



SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SGSSS)

STUDENT-LED OPEN COMPETITION 2020/21

GUIDANCE FOR PATHWAY REPS & CONVENORS

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1. Student-led Open Competition Overview

The guidance document is for Pathway Reps and Convenors, all of whom play a role in the SGSSS Student-led Open Competition 2020/21 (Open Competition). Please note, this guidance should be read in conjunction with the [SGSSS Open Competition Guidance for Students](#).

The Open Competition consists of four review stages:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. HEI Review Stage | 5 November 2020 to 16 February 2021 |
| 2. Pathway Review Stage | 17 February to 11 March 2021 |
| 3. Hub Review Stage | 12 March to 6 April 2021 |
| 4. Global Panel Review Stage | 7 April to 13 May 2021 |

Pathway Reps play a role in the competition up to and including the Pathway Review Stage while Pathway Convenors play a role up to and including the Hub Review Stage.

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

1.1 Competition Review Stages

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

This stage is when institutions shortlist Stage 1 applications, resulting in candidates being invited to submit a Stage 2 application (same as Stage 1 with minor adjustments). HEI Admin Leads¹ coordinate the internal review process for Stage 1 applications, disseminating applications internally within their institutions and updating SGSSS of who has been shortlisted via our application portal, GradHub. Each institution can nominate four applications per accredited Pathway² within their institution. Of the four applications, a maximum of two may be international applicants. Please note, SGSSS does not play a role in the internal review processes conducted by institutions.

Scores and rankings are not required at this stage, but rather a list of shortlisted candidates and a reason for each unsuccessful application. This is provided to SGSSS by the relevant HEI Admin Lead.

Applicants are required to submit a standard set of application materials as follows:

1. [Application Form](#) (which includes a lay summary, section on preparedness and the research proposal).
2. CV (academic where applicable).
3. All relevant Undergraduate and Masters level degree transcripts (and translations, if not originally in English) – provisional transcripts are sufficient if the student is yet to complete their degree.
4. Supervisor Statement of Support (required by shortlisted candidates only) – this is a statement from the prospective first supervisor. If a cross-institutional supervision arrangement is being proposed then the statement should be jointly written and signed.
5. Contact details for two references, both provided as part of the Stage 1 application:
 - 5.1. [Reference 1](#)
This should be from an academic familiar with the applicant's work (including a member of the proposed supervisory team) unless the student has been out of academia for more than 5 years, in which case a work reference is acceptable. If the student is applying to more than

¹ See [here](#) for details of our HEI Admin Leads.

² See [here](#) for details of our Pathways.

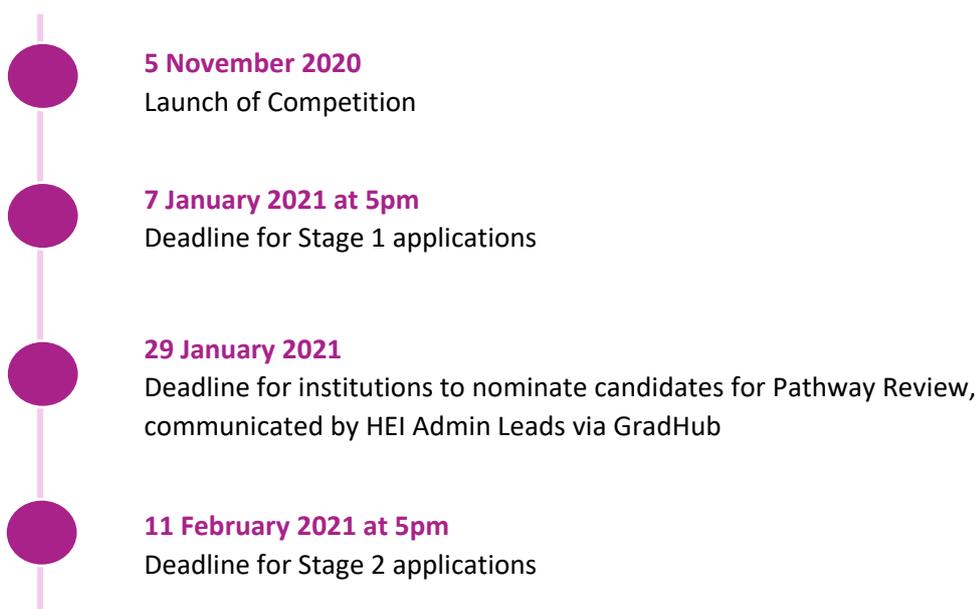
one pathway then they can opt to use different referees as referee 1 for each pathway application.

5.2. Reference 2

This should be from an academic unless the student has been out of academia for more than 5 years. This reference will be the same for all pathway applications submitted. Like Reference 1, a member of the student's supervisory team can provide this reference.

6. Details of any overseas fieldwork the student proposes to undertake during their research (advised within the Application Form).
7. Details of any difficult language training the student proposes to undertake during their research (advised within the Application Form).

