



SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SGSSS) STUDENT-LED OPEN COMPETITION 2022/23 GUIDANCE FOR PATHWAY REPS & CONVENORS

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To view a summary document (2 pages) of the relevant competition timeline dates and tasks for Pathway Reps and Convenors, please click [here](#).

For the full Student-led Open Competition timeline (internal), please click [here](#).

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 from 2022/23

1. Following the implementation of *SGSSS Apply* in 2021/22, the 'application form', which was a Microsoft Word upload, will be replaced with an online application form. This is where the applicant details their project proposal.
2. Responding to feedback from pathways following the implementation of the 'whole person approach', applications will now be anonymised for reviewers, i.e., the applicant will upload redacted supporting documents (transcripts, certificates, CV etc.), and the application form and references will no longer contain the applicant's name or other identifiable information.
3. We have built into the competition timeline new windows of time and deadlines to help better administer the Pathway Review Stage of the competition (for SGSSS and Pathway Convenors). These are:
 - A window of time for Pathway Convenors to assign applications to their Pathway Reps (14 February to 15 February).
 - A deadline for Pathway Reps and Convenors to complete their reviews prior to the start of the Pathway Review Meetings (16 February to 28 February).
 - A window of time for SGSSS to produce reports for each pathway to use during their Pathway Review Meetings (1 March to 5 March).
 - A window of time for pathways to hold their Pathway Review Meetings (6 March to 10 March).
4. When a pathway makes their nominations (actioned by the Pathway Convenor via *SGSSS Apply* on behalf of the pathway after the Pathway Review Meeting), this will now be in the form of rankings rather than scores, i.e., the nominated applications will go through to the Hub Review Stage ranked from 1 to 6 (or below depending on the number of applications a pathway wishes to nominate), rather than with a score out of 25.
5. External Reviewers (approx. three per Hub) will now review applications (scores and comments) for each Hub during the Hub Review Stage. In prior years, the reviews at this stage were completed by the relevant Pathway Convenors and Hub Lead. External Reviewers will be academics based within the UK but outside of Scotland and will be selected for their capacity to review across pathways in the Hub they are assigned. While Hub Leads will not review applications, they will be required to have read each application within their Hub to help support decision making during the Hub Review Stage.

1.2 Key Competition Changes from 2021/22 (reminder)

1. Responding to feedback from institutions and pathways, we have moved the Stage 1 application deadline forward to early December (rather than early January).
2. We 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 was 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, and contribute to a positive PhD community.
3. The two Marking Frameworks (one for +3 applications and another for 1+3 applications) was replaced with one single Marking Framework for the assessment of all applications, i.e., both +3 and 1+3 applications.
4. All applications, and the reviewing of applications, now takes place via our online application system, [SGSSS Apply](#). This system replaced GradHub (to submit applications) and the use of SharePoint (to review applications).

1.3 Competition Review Stages

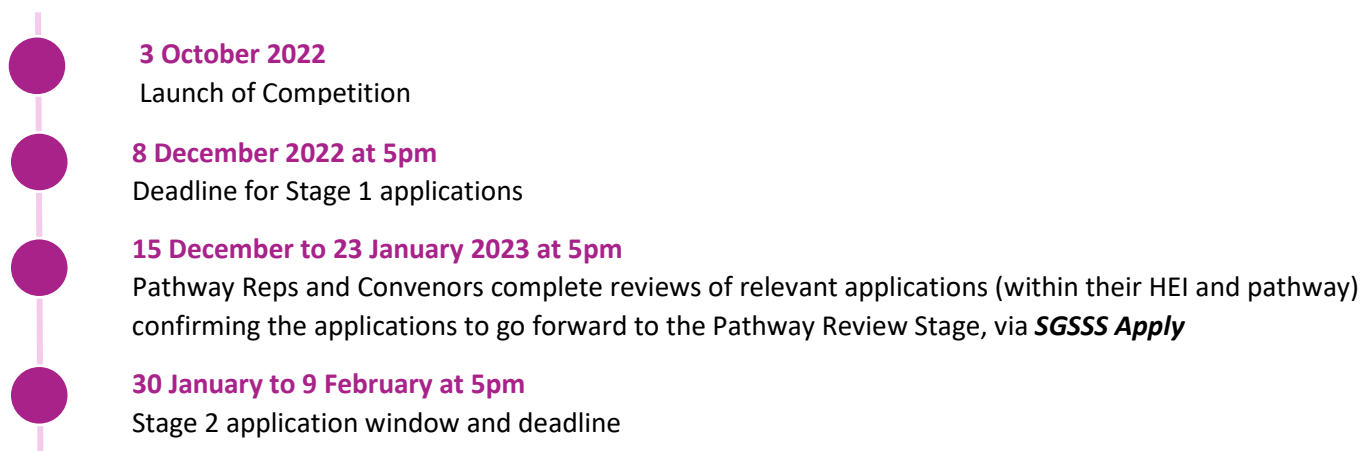
1. HEI Review Stage (3 October 2022 to 13 February 2023)

