SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SGSSS)

STUDENT-LED OPEN COMPETITION 2021/22

GUIDANCE FOR PATHWAY REPS & CONVENORS

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1. Student-led Open Competition Overview

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

1.1 Key Competition Changes for 2021/22

1. Responding to feedback from institutions and pathways, we have moved the Stage 1 application deadline forward to 9th December 2021.

2. Responding to feedback from pathways, we have removed the requirement for nominated applications at the Pathway Review Stage to have unique scores. Unique rankings will still be required (see section 3 for details).

3. We have introduced a major amendment to our marking framework, introducing a ‘whole person approach’ to reviewing applications. As such, the Candidate Record score worth 10 out of 25 marks has been replaced by the Candidate Capabilities score, still worth 10 out of 25, however this is now split in two. 5 points are for academic qualifications obtained/expected and 5 points are for preparedness to complete a PhD/flourish with available funding/contribute to a positive PhD community.

4. Unlike in previous years where we had two Marking Frameworks, we will now use one Marking Framework for the assessment of all applications, i.e. +3 and 1+3 applications.

5. All applications, and the reviewing of applications, will now take place via our new online application system, SGSSS Apply. This system will replace GradHub (to submit applications) and the use of SharePoint (to review applications).

1.2 Competition Review Stages

1. HEI Review Stage (1 October 2021 to 15 February 2022)

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). All applications will be disseminated to the relevant Pathway Reps/Convenors via the new online application review system, SGSSS Apply. HEI Admin Leads will have an overview of all applications being submitted however they will not allocate applications for review as this is done automatically by SGSSS Apply. Each institution (relevant Pathway Rep/Convenor) can nominate four applications per accredited Pathway1 within their institution. Of the four applications, a maximum of two may be international applicants. Scores and rankings are not required to be submitted to SGSSS at this stage, simply 4 nominated applications per pathway. Please note, SGSSS does not play a role in the internal review processes conducted by institutions. It will be assumed that the Marking Framework (see section 4) is utilised to inform nominations and that all nomination processes will include the relevant Pathway Rep/Convenor. This is particularly important as we test out the new Whole Person Approach to assessment.

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.

Where possible references should include an academic familiar with the student’s work (can be, but does

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1 See here for details of our Pathways.
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:

1. **1 October 2021**
   Hard launch of Competition

2. **9 December 2021 at 5pm**
   Deadline for Stage 1 applications

3. **24 January 2021 at 5pm**
   Deadline for institutions to nominate candidates for Pathway Review, advised by Pathway Reps/Convenors via SGSSS Apply

4. **31 January to 9 February at 5pm**
   Stage 2 application window and deadline

2. **Pathway Review Stage (16 February to 10 March 2022)**

This stage is when Pathways (made up of the relevant Pathway Reps) shortlist Stage 2 applications. Each Pathway can nominate six applications per pathway (fewer only if the quality threshold is not met). Of the six applications, a maximum of two may be international applicants.²

All applications for review will be shared via SGSSS Apply on 16 February 2022. SGSSS Apply access will be granted for all Pathway Reps/Convenors in advance of this date.

Each Pathway Convenor coordinates their Pathway’s review process (see section 3). 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 nomination processes are consistent and fair across Pathways - not to review applications themselves).

Scores and feedback are required at this stage. This information should be advised via SGSSS Apply. Each Pathway Convenor will be responsible for submitting the final nominations for their Pathway.

The deadline for Pathway Convenors to return nominated applications for their Pathway is 5pm on 4 March 2022.

Import dates to know for the Pathway Review Stage:

1. **16 February to 4 March 2022**
   Pathway Reps & Convenors are invited to review the relevant applications before meeting (within their Pathways) to determine which six applications to nominate for the Hub Review Stage

2. **4 March 2022 at 5pm**
   Deadline for all Pathway Convenors to submit the outcome of their Pathway’s review (6 nominated candidates) via SGSSS Apply

² The Economics pathway can nominate three international applicants, rather than two, given the higher international cap of 50% as introduced by ESRC in 2021.
3. Hub Review Stage (11 March to 6 April 2022)

The Hub Review stage is when Hub Leads review ALL applications shortlisted at the Pathway Review Stage, in their respective Hub 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, provided via SGSSS Apply.

Import dates to know for the Hub Review Stage:

- **11 March 2022**
  Applications for review shared with Pathway Convenors and Hub Leads via SGSSS Apply

- **23 March 2022 at 5pm**
  Deadline for Pathway Convenors & Hub Leads to upload, via SGSSS Apply, the outcome of their Hub review (scores and feedback required for all applications)

- **30 March to 31 March 2022**
  Three Hub Panel meetings to take place; one for each Hub to nominate 15 applications (45 in total) for the Global Review Stage

4. Global Panel Review Stage (7 April to 13 May 2022)

This stage is when a final review panel consisting of three Deans and members of the SGSSS Directorate meet to make the final award decisions. In 2021/22, approx. 34 applications, of the nominated 45 applications, will be funded. Approximately 10 of the 34 awards can be made to international students. On 13 May, the outcome of the Competition will be announced to applicants.

Import dates to know for the Global Review Stage:

- **5 May 2022**
  Global Panel meet to make final recommendations on rankings and awards

- **13 May 2022**
  SGSSS communicate outcome of the Competition with candidates (successful and unsuccessful)

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

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3 See [here](#) for details of our Hubs.
2. Additional Important Information

2.1 Student Eligibility

As per guidance published by UKRI in 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.

