

## Guidance for Supervisors regarding the Student Led Open Competition 2019

*Please note that this guidance should not be read in isolation. It is being issued by the SGSSS-DTP in parallel to guidance on the content of [Supervisors' Statements of Support, References, and a guidance note for students applying for an ESRC studentship](#). In particular we stress that your role should be as support not lead in the development of an applicant's research proposal.*

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance document is to set out the process through which ESRC Student Led Open Competition Awards will be made in 2019.

Please also note that the process detailed below is entirely separate from the admissions process at your University. The SGSSS-DTP has no role in that process. Applicants do not need to have been formally admitted in order to be considered for an ESRC studentship but some institutions require that this admissions process is complete prior to submitting an application for funding – you and the relevant pathway representative 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 university.

**This guidance note should be read alongside the SGSSS-DTP guidance for students applying for an ESRC studentship, including guidance on whether applications meet the criteria for ESRC steers ([Guidance on Steers and Targets](#)).**

### THE PROCESS

The section below details the process for Supervisors and outlines the Student process. The Guidance for Students details specifically what materials and documents are required to apply for a studentship.

SGSSS-DTP recognises that the internal process of selecting applicants to put forward for ESRC studentships will vary across Universities. All applicants are required to submit a letter of support from their prospective supervisor; you may be one of the first people the student contacts and we encourage you to have them contact [the pathway representative in your institution](#) as soon as possible. **Please also note that the first supervisor has to have had attended supervisory training within their host institution within the last 5 years.**

We encourage supervisors to be fully aware of the projects being proposed and vet the applications for appropriateness, scope, accuracy and feasibility. The student proposals often benefit from supervisor input in all these aspects nevertheless the proposals must originate from the student and not the supervisor. We should highlight that the supervisor statement is worth 5 points in an overall 25 (see Annex B) so clearly can be the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful award. Please ensure that you address the content requirements in "Guidance Note for Supervisor's Statement of Support" to avoid disadvantaging your student. The supervisor statement is not a reference for the student but asks you to provide details on proposed supervision arrangements and training in the

HEI to meet the needs of the student and the particular project. This should cover the contributions across the supervisory team proposed. Where the supervision proposed is cross-institutional then the supervisor statement must be co-written by both supervisors and explain why such cross-institutional supervision is in the best interests of the student.

## IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR SUPERVISORS

**ESRC student eligibility criteria can be found [here](#)**

### **ELIGIBILITY AND ENHANCED STIPENDS**

SGSSS reminds supervisors that the residency criteria must be met in order for a student to receive the full studentship including stipend. There is a partial exception to this within the Economics pathway where residential eligibility waivers are allowed for a maximum of 35% of offers made meaning that some EU resident and international students may be able to obtain full awards.

No enhanced stipends will be available from 2019 onward.

### **LENGTH OF AWARD**

Students applying for a +3 studentship must meet the minimum ESRC training requirements. If a student does not meet these requirements but the pathway still wishes to consider him/her they may choose to appoint on a 1+3 basis. As supervisor you should be familiar with ESRC training requirements but please discuss with your pathway representative so that you can best advise your student. Please see [here](#) for the guidance which students receive in relation to this. In addition, SGSSS conduct an audit of the training requirements of all applications nominated by pathways – this means that we will sometimes give a fractional award (such as a 3.3 or a 3.5) where we identify that applicants have some but not all of the required methods training. This will extend the award by a few months more than a +3 but will mean that the student doesn't need to do an additional Masters degree.

### **CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL SUPERVISION**

The SGSSS-DTP wishes to encourage pathways, supervisors and applicants to consider supervisory arrangements across the 16 institutions of the SGSSS, if appropriate to the particular student project and with the support of both proposed supervisors. This will usually be within pathways but across institutions but we do not wish to rule out cross-pathway supervision if this is clearly in the interests of the student project. We therefore ask Pathway Representatives 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 this needs to be clearly stated within the supervisory statement. Where there are two institutions involved in the proposed supervisory team then the statement of support must be jointly written by both supervisors and refer to the research and training environment within each institution.

