Introduction: In response to the ESRC’s aim of developing early career researchers who are able to straddle research council interests and are fluent in interdisciplinary concepts and methods (interdisciplinary steer), in advanced quantitative methods (AQM steer), and in secondary data analysis (Data Set steer) we are running two stage competitions for all supervisor-led ESRC Steers Competitions. This document sets out the timescales and process for the competition.

Please note that from this year supervisors can put in only one application per competition – that is, a supervisor may apply to both a collaborative competition and the steers competition but cannot put more than one application to a single competition. Please note that the single application requirement applies to any position within a supervisory team – that is, an applicant cannot apply to a competition as first supervisor on one application and second or subsequent supervisor on another application to the same competition.

Summary of Timescales

Please note that your individual HEI may wish to deploy an earlier deadline for the EOI and full application.

Stage 1:

- Deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest (EOIs): 14 October 2019
- Shortlisted candidates invited to submit full application: 7 November 2019

Stage 2:

- Deadline for full application: 9 December 2019
- Awards to supervisors: mid-January 2020

Overview – Interdisciplinary Competition

This competition aims to encourage conceptual and methodological creativity. Co-funding from another Doctoral Training Partnership is not required but applicants are advised to read the ESRC Guidance of Steers and Targets which provides the requirements of an interdisciplinary award.

Stage 1

Supervisor pairs (with the lead supervisor in social sciences and the second supervisor outside the social sciences and who clearly works within the remit of one of the other research councils) are invited to submit a co-produced Expression of Interest – EoI - (maximum of 500 words). The brevity of the EoI is to encourage rapid and creative responses from interested colleagues. It
should articulate the main conceptual idea and methodology of the proposal and demonstrate how it meets the brief of being interdisciplinary. The EOI application form can be found here.

*Please note that in assessing applications, equal weight will be given to the research proposal and the supervisory team/research environment; both must demonstrably fit the steer. The 12 highest scoring applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal.*

**Stage 2**
Selected applicants will be asked to submit a full application – the form can be found on GradHub. The same weighting will be applied to the assessment of applications as at the EOI stage. The top 4 proposals will be funded and supervisors required to advertise studentships widely.

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**Overview – AQM Competition**
This competition aims to encourage the development of advanced quantitative methods skills in relation to the norms of the discipline. Applicants are advised to read the ESRC Guidance of Steers and Targets which provides the requirements of an AQM award.

**Stage 1**
Supervisor pairs are invited to submit a co-produced Expression of Interest – EOI - (maximum of 500 words). The brevity of the EOI is to encourage rapid and creative responses from interested colleagues. It should articulate the main conceptual idea and methodology of the proposal and demonstrate how it meets the AQM criteria. EOI application form can be found here.

*Please note that in assessing applications, equal weight will be given to the research proposal and the supervisory team/research environment; both must demonstrably fit the steer. The 12 highest scoring applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal.*

**Stage 2**
Selected applicants will be asked to submit a full application – the form can be found on GradHub. The same weighting will be applied to the assessment of applications as at the EOI stage. The top 4 proposals will be funded and supervisors required to advertise studentships widely.

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**Overview – DATA SET Competition**
This competition aims to encourage the development of data skills as applied to secondary data analysis. Applicants are advised to read the ESRC Guidance of Steers and Targets which provides the requirements of a DATA SET award. Please note that the criteria for DATA SET awards have been revised for 2020 entrants.

In addition to the 2018 ESRC Guidance on Steers and Targets criteria, Data Set applications should refer to data sets where:

- The primary project funding period has ended;
- At least one publication deriving from the funded project has appeared in a peer-reviewed journal; and,
- The project through which the data set has been generated has been externally funded and awarded through a peer-review process.

**Stage 1**

Supervisor pairs are invited to submit a co-produced Expression of Interest – EoI - (maximum of 500 words). The brevity of the EoI is to encourage rapid and creative responses from interested colleagues. It should articulate the main conceptual idea and methodology of the proposal and demonstrate how it meets the DATA SET criteria. EOI application form can be found here.

Please note that in assessing applications, equal weight will be given to the research proposal and the supervisory team/research environment; both must demonstrably fit the steer. The 12 highest scoring applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal.

Stage 2
Selected applicants will be asked to submit a full application – the form can be found on GradHub. The same weighting will be applied to the assessment of applications as at the EoI stage. The top 4 proposals will be funded and supervisors required to advertise studentships widely.

Please note that if you are applying for a Data Sets award then you must confirm the following in the stage 2 application: that you are confident that the necessary data as outlined in the proposal will be available to the student in a timely fashion AND where there are costs associated with accessing the data (including required specialist subsets), how these costs will be met.