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 eligible 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 Studentship 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 given the relatively new ‘whole person approach’ to assessment (introduced during the 2021/22 Open Competition).

Applicants are required to complete and/or submit a standard set of application materials as follows:

1. Online 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 not have to be, a member of the proposed supervisory team). Both references can be from academics but may include a work reference, especially if the student has been out of academia for more than 5 years.
6. Details of any overseas fieldwork the student proposes to undertake during their research.
7. Details of any difficult language training the student proposes to undertake during their research.
8. Details of the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, if applicable.
9. Details of the collaborative partner, including a *Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement*, if applicable.

Import dates to know for the HEI Review Stage:



2. Pathway Review Stage (14 February to 17 March 2023)

¹ See [here](#) for details of our Pathways.

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

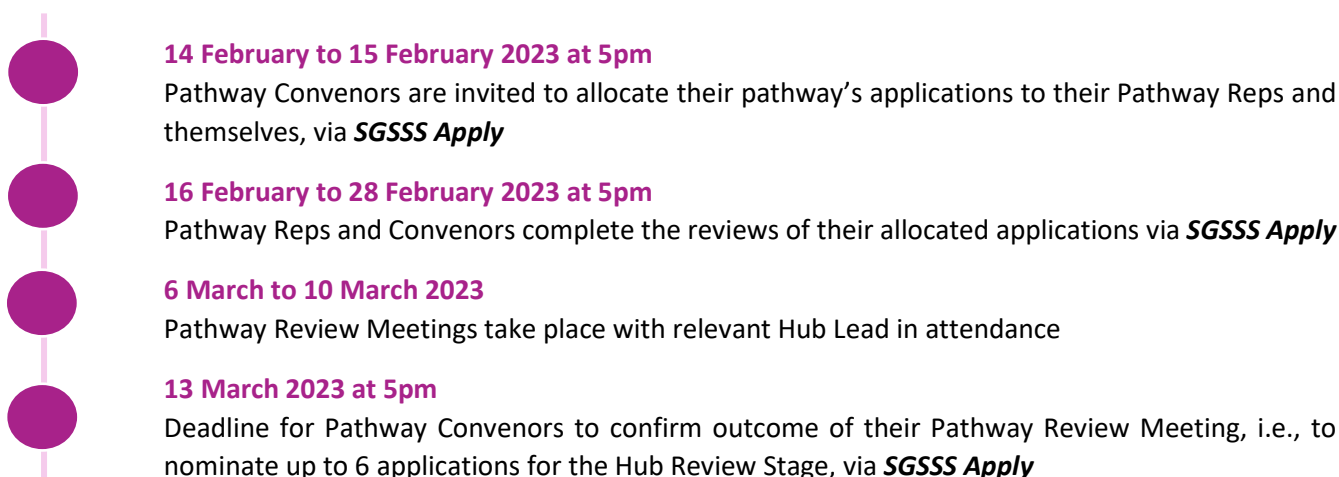
All applications for review will be shared via *SGSSS Apply* on 16 February 2022. *SGSSS Apply* access will be granted for all Pathway Reps/Convenors in advance of this date.

