SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SGSSS)

STUDENT-LED OPEN COMPETITION 2020/21

GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISORS

Contents

The closing date for Stage 1 applications is **Thursday, 7 January 2020 at 5pm**. The closing date will be strictly adhered to.

For the full Student-led Open Competition timeline, please click here.

1. Overview

The guidance detailed within this document is for supervisors of students applying to the SGSSS Student-led Open Competition 2020/21.

Please note the process detailed below is entirely separate from the admissions process at your institution. The SGSSS-DTP plays no role in the institutional admissions process. Although applicants do not need to have been formally admitted in order to be considered for an ESRC studentship, some institutions require that this admissions process is complete prior to submitting an application for funding – you and the relevant Pathway Rep (within your discipline and at your institution) should advise your student as appropriate.

Should an applicant be successful in securing an ESRC studentship, the funding is conditional on the applicant obtaining an unconditional offer for entry to the institution to which they applied.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the SGSSS Open Competition Guidance for Students.

1.1 Before a Student Applies

We encourage supervisors to be fully aware of the projects being proposed. Student proposals usually benefit from supervisory input; however, the proposal must originate from the student and not the supervisor.

In addition, the Supervisor Statement of Support (see section 4) is worth 5 points out of a possible maximum of 25 (see section 3 for the Assessment Framework). Please ensure that you address the content requirements to ensure your student has the best chance of success. The Supervisor Statement is not a reference but rather an opportunity to provide details of proposed supervision arrangements and training opportunities to meet the needs of the student and the proposed project.

1.2 Eligibility

From October 2020, the eligibility criteria for ESRC funding has changed for studentships commencing in the 2021/22 academic year.

As per guidance published by UKRI in October 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 Competition.

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 a student does not meet the criteria above, they will be classed as an international student.

To establish if a student would be classed as a home student, we have asked that they refer to pages 4 and 5 of the UKRI eligibility guidance here.

1.3 Length of Award

The length of award depends on the extent to which the student meets the core methods training requirements set out by ESRC. If a student is applying for a +3 studentship, they must have already met the minimum ESRC training requirements. If not then they may choose to apply for a 1+3 award instead. Please see here for guidance in determining which is the appropriate length of award. Please discuss this with your student and the relevant Pathway Rep before your student applies.

Please note, SGSSS will also conduct an audit of the training needs of all final applicants – this means in some circumstances we may determine a fractional award, such as a 3.3[1] or a 3.5[2], is required where we identify that the student has some, but not all, of the core methods training required by ESRC.

If a first year (or part-time equivalent) student is self-funding their PhD, or they are in receipt of financial support not in excess of an ESRC award[3], they can apply for ESRC funding from their second year, i.e. they must be in their first year when applying. The precise length of award will be determined by SGSSS based on the stage of progress (but may be +2 or +3).

Part-time awards are permitted and the funding and award lengths are pro-rated accordingly, in accordance with the ESRC funding guidance.

1.4 Masters Programmes

Students applying for a 1+3 award within an institution which does not offer an ESRC accredited Masters programme on the desired Pathway, are required to undertake their Masters in another Pathway eligible institution (within the SGSSS-DTP) before transferring to their 'home' institution for the PhD programme. If this applies to your student, then they must upload a Masters Arrangement Form, completed in conjunction with the relevant SGSSS Deans of Graduate Studies Network representative at the institution where the Masters will be undertaken. Students should work with their Pathway Rep and you as their supervisor, to facilitate the completion of the Masters Arrangement Form.

1.5 Supervision

Students must have support from a first supervisor **before they apply** to this competition.

The SGSSS-DTP wishes to encourage pathways, supervisors and applicants to consider supervisory arrangements across the 16 institutions that form the SGSSS, if appropriate to the particular student's project and with the support of both proposed supervisors. Although this will typically be within the same pathway but across institutions, we will consider cross-pathway supervision if this is clearly in the interest of the student's project. We therefore ask supervisors (and Pathway Reps) to let students know that while their main supervisor must be at a recognised SGSSS-DTP pathway institution, a second supervisor may be attached to the project from a second institution, either with or without pathway accreditation. The rationale for such arrangements should be clearly stated within the Supervisor Statement of Support (see section 4 for details). Where supervisors are from different institutions, the Supervisor Statement of Support must be jointly written by both supervisors and refer to the research and training environment within each institution.

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[1] Three years and three months.
[2] Three years and six months.
[3] See page 10 and 11 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide for details on financial support not in excess of an ESRC award.

1.6 Interdisciplinary Proposals

The ESRC welcomes interdisciplinary studentships, as many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature, both within the social sciences and other areas of research. For that reason, we ask students to indicate whether their proposed research is deemed interdisciplinary. To meet the criteria for this label, the proposed research should include substantive interaction between relevant disciplines and incorporate training that is not constrained to one disciplinary approach. Please discuss this with your student and Pathway Rep where relevant. Please also ensure your student specifies which other research council Doctoral Training Partnership their proposed work aligns with and, within which, training might be sought. For further information on interdisciplinary awards, please see the ESRC guidance on requirements here (page 2).

