Guidance for Supervisors regarding the Student Led Open Competition 2020

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 2020.

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 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 advice 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**

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 referees will be contacted automatically via GradHub for a reference and 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 applicants contact their referee as soon as possible. Please advise any applicant that you are supporting that the referee will be expected to provide a reference as soon as requested. Please bear in mind that the referee will only get the notification from the system when the applicant clicks submit which, if they elect to do very close to the final application submission deadline on 10th January (stage 1) or 12 February (stage 2) it will result in a very
tight turn around for the referee and this may jeopardise their application. Guidance and templates for referees can be found at https://www.sgss.ac.uk/studentships/open-competition/

APPLICATION KEY DATES

- **1 November to 10 January, application period:** applications may be submitted at any point from the competition opening until Friday, 10 January 2020
- **Friday, 10 January 2020, 12 noon:** deadline for Application Stage 1.
- **Wednesday, 12 February 2020, 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, 10 January 2020.

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

PROCESS OF REVIEW BEYOND APPLICATION

After the 12th February 2020 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 – 17 February to 2 March 2020
Hub Review period – 4 March to 3 April 2020
Global Review period – 6 April to 5 May 2020

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 (2020) Assessment for +3 Awards

SGSSS-DTP Open Competition Award Marking Framework (2020) Assessment for 1+3 Awards

Competition Timeline for Students and Supervisors