Each Pathway Convenor coordinates their Pathway's review process (see section 3 for options and details). Please note, from 2022, SGSSS will help with the organising of Pathway Review Meetings, i.e., on 1 November 2022 SGSSS will send Doodle Polls to each pathway to help arrange these meetings³. Hub Leads should attend all relevant Pathway Review Meetings to ensure that application nomination processes are consistent and fair across Pathways - not to review applications themselves.

Scores and comments are required by Pathway Reps and Convenors when initially reviewing applications (this is done via *SGSSS Apply*). However, when pathways decide on which applications to nominate for the Hub Review Stage, only ranks (1 to 6, or below if applicable) and comments are required. Each Pathway Convenor will be responsible for submitting the final nominations for their pathway via *SGSSS Apply*.

The deadline for Pathway Convenors to return nominated applications for their Pathway is 5pm on 13 March 2023.

Import dates to know for the Pathway Review Stage:



3. Hub Review Stage (20 March to 12 April 2023)

The Hub Review stage is when External Reviewers (Social Science academics from within the UK but outwith Scotland) review applications shortlisted at the Pathway Review Stage. Each Hub⁴ will be allocated up to three External Reviewers who will be selected for their capacity to review across pathways in the Hub they are assigned. While Hub Leads will not review applications, they will be required to have read each application within their Hub to help support decision making during the Hub Review Stage panels. Reviews will be conducted independently before a Hub Panel Meeting (one for each Hub consisting of Mhairi Mackenzie, Hub Lead(s) and member(s) of the SGSSS Deans Group Network). At each Hub Panel Meeting, the top 15 applications from across all five Pathways are nominated for the final Global Review Stage (45 in total from

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 The date used will be when all, or most, of the Pathway Reps can attend, as well as the Pathway Convenor and relevant Hub Lead.

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

the three Hubs). Of the 15 applications shortlisted per Hub, up to five may be international applicants. Scores and comments are required at this stage, provided by External Reviewers via *SGSSS Apply*.

4. Global Review Stage (12 April to 12 May 2023)

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 2022/23, approx. 30 applications, of the nominated 45 applications, will be funded. Approximately 9 of the 30 awards can be made to international students. On 12 May 2023, the outcome of the Competition will be announced to applicants.

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. In addition, some highly ranked international students may not be able to receive an award due to the 30% cap.

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 3.25⁵ or a 3.5⁶, 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 award⁷, they can apply for ESRC funding. If successful, SGSSS will conduct an audit of the applicant’s training requirements to determine if the student requires 2 or 3 years of funding.

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

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, 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 [SGSSS pathway](#), are required to undertake their Master's in another eligible institution (within the SGSSS-DTP) before transferring to their 'home' institution for the PhD programme. If this applies to an applicant they 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, including those previously submitted through a SGSSS supervisor-led competition.

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.

Please note, at least one of your supervisory team must have supervised a minimum of two PhD students to completion.

2.5 Interdisciplinary Proposals (optional)

The ESRC welcomes interdisciplinary studentships since many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature. They are particularly interested in encouraging research that crosses over from the social sciences to other fields of science and to the arts and humanities. For that reason, we ask applicants to indicate whether their proposed research is deemed interdisciplinary.

To meet the criteria for this label, the proposed research should include substantive interaction between disciplinary fields and incorporate training that is not constrained to one disciplinary approach, i.e., crosses the boundaries of social sciences to other sciences, arts and humanities. 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 (optional)

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](#). If so, the student must upload a *Collaborative Partner Letter of Agreement*, which should cover the below:

- How the research project aligns to the priorities of the partner organisation and of the nature of the collaboration already underway (for example, the role of the partner in identifying the research need and in developing the application).
- How the collaborative partner will support your supervision/development and your project.
- The agreed co-funding arrangement.
- Any agreed additional funding, i.e., this may include details of how the travel, subsistence and accommodation costs associated with your visits to the non-academic organisation will be covered.
- Any arrangements for special materials and facilities which will be made available to you.
- Any appropriate arrangements relating to Intellectual Property Rights.
- The details of any previous involvement in social science research by the collaborative partner. This should include any collaboration that has previously taken place, e.g., any former studentships they have co-funded.