Import dates to know for the HEI Review Stage:



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

This stage is when Pathways (made up of the relevant Pathway Reps) shortlist Stage 2 applications. Each Pathway can nominate six applications per pathway. Of the six applications, a maximum of two may be international applicants.

All applications for review will be shared via the [SGSSS Student-led Open Competition SharePoint Homepage](#) (by Pathway) on 17 February 2021. SharePoint access should be granted to all relevant Pathway Reps and Convenors by 29 January 2021 however should you have any access issues, please contact SGSSS on team@sgsss.ac.uk.

Each Pathway Convenor coordinates their Pathway's review process³. SGSSS encourages the scheduling of Pathway Review Meetings well in advance to ensure the availability of Pathway Reps and the relevant Hub Lead (Hub Leads should be in attendance of all relevant Pathway Review Meetings to ensure that application nominations are consistent and fair across Pathways - not to review applications themselves).

Scores, feedback and rankings are required at this stage. This information should be advised via the spreadsheet template provided by SGSSS via SharePoint. Each relevant Pathway Convenor

³ For detailed information on the approved Pathway Review Stage processes (three to choose from), please see section 3 below.

collates this information, updating the spreadsheet before uploading this to the Open Competition SharePoint page for SGSSS to download.

The deadline for Pathway Convenors to return nominated applications for their Pathway is 5pm on 5 March 2021.

Import dates to know for the Pathway Review Stage:



17 February to 5 March 2021

Pathway Reps & Convenors are invited to review the relevant applications before meeting (within their Pathways) to determine which six applications to shortlist



5 March 2021 at 5pm

Deadline for all Pathway Convenors to submit the outcome of their Pathway's review (6 nominated candidates). Submission returns are made via SharePoint

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

The Hub Review stage is when Hub Leads review **ALL** applications shortlisted at the Pathway Review Stage, in their respective Hub⁴ only (30 applications maximum). All Pathway Convenors review the applications shortlisted in their Hub also, less their own Pathway's applications (24 applications maximum). This review is conducted independently before a Hub Panel Meeting (one for each Hub consisting of all relevant Pathway Convenors, the Hub Lead and Mhairi Mackenzie). At each Hub Panel Meeting, the top 15 applications from across all five Pathways are nominated for the final Global Panel Review Stage (45 in total from the three Hubs). Of the 15 applications shortlisted per Hub, up to five may be international applicants, although this is not a requirement.

Scores and feedback are required at this stage. This information should be advised via the spreadsheet provided by SGSSS. Each relevant Pathway Convenor and Hub Lead populates the spreadsheet before returning this via the Open Competition SharePoint page for SGSSS to download.

Import dates to know for the Hub Review Stage:



12 March 2021

Applications for review shared with Pathway Convenors and Hub Leads via SharePoint



25 March 2021 at 5pm

Deadline for Pathway Convenors & Hub Leads to upload, via SharePoint, the outcome of their Hub review (scores and feedback required for all applications)



31 March to 1 April 2021

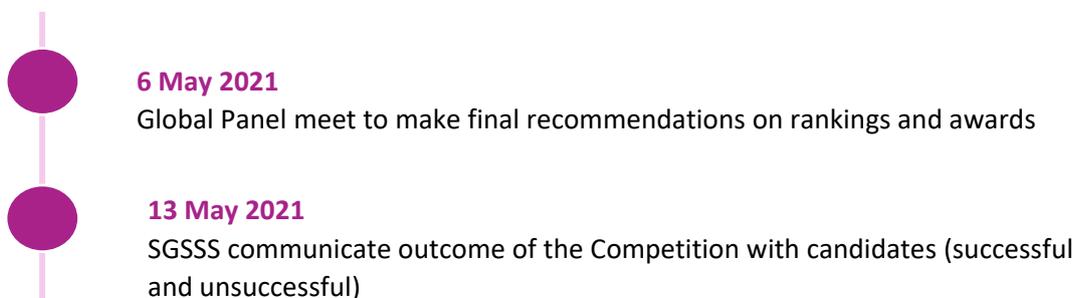
Three Hub Panel meetings to take place; one for each Hub to nominate 15 applications (45 in total) for the Global Panel Review Stage

⁴ See [here](#) for details of our Hubs.

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

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.

Import dates to know for the Global Panel Review Stage:



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

2. Additional Important Information

2.1 Student 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](#).

Please Note: Due to the above eligibility changes, there is no longer an Economic Pathway eligibility waiver, nor are enhanced stipends available (this has been the case since the 2019/20 Competition).

2.2 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. If contacted please advise students and supervisors who seek advice on the length of award to apply for, where you can.

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 3.25⁵ or a 3.5⁶, 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 award⁷, 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).

⁵ Three years and three months.

⁶ Three years and six months.

⁷ See page 10 and 11 of the [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) for details on financial support not in excess of an ESRC award.

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

2.3 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 applicable, students 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 supervisor and relevant Pathway Rep to facilitate the completion of the Masters Arrangement Form.