Students eligible for a 1+3 award, wishing to study in institutions without an ESRC accredited Masters program, may choose to complete their Masters in another accredited institution

(within SGSSS-DTP) before completing their PhD program at their chosen university. If this is the case then the applicant must upload a letter of support from the Deans' representative at the institution where the Masters will be undertaken using the [template](#) provided. Supervisors and students should work with their pathway representative to facilitate this.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY PROPOSALS

The ESRC welcomes interdisciplinary studentships since many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature, both within the social sciences, and between the social sciences and other areas of research. For that reason the application form asks whether the proposed research is deemed interdisciplinary. To meet the criteria for this label (please see guidance [here](#)), the proposed research should include substantive interaction between relevant disciplines and the studentship should provide training that is not constrained to one discipline and supervision should straddle the different approaches. Please discuss this with your student and pathway representative where relevant and, if appropriate, ensure that your student indicates their proposal's potential applicability to be considered as interdisciplinary research on the application form. When they do so they will be required to specify which other research council Doctoral Training Partnership their proposed work aligns with and, within which, training might be sought. You should read closely the ESRC guidance on requirements for interdisciplinary awards.

### STUDENT PROCESS

The application process for students is as follows:

- a. **Registration** on GradHub (<https://gradhub.sgsss.ac.uk>)
- b. **Application Stage 1** – applicants must upload a completed application form, existing transcripts where available, CV and **contact details for one academic referee** (this reference should be from an academic unless the applicant has been out of academia for more than 5 years). The referee will be contacted automatically via GradHub for a reference.

**n.b.** the reference at this stage **cannot** be from the proposed supervisor

The referee will be asked to return the reference directly to the institution's HEI Admin Lead (contact details will be provided to the referee).

It is vital that the contact details are uploaded in good time for the referee to be contacted and reference to be submitted before the deadline.

- c. **Application Stage 2 - shortlisted candidates only** will be invited to add a **supervisor's statement and additional referee contact details** before their application is progressed to the next stage. Shortlisted candidates will have the opportunity to revise their application up until the Stage 2 deadline. Students must ensure that contact details are provided as soon as possible to allow the reference for the 12 noon deadline

**n.b.** the reference at this stage **may** be from the proposed supervisor

The referee will be asked to return the reference directly to the institution's HEI Admin Lead (contact details will be provided to the referee).

It is vital that the contact details are uploaded in good time for the referee to be contacted and reference to be submitted before the deadline.

### **APPLICATION KEY DATES**

- **November to 11 January, application period:** applications may be submitted at any point from the competition opening until Friday, 11 January 2019
- **Friday, 11 January 2019, 12 noon:** deadline for **Application Stage 1**.
- **Thursday, 7 February 2019, 12 noon:** deadline for **Application Stage 2** (*shortlisted candidates only*).

**The SGSSS cannot consider students who have not registered and completed Application Stage 1 by 12 noon, Friday, 11 January 2019.**

**Please note that your own institution may require documentation earlier than the SGSSS deadlines as part of their own selection process.**

### **PROCESS OF REVIEW BEYOND APPLICATION**

After the 7th February 2019 deadline, Universities and the SGSSS will work together to select the best students who have applied to study within each pathway.

There are several rigorous review stages during which further shortlisting is undertaken before final awards are made. These are as follows:

Pathway Review period – 7 February to 25 February 2019

Hub Review period – 25 February to 28 March 2019

Global Review period – 28 March to 24 April 2019

Unsuccessful candidates will be informed if they have not progressed to the next stage at the end of each period through GradHub.

## SGSSS-DTP Open Competition Award Marking Framework (2019)

### Assessment for +3 Awards

#### SGSSS -DTP Open Competition Award Marking Framework (2019)

Assessment for +3 Awards (note: pathways must be convinced that the candidate has met the training requirements for their pathway and are expected to go back to candidates that have applied for +3 and have not acquired at least 40 credits in the required core methods )

	Candidate Record (OUT OF 10 ) (Please note that the descriptors can be used with discretion where there is a good case to do so)	Research Proposal (OUT OF 10) (Please note that the descriptors can be used with discretion where there is a good case to do so)	Supervision & Training (OUT OF 5)
<b>Marking Criteria</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Candidate can demonstrate:</b></p> <p>The equivalent of a first class degree AND/OR an already achieved distinction at Masters level OR strong and relevant professional experience (All of the above must meet the ESRC training requirements), AND an excellent degree of preparedness for PhD study</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plus</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Candidate can demonstrate:</b></p> <p>An excellent proposal scoring well in terms of both cogency and originality. All components – overview, context, methodology, and impact – will be well thought out and clearly expressed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plus</b></p>	
<b>10</b>	Two exceptional references in which student is identified, for example, as amongst the very best ever encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal is exceptionally good in all of its components  and  fulfils criteria 7-9 below	
<b>9</b>	As (8), but with one clearly exceptional reference in which student is identified, for example, as amongst best ever encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal is highly original and innovative, at the cutting edge of developments substantively and methodologically  and  fulfils criteria 7 and 8 below	