Note on Cross Institutional Supervision Relating to the 2020 Co-funding Model

SGSSS now operates a new funding model from 2019 entrants onwards awarded studentships will be co-funded by the host institution, usually to the value of one third. The exception to the one third HEI contribution is where the award is for a collaborative studentship with a financial contribution from the non-academic partner. For these awards the contribution from the host institution is reduced as follows:

(a) 10% contribution from the non-academic partner - remainder paid by 23% contribution from host HEI and 67% from SGSSS
(b) 33% contribution from the non-academic partner - remainder paid by 17% contribution from host HEI and 50% from SGSSS.

With the new co-funding model in place we will continue to support cross-institutional supervision where the arrangements are in the best interests of students. 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 one third 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 the 4 HEIs that cannot hold studentships. In these cases, the host institution will pay only 70% of the institutional cost with SGSSS picking up
the remaining 30% of the institutional cost. For these studentships we will support the transfer of 30% of fees going
to the second institution.

Finally, to view examples of recently funded projects please visit our website here: EXAMPLES

Appendix 1: ESRC Steers Award Marking Framework 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking Criteria</th>
<th>Research Proposal (OUT OF 10)</th>
<th>Supervision &amp; Training (OUT OF 10)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Please note that the descriptors can be used with discretion where there is a good case to do so) PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FIT WITH STEER CRITERIA IN ASSESSING THE PROPOSAL</td>
<td>PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FIT WITH STEER CRITERIA IN ASSESSING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SUPERVISORY TEAM AND THE CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO ADVANCED TRAINING DURING THE COURSE OF THE PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate can demonstrate:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>An excellent proposal (MEETING THE STEER CRITERIA) and scoring well in terms of both cogency and originality. All components – overview, context, methodology, and impact – will be well thought out and clearly expressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plus</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>Proposal is exceptionally good in all of its components and fulfils criteria 7-9 below</td>
<td>Supervision arrangements represent a perfect fit with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The supervisory team includes an experienced supervisor with recognised expertise in the field.</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Proposal is highly original and innovative, at the cutting edge of developments substantively and methodologically, and fulfils criteria 7 and 8 below</td>
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<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Proposal contains clear awareness of the potential impact of the research and fulfils criterion 7 below</td>
<td>Supervision arrangements represent a <strong>very good fit</strong> with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The supervisory team includes an experienced supervisor with recognised expertise in the field. The supervision combination meets very well the student’s potential training needs and has very good plans around advanced training. The destination HEI offers high-quality specialist training. The research fits well with the wider department/school/faculty.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>A well-defined proposal with researchable questions, appropriately identified sources, an awareness of the theoretical and empirical background to the research and an appropriate methodology. The proposal should be feasible within 3 years of funding and demonstrate an awareness of the economic and social relevance of the research.</td>
<td>Candidate can demonstrate: A good and promising proposal but with identifiable weaknesses. Some, but not all, components of the proposal will be problematic, ill-expressed, or show a lack of knowledge. Plus</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>A good proposal with only minor but still identifiable weaknesses. The research question will be clear, the methodology appropriate and clearly presented, and most of the appropriate literature identified.</td>
<td>Supervision arrangements represent a <strong>good fit</strong> with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The supervisory team includes an experienced supervisor with recognised expertise in the field. The supervision combination meets well the student’s potential training needs and has good plans around advanced training. The destination HEI offers high-quality specialist training. The research fits well with the wider department/school/faculty.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>A promising proposal that suffers from several weaknesses. The methodology is appropriate but ill-expressed. The proposal is only weakly grounded in relevant literature.</td>
<td>Supervision arrangements represent a <strong>adequate fit</strong> with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The supervisory team includes an experienced supervisor with some expertise in the field. The supervision combination meets directly the</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A proposal with one serious weakness or several minor ones, which suggests gaps in knowledge and a weak grasp of the proposed methodology and its suitability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>A proposal with significant weaknesses in multiple components, little appreciation of possible methodologies, and/or awareness of relevant literature.</td>
<td>The supervision combination meets directly the student’s potential training needs and has adequate plans around advanced training. The destination HEI offers good quality specialist training. The research fits with the wider department/school/faculty.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>A problematic proposal that would need considerable additional work before being fundable. All components of the proposal will require further work and/or demonstrate little or no background or interest in their subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A problematic proposal that would need considerable additional work before being fundable. All components of the proposal will require further work and/or demonstrate little or no background or interest in their subject.</td>
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