2.4 Supervision

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 Pathway Reps (and supervisors) 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 recognition. The rationale for such arrangements should be clearly stated within the Supervisor Statement of Support (see section 5 for details). Where supervisors are from different institutions, the statement of support must be jointly written by both supervisors and refer to the research and training environment within each institution.

2.5 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. Students are also asked to ensure they specify which other research council Doctoral Training Partnership their proposed work aligns to. We have advised students to discuss this with their supervisor(s) and Pathway Rep where relevant. For further information on interdisciplinary awards, please see the ESRC guidance on requirements [here](#).

2.6 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 ⁸
University of Strathclyde	No

Cross-Institutional Supervision

As detailed in section 2.4 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.

⁸ 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 jas@stir.ac.uk.

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.

3. Pathway Review Stage Processes

When Pathways assess, score and rank applicants for nomination during the Pathway Review Stage, **at least one** of the following three review processes must be used:

1. Pathway Reps (including the Pathway Convenor) rank candidates from other institutions only – for example in the Politics and IR Pathway, St Andrews and Glasgow colleagues assess and rank Edinburgh candidates, St Andrews and Edinburgh colleagues assess and rank Glasgow candidates, and Glasgow and Edinburgh colleagues assess and rank St Andrews candidates, as a basic minimum standard. Where possible, each applicant should be assessed by at least two Pathway Reps from two different institutions. Pathway Reps should score all applications outwith their own institution where possible. The Pathway Convenor should oversee the allocation of applications to Pathway Reps within their Pathway (including themselves). A final Pathway Review Meeting should take place to determine the final nominated candidates (online is fine), organised by the Pathway Convenor, who also collates all scores and comments for submission to SGSSS.
2. An external reviewer ranks applicants – the Pathway secures an external reviewer who will manage the assessment and ranking process. Pathways using this approach must have a Pathway Review Meeting to discuss and confirm the external scores and rankings (online is fine), organised by the Pathway Convenor. The Pathway Convenor should also collate all scores and comments for submission to SGSSS following the Pathway Review Meeting.
3. Pathways conduct interviews with applicants – the expectation is that interviews should be conducted online via video-conference (as SGSSS-DTP will not reimburse applicants travel expenses or other interview costs). The Pathway Convenor should oversee the organisation of interviews and all Pathway Reps should be in attendance during interviews where possible. The Pathway Convenor should then arrange a final Pathway Review Meeting for all Pathway Reps to determine the final nominated candidates (online is fine), collating all final scores and comments for submission to SGSSS.

Please Note:

1. Pathway Reps (including Pathway Convenors) are not permitted to assess/score/rank/vote on applications from their own institution at the Pathway Review Stage - this rule does not apply during the HEI Review Stage.
2. The relevant Hub Lead should attend all final Pathway Review Meetings to ensure parity and fairness across all Pathway nomination processes – the role of the Hub Lead is not to score or rank applications at this stage.
3. Pathways with fewer than three institutions should use options 2.
4. The final Pathway Review Meetings should be scheduled well in advance of the Pathway Review Stage window (17 February to 5 March 2021) to ensure availability of all Pathway Reps, Convenors and Hub Leads.
5. Pathway Convenors organise the Pathway Review Meeting for their Pathway.
6. Whilst scores given to applications should correspond to the marking framework (paying heed to areas of flexibility such as experience beyond academic qualifications), ranks should be used to distinguish between applications with each application given a unique score. Applications can be given fractional scores if there is very good reason to do so but please note that fractions should only be used to indicate 0.5 distinctions (for example, an application might be given a score of 22.5 but not 22.25 or 22.75).
7. The Assessment Framework (see section 4 below) provided must be used when reviewing applications. Scores are out of 25: 10 for Candidate Record; 10 for Research Proposal; 5 for Supervision & Training.

8. Each application should contain two references. As of this competition round (2020/21), both can be written by a member of the student's supervisory team and both are provided as part of the Stage 1 application.
9. At the Pathway Review Stage, a maximum of six nominations per Pathway is permitted. Of the six nominations, a maximum of two may be for international candidates. Whilst quality remains key in selecting applications, this ceiling cannot be exceeded due to the 30% cap imposed by UKRI.
10. Pathway Convenors are to submit their Pathway's collated scores, rankings and comments (using the spreadsheet template provided by SGSSS) via the [Open Competition SharePoint Homepage](#), by the deadline of 5 March 2021. For information, this SharePoint page is where application documentation will be shared by SGSSS also.
11. We also ask Pathway Convenors to provide details of the method(s) used to assess and nominate their six candidates by completing the [Pathway Scoring Process template](#), returning this also via SharePoint by 5 March 2021.
12. On 11 March 2021, SGSSS will inform candidates if they have been successful, or not, following the Pathway Review Stage (as well as all other review stages), however we will advise candidates to seek feedback from the relevant Pathway Convenor, should they want this.

If you have any queries regarding the Pathway Review Stage and the relevant processes, please email team@sgsss.ac.uk.

4. 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](#).