8	Two very strong references in which student is, for example, singled out as amongst the best of a peer group encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal contains clear awareness of the potential impact of the research  and  fulfils criterion 7 below	
7	Two strong references in which student potential is communicated with clear examples	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 display an awareness of the research for economic and societal relevance.	
	Candidate can demonstrate:  The equivalent of a 2:1 degree AND/OR an already achieved 60+ average at Masters level OR relevant professional experience (All of the above must meet the ESRC training requirements), AND a good/very good degree of preparedness for PhD study  Plus	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	
6	Both references offer glimpses of strong potential but with little substance and few examples.	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.	
5	Two minimally satisfactory references which make it clear student is capable of conducting research but little more.	A promising proposal that suffers from several weaknesses. The methodology is appropriate but ill-expressed. The proposal is only weakly grounded in relevant literature.	Supervision arrangements represent a near-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.  The supervision combination meets directly the student's training needs. The destination HEI offers high-quality specialist training. The research fits well with the wider department/school/faculty.

4	A mixture of weak and satisfactory references which leave questions to student's suitability to conduct research.	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.	Supervision arrangements represent a very good fit with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The lead supervisor is an experienced supervisor with a strong reputation for research in this field, and the combination of supervisors offers the student good training in the field. There is provision of advanced and specialist training and a broadly supportive research environment at the destination HEI.
3	Two weak references in which student potential is not communicated.	A proposal with significant weaknesses in multiple components, little appreciation of possible methodologies, and/or awareness of relevant literature.	Supervision arrangements represent a good fit with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The lead supervisor will be an expert in the field and the combination of supervisors will offer good support to the student. The HEI offers good general support and advanced training for the student.
2	The equivalent of EITHER a 2:2 degree AND an already achieved pass at Masters level (average mark of 50) which does not necessarily meet the ESRC training requirements AND clear evidence of additional experience or training that would bring the candidate up to the required level DTP would be unlikely to consider applicants with academic scores below these levels.	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.	Supervision arrangements are appropriate and the supervisor has experience in the area of the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. . The supervisory team offers good general support and the HEI offers some advanced training for the student.
1	The equivalent of EITHER a 2:2 degree AND an already achieved pass at Masters level (average mark of 50) which does not necessarily meet the ESRC training requirements AND clear evidence of additional experience or training that would bring the candidate up to the required level DTP would be unlikely to consider applicants with academic scores below these levels.	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.	Supervision arrangements and support offered by the HEI meet the threshold for ESRC recognised training on this pathway. Note: supervision arrangements below this threshold do not meet the ESRC training requirements and students should not be offered DTP funding on this basis.