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 by an applicant or their supervisor seeking advice on the correct award length to apply for, please advise 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 3.25 or a 3.5, is required where we identify an applicant who has some, but not all, of the core methods training required by ESRC. In some rare cases we may decide an applicant who holds a Master’s degree that is too far removed from the social sciences and/or the subject area of the research proposal, is required to undertake another Master’s programme to ensure the ESRC training requirements are met (as this is a condition of funding).

If a first year student (or part-time equivalent) is self-funding their PhD, or they are in receipt of financial support not in excess of an ESRC award⁶, they can apply for ESRC funding. If successful, the study already undertaken will not be considered and the studentship will start over. Dependent on the applicant’s training requirements, SGSSS may even add additional time (see above).

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

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⁴ Three years and three months.
⁵ Three years and six months.
⁶ See page 10 and 11 of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide for details on financial support not in excess of an ESRC award, and/or if you have undertaken one year (or less) of a PhD.
2.3 Masters Programmes

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

2.4 Supervision

Applicants must have support from a first supervisor to be eligible to apply to this competition. Students must be the lead authors of submitted proposals with guidance provided by the proposed supervisory team. Proposals should not be submitted that have been led or written by a supervisor.

SGSSS-DTP wishes to encourage pathways, supervisors and applicants to consider supervisory arrangements across the 16 institutions that form the SGSSS. 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. 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 Collaborative Partner Proposals

Should a student wish to include a collaborative partner within their project, i.e. their research would be supported by a non-academic partner in the public, private or third sector, we have asked that they include this detail within the research proposal section of their application form. We ask that, in addition to the above, they also detail if the collaborative partner will be making a financial or in-kind contribution towards the studentship as per the various SGSSS funding arrangements. Please note, a collaborative partner can be based abroad, however they cannot be an academic organisation.

2.7 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 2022/23 onwards are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Type</th>
<th>2022/23</th>
<th>2023/24</th>
<th>2024/25</th>
<th>2025/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stipend*</td>
<td>£15,890</td>
<td>£16,176</td>
<td>£16,467</td>
<td>£16,767</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition Fees*</td>
<td>£4,581</td>
<td>£4,663</td>
<td>£4,747</td>
<td>£4,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTSG</td>
<td>£750</td>
<td>£750</td>
<td>£750</td>
<td>£750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Fieldwork (if applicable)</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>£450</td>
<td>£450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These are approximations based on annual increases of 1.8%.

Please Note: From 2019/20, each SGSSS studentship has and will be co-funded by the student’s home institution (SGSSS-DTP institutions) for a minimum of one-third (33.0%). This co-funding agreement is already in place and no action is required by students to facilitate this.

**International Students**

The funding arrangements for international students are the same as that of home students, i.e. they are eligible for the full ESRC studentship package and are not required to pay any additional international tuition fees (top up fees). This is because all of our partner institutions have agreed to waive the difference between home and international tuition fees.

Regarding the University of Stirling, whilst fee waivers will be offered, this will be up to an internal institutional cap of 30%. Applicants will therefore be advised to seek confirmation of the funding position from the University of Stirling directly.

**Cross-Institutional Supervision**

As detailed in section 2.4 above, SGSSS 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. For these studentships, 33.0% of fees income will go to the second institution as part of the SGSSS reconciliation process, with the remaining 67.0% going to the host institution.

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7 Abertay University, University of Highlands & Islands, Robert Gordon University, University of the West of Scotland.
3. Pathway Review Stage Processes

When pathways review applicants for nomination during the Pathway Review Stage, at least one of the following three review processes must be followed:

1. Pathway Reps (including the Pathway Convenor) review candidates from other institutions only – for example in the Politics and International Relations Pathway, St Andrews and Glasgow colleagues review Edinburgh candidates, St Andrews and Edinburgh colleagues review 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 review 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 submits the final nominations to SGSSS via SGSSS Apply.

2. An “external academic” reviews applications – the Pathway secures an external academic who will review the applications received. Pathways using this approach must have a Pathway Review Meeting to discuss and confirm the external feedback and scores (online is fine), organised by the Pathway Convenor. The Pathway Convenor is responsible for submitting the final nominations to SGSSS via SGSSS Apply, 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), submitting the final nominations to SGSSS via SGSSS Apply.

Please Note:

1. Pathway Reps (including Pathway Convenors) are not permitted to review 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 review applications at this stage.
3. Pathways with fewer than three institutions should use option 2.
4. The final Pathway Review Meetings should be scheduled well in advance of the Pathway Review Stage window (16 February to 4 March 2022) to ensure availability of all Pathway Reps, Convenors and Hub Leads.
5. Pathway Convenors organise the Pathway Review Meeting for their Pathway. Meetings should consider and moderate existing scores/ranks, reaching a consensus on final scores and ranks and noting key decisions on changes to initial scores.
6. Scores given to applications should correspond to the Marking Framework and in a few cases this may lead to tied scores; all applications should, however, be given unique ranks. 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 Marking Framework (see section 4 below) provided must be used when reviewing applications. Scores are out of 25: 10 for Candidate Capabilities (split into two scores of 5); 10 for Research Proposal; 5 for Supervision & Training.
8. Each application should contain two references. Both can be written by a member of the student’s
supervisory team (not a requirement) 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.\(^8\) 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 nominations via SGSSS Apply, by the deadline of 4 March 2022 at 5pm.

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. Please return this to SGSSS via email (team@sgsss.ac.uk) by 5pm on 4 March 2022.

12. On 10 March 2022, 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.

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\(^8\) The Economics pathway can nominate three international applicants, rather than two, given the higher international cap of 50% as introduced by ESRC in 2021.
4. Marking Framework (new for 2021/22)

To view the Student-led Open Competition Marking Framework 2021/22, please click here. Please note, this single Marking Framework replaces the two Marking Frameworks from prior years (1+3 and +3).