1.7 Funding Arrangements

As of 2019/20, SGSSS operates a funding model where all studentship awards are co-funded by the host institution, usually to the value of one-third, or more. Please see here for full guidance on the different types of SGSSS funding arrangements available for each studentship competition/studentship type.

Home Students

For home students, 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).

The ESRC studentship packages for years 2021/22 onwards are*:

Funding Type	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Stipend	£15,582	£15,886	£16,203
Tuition Fees	£4,492	£4,579	£4,670
RTSG	£750	£750	£750
Overseas Fieldwork (if applicable)	£450	£450	£450

* These are approximations based on the UK Government's GDP deflators.

International Students

The funding arrangements for international students are primarily the same as that of home students, i.e. students are eligible for the full ESRC studentship package, with the exception that some institutions require international students to pay the difference between home and international tuition fees (top up fees). This is detailed in Table 1 below:

Institution	International Students required to pay Top Up Fees (Masters and PhD)
University of Aberdeen	No
University of Dundee	No
University of Edinburgh	No
Edinburgh Napier University	No
University of Glasgow	No
Glasgow Caledonian University	No
Heriot Watt University	No
Queen Margaret University	No
Scotland's Rural University College	No
University of St Andrews	No
University of Stirling	No[4]
University of Strathclyde	No

Cross-Institutional Supervision

As detailed in section 1.5 above, we will continue to support cross-institutional supervision where the arrangements are in the best interest of the student. In these cases, the lead institution will be regarded as the host institution. The expectation is that the host institution will be responsible for covering the HEI contribution. The second institution will not be responsible for any proportion of the contribution. Further, the fees due will be transferred to the host institution with no expectation of a proportion of the fees going to the second institution.

Exceptions will be made where the cross-institutional supervision partnership is with one of our four HEIs that currently do not hold studentships. In these cases, the host institution will pay only 70% of the institutional cost with SGSSS contributing the remaining 30% of the institutional costs. For these studentships, we will support the transfer of 30% of fees going to the second institution.

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[4] Whilst fee waivers will be offered, this will be up to an internal institutional cap of 30%. Applicants are strongly advised to seek confirmation of the funding position from the University of Stirling directly by contacting the HEI Admin Lead at ias@stir.ac.uk.

2. Applications

2.1 Application Process Overview

Below is a high-level process for applicants submitting an application for the Student-led Open Competition.

1.   Register for GradHub as a prospective student.

2.   **Stage 1 Application**:

    2.1. Click here to access the *ESRC Open Competition Application Portal 2020/21* via GradHub.

    2.2. Next, complete the *ESRC Open Competition Eligibility Check* section.

    2.3. Next, complete the *Institution* section.

    2.4. Next, input the contact details for your *First Reference request* so SGSSS can contact them (this happens automatically once you submit your referee's details). Your *Reference 1* (as it is called) can be unique for each pathway application you submit; for example, you may have a different first supervisor for your project depending on the pathway you are applying to.

    2.5. Next, input the contact details for your *Second Reference request* so SGSSS can contact them (this happens automatically once you submit your referee's details). Your *Reference 2* (as it is called) will be the same for all applications you submit, regardless of the pathway. This too can be provided by a member of your supervisory team.

    2.6. Next, upload your completed Application Form, located here. You will also need to upload your existing transcripts (where available) and your CV.

3. **Stage 2 Applications**:

    3.1. Once the initial review stage is complete (by 1 February 2021), applicants will be notified if they have been shortlisted or not.

    3.2. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to upload a *Supervisor Statement of Support* and make any final minor amendments to their applications before the deadline of 5pm on 11 February 2021.

There are two primary deadlines that students need to be aware of:

•   Thursday, 7 January 2021 at 5pm: this is the deadline for Stage 1 Applications

    Please Note: As a manual process is required to approve GradHub accounts, applicants must have created their GradHub account by 9am on Wednesday, 6 January 2021 (to allow the SGSSS team to approve new accounts).

•   Thursday, 11 February 2021 at 5pm: this is the deadline for Stage 2 Applications (shortlisted candidates only).

    Please Note: Late applications, at both stages, will not be considered.

After the 11 February 2021 deadline, SGSSS will work to select the best students who have applied to study within each pathway. For details on the various competition review stages, and the dates for each review stage, please see the Competition Timeline and Stages section below.

2.2 Competition Timeline and Stages

There are four rigorous review stages during the Student-led Open Competition. Students will be updated after each relevant review stage until either they are awarded a studentship or their application is unsuccessful. To view these dates, please see here.

1. HEI Review Stage (5 November 2020 to 16 February 2021)

This stage is when institutions shortlist Stage 1 applications, resulting in students being invited to submit a Stage 2 application. Each institution can nominate four applications per pathway for which it is eligible. Of the four applications, up to two may be international applicants.