## SGSSS-DTP Open Competition Award Marking Framework (2019) Assessment for 1+3 Awards

### SGSSS -DTP Open Competition Award Marking Framework (2019) Assessment for 1+3 Awards

	Candidate Record (OUT OF 10 ) (Please note that the descriptors can be used with discretion where there is a good case to do so)	Research Proposal (OUT OF 10) (Please note that the descriptors can be used with discretion where there is a good case to do so)	Supervision & Training (OUT OF 5)
<b>Marking Criteria</b>	<p><b>Candidate can demonstrate:</b></p> <p>The achievement or expectation of a first class degree or equivalent AND/OR a Master's degree which does not meet the ESRC training requirements</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plus</b></p>	<p><b>Candidate can demonstrate:</b></p> <p>An excellent proposal scoring well in terms of both cogency and originality. All components – overview, context, methodology, and impact – will be well thought out and clearly expressed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plus</b></p>	
<b>10</b>	Two exceptional references in which student is identified, for example, as amongst the very best ever encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal is exceptionally good in all of its components  and  fulfils criteria 7-9 below	
<b>9</b>	As (8), but with one clearly exceptional reference in which student is identified, for example, as amongst best ever encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal is highly original and innovative, at the cutting edge of developments substantively and methodologically  and  fulfils criteria 7 and 8 below	
<b>8</b>	Two very strong references in which student is, for example, singled out as amongst the best of a peer group encountered in terms of abilities and potential	Proposal contains clear awareness of the potential impact of the research  and  fulfils criterion 7 below	
<b>7</b>	Two strong references in which student potential is communicated with clear examples.	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 display an awareness of the research for economic and societal relevance.	
	<p>Candidate can demonstrate:</p> <p>The equivalent of a 2:1 degree AND/OR an already achieved Masters which does not meet the ESRC training requirements</p> <p>Plus</p>	<p>Candidate can demonstrate:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Plus</p>	
6	Both references offer glimpses of strong potential but with little substance and few examples.	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.	
5	Two minimally satisfactory references which make it clear student is capable of conducting research but little more.	A promising proposal that suffers from several weaknesses. The methodology is appropriate but ill-expressed. The proposal is only weakly grounded in relevant literature.	Supervision arrangements represent a near-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. The supervision combination meets directly the student's training needs. The destination HEI offers high-quality specialist training. The research fits well with the wider department/school/faculty.
4	A mixture of weak and satisfactory references which leave questions to student's suitability to conduct research.	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.	Supervision arrangements represent a very good fit with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The lead supervisor is an experienced supervisor with a strong reputation for research in this field, and the combination of supervisors offers the student good training in the field. There is provision of advanced and specialist training and a broadly supportive research environment at the destination HEI.
3	Two weak references in which student potential is not communicated.	A proposal with significant weaknesses in multiple components, little appreciation of possible methodologies, and/or awareness of relevant literature.	Supervision arrangements represent a good fit with the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. The lead supervisor will be an expert in the field and the combination of supervisors will offer good support to the student. The HEI offers good general support and advanced training for the student.

2	<p>The equivalent of EITHER a 2:2 degree AND an already achieved pass at Masters level (average mark of 50) which does not necessarily meet the ESRC training requirements AND clear evidence of additional experience or training that would bring the candidate up to the required level. DTP would be unlikely to consider applicants with academic scores below these levels.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Supervision arrangements are appropriate and the supervisor has experience in the area of the proposed research in relation to methods, substantive topic area and academic/policy networks. . The supervisory team offers good general support and the HEI offers some advanced training for the student.</p>
1	<p>The equivalent of EITHER a 2:2 degree AND an already achieved pass at Masters level (average mark of 50) which does not necessarily meet the ESRC training requirements AND clear evidence of additional experience or training that would bring the candidate up to the required level. DTP would be unlikely to consider applicants with academic scores below these levels.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Supervision arrangements and support offered by the HEI meet the threshold for ESRC recognised training on this pathway. Note: supervision arrangements below this threshold do not meet the ESRC training requirements and students should not be offered DTP funding on this basis.</p>

Date	SGSSS Student-led Open Competition stages
<b>STAGE ONE</b>	
October	Announcement of Competition - open for entries from November
November	Applicants can access GradHub to register, upload Equal Opportunities Data and complete application stage 1
November to Friday, 11 January	Each institution's HEI Admin Lead will decline any applications that do not meet their institutional criteria - the candidate will be informed through GradHub
Friday, 11 January at 12 noon	Deadline for Stage 1 applications on GradHub
11 January till 25 January	HEI Admins will verify applicants on GradHub and decline any outstanding eligible students. Institutions review and nominate up to 4 candidates per pathway.
Friday, 25 January	Deadline for institutions to nominate candidates to go forward to the next stage
Monday, 28 January	Email to approved applicants reminding them of final closing date for uploading final applications along with supervisor statement
Thursday, 7 February	Applicants to upload final versions of their applications along with their supervisor statement by this date – 12 noon
<b>STAGE TWO</b>	
Thursday 7 February – Monday 25 February	Pathway Review stage Unsuccessful applicants at this stage will be notified through GradHub <b>after</b> 25 February.
<b>STAGE THREE</b>	
Monday 25 February – 28 March	Hub review stage Unsuccessful applicants at this stage will be notified through GradHub <b>after</b> 28 March.
<b>STAGE FOUR</b>	
28 March – 24 April	Global Panel review stage
Wednesday 24 April	Global panel meets to make final recommendations on rankings and awards
1 May	SGSSS-DTP will communicate with all candidates on the outcome of the competitions by Wed 1 May