV</td>
<td>Overseas Institutional Visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathway</td>
<td>A pathway is the broad training a student will receive during their PhD; it can be disciplinary, interdisciplinary or thematic in nature. SGSSS has 15 pathways</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathway Rep</td>
<td>A Pathway Rep is an academic at an institution who leads on their institution’s pathway matters, for which they represent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathway Convenor</td>
<td>A Pathway Convenor is also a Pathway Rep (see above); however, they lead the Reps within their particular pathway</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTF</td>
<td>Pathway Training Fund</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Research Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTSG</td>
<td>Research Training Support Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Skills Development Scotland</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFC</td>
<td>Scottish Funding Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGSAH</td>
<td>Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGSSS</td>
<td>Scottish Graduate School of Social Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGSSS Apply</td>
<td>An online system used by SGSSS for students to submit applications for various opportunities, including funding and internships</td>
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<tr>
<td>SiM</td>
<td>Spring into Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLTF</td>
<td>Student-led Training Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>An online community platform for SGSSS students (including alumni), as well as any and all social science researchers and academics wishing to join the platform</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>Training Needs Analysis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>