2. Pathway Review Stage (17 February to 11 March 2021)

This stage is when pathways (made up of the relevant Pathway Reps from different institutions) shortlist Stage 2 applications. Each pathway can nominate six applications per accredited pathway. Of the six applications, up to two may be international applicants.

3. Hub Review Stage (12 March to 6 April 2021)

This stage is when our three Hubs[5] (each Hub is made up of five relevant pathways) nominate 45 applications (15 per Hub) from the nominated applications at the Pathway Review Stage. Each Hub can nominate five international applicants out of their 15 nominations.

4. Global Panel Review Stage (7 April to 13 May 2021)

This stage is when a final review panel consisting of Deans and members of the SGSSS Directorate meet to make the final award decisions. In 2020/21, approx. 27 applications, of the nominated 45 applications, will be funded. A maximum of eight awards to international students can be made. On 13 May, the outcome of the competition will be announced to applicants.

Dates to note are:

7 January 2021 at 5pm
Deadline for Stage 1 applications. Outcome of HEI Review
Stage communicated on **1 February 2021**

11 February 2021 at 5pm
Deadline for Stage 2 applications. Outcome of Pathway
Review Stage communicated on **11 March 2021**

6 April 2021
Outcome of Hub Review Stage communicated

13 May 2021
Outcome of Global Panel Review Stage communicated
and awards made

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[5] See here for details of our three Hubs.

For the full competition timeline, please see [here](#).

Unsuccessful candidates will be informed if they have not progressed to the next review stage of the competition at the end of the previous review stage.

We expect decisions on who has been selected to receive studentships (and, if relevant, who is being held on a reserve list) to be decided and communicated by Thursday, 13 May 2021.

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please email team@sgsss.ac.uk.

3. Assessment Framework

1. To view the Student-led Open Competition Award Assessment Framework for +3 Awards (2020/21), click here.

2. To view the Student-led Open Competition Award Assessment Framework for 1+3 Awards (2020/21), click here.

4. Supervisor Statement of Support

All shortlisted applicants are required to submit a Supervisor Statement of Support provided by their prospective supervisor(s). The Supervisor Statement of Support is a key component of the application and of the assessment process. We suggest that supervisors refer to the Assessment Framework (see section 3 above) when writing their statement of support, as the purpose of this statement is primarily to detail the ways in which the student will fit within the institution's overarching research environment (i.e. within the relevant department). In particular, we are looking for clarification on how the proposed supervisory team will provide the student with an outstanding PhD experience that engages with appropriate advanced training opportunities.

Once you have completed your Supervisor Statement of Support, please return it to your prospective student who will upload it as part of their final, Stage 2 application. Please note, the deadline for Stage 2 applications is **5pm on Thursday, 11 February** and late applications will not be accepted.

Supervisor statements should follow the style and content guidance provided below:

Style Guide
- The statement must be in either PDF or Word format.
- The statement must display the letterhead of the supervisor's home institution.
- The statement must clearly state the name and position of the supervisor(s).
- The statement must contain, as a subject line, the name of the student that the reference concerns (e.g. Amna Singh), the academic discipline (e.g. Human Geography), and the host institution (e.g. University of Glasgow).
- Statements should not exceed two sides of A4.

Content Guide (statements should include all of the below)
- Proposed supervisory arrangements including second supervisor(s) and their relevance to the project, as well as contingency supervisory arrangements. Where the supervisory team is cross-institutional, the added benefits to the student and their proposed research should be detailed. Please note, the statement should be co-written and signed by both supervisors.
- A consideration of the research environment at the host institution, with specific reference to the fit between the department and the proposed topic of research.
- Detail of the potential research training courses/programmes offered by the host institution that would benefit the applicant; consideration of broader advanced training that will likely be required including, but not limited to, that provided by SGSSS.
- An assessment of the potential impact of the proposed research and its significance to the academic discipline(s) concerned.
- Details of the supervisory team's experience of supervision. This should include the number of students supervised by each supervisor (including ongoing supervision) and their completion rates where applicable, i.e. we would like to know the proportion of students who have completed within four years (or equivalent for part-time students). In addition, we are interested to know of any specific research experience relevant to the student's proposed project, including any particular methodological experience or training.
- Confirmation that the proposal is the applicant's own work, although you many have provided advice on the content.
- Confirmation that the first supervisor has attended supervisory training within their institution within the last 5 years.

5. Example Applications

Please see the two examples below for what makes a good Student-led Open Competition application.

For each, we have included the full application form (marginally different to the 2020/21 form) and the Supervisor Statement of Support, both anonymised.

1. **PhD title: Monetary policy rules under model uncertainty**

   Key Information

   - **Institution:** University of Strathclyde
   - **Pathway:** Economics
   - **Hub:** Economies, Mind and Technologies

   Click here to view the Application Form and Supervisor Statement of Support.

2. **PhD title: Pro-environmental Voluntary Simplicity: the Lived Experience within Family and Domestic Life**

   Key Information

   - **Institution:** University of Edinburgh
   - **Pathway:** Sociology
   - **Hub:** Society and Welfare

   Click here to view the Application Form and Supervisor Statement of Support.