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 2023/24 onwards are:

| Funding Type | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Stipend ⁸ | £18,180 | £18,708 | £19,250 | £19,808 |
| Tuition Fees ⁹ | £4,693 | £4,791 | £4,892 | £4,994 |
| RTSG | £750 | £750 | £750 | £750 |
| Overseas Fieldwork (if applicable) | £450 | £450 | £450 | £450 |

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.

⁸ All stipend figures are approximations based on a 2.9% increase year on year using the 2022/23 stipend rate of £17,668 as the starting position.

⁹ All tuition fees figures are approximations based on a 2.1% increase year on year using the 2022/23 tuition fees rate of £4,596 as the starting position.

Regarding the University of Stirling, whilst fee waivers will be offered, this will be up to an internal institutional cap of 30%. Applicants have therefore been 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 HEIs¹⁰ 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.

2.8 Stuart Hall Foundation (optional)

New from 2022/23, Scotland's two national graduate schools (SGSSS and SGSAH¹¹) are delighted to be working with the [Stuart Hall Foundation](#) to offer up to six Stuart Hall Fellowships starting in October 2023.

Both SGSAH and SGSSS are committed to the public function of education and to addressing the barriers which exist to accessing higher education. The Fellowships, inspired by the life and work of Professor Stuart Hall and his research legacy in the areas of race, ethnicity, cultural and structural inequalities, will be used to provide opportunities for students from non-traditional and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Applications for these Fellowships are sought from UK candidates from non-traditional or disadvantaged backgrounds who are under-represented at graduate level in the Arts and Humanities and the Social Sciences in Scotland, and with a preference for those whose planned research aligns broadly with one of Stuart Hall's many areas of interest: cultural studies, race, ethnicity and inequalities. Applicants can apply through SGSAH and SGSSS's DTP Open Studentship Competitions, with selected successful candidates invited to apply for a Stuart Hall Foundation Fellowship. Each Graduate School will award up to three Stuart Hall Foundation Fellowships, which will be attached to funded studentships (covering fees, stipend and a research training grant). The Fellowships can be held within disciplines across the social sciences, arts and humanities at selected Scottish HEIs which form part of the relevant Graduate School.

Recipients of these Fellowships will benefit from access to the [Stuart Hall Foundation Scholars and Fellows network programme](#), which includes regular events and opportunities to develop their career and research profile.

As per the [SGSSS Open Competition Guidance for Students](#), should an applicant like to be considered for the above opportunity, they have been asked to indicate this within the online application form via *SGSSS Apply*. Decisions on who will be awarded these fellowships will be made during a cross SGSSS/SGSAH Panel, following the conclusion of the SGSSS Global Review Stage.

¹⁰ Abertay University, University of Highlands & Islands, Robert Gordon University, University of the West of Scotland.

¹¹ Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities: <https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/>

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, however this is not a requirement. The Pathway Convenor should oversee the allocation of applications to Pathway Reps within their Pathway (including themselves). A final Pathway Review Meeting (online is fine) should then take place to determine the final nominated candidates. The Pathway Convenor submits the final nominations (ranks and comments) 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 (online is fine) to discuss and confirm the external feedback and scores, organised by the Pathway Convenor. The Pathway Convenor is responsible for submitting the final nominations (ranks and comments) 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 (online is fine) for all Pathway Reps to determine the final nominated candidates, submitting the final nominations (ranks and comments) to SGSSS via *SGSSS Apply*.

Please Note:

1. Pathways with fewer than three institutions should use option 2 listed above.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Scores are out of 25: 10 for Candidate Capabilities (split into two scores of 5); 10 for Research Proposal; 5 for Supervision & Training.
5. 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).
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 as when a pathway makes their nominations, only the ranks will be provided for the Hub Review Stage.
7. The Pathway Review Meetings should be scheduled in collaboration with SGSSS well in advance of the Pathway Review Meeting window (6 March to 10 March 2023). This is to ensure availability of all Pathway Reps, Convenors and Hub Leads. As such, SGSSS will issue Doodle Polls to all pathways on 1 November to ensure meetings are agreed as soon as possible.
8. 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.

9. 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.
10. 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.¹² Whilst quality remains key in selecting applications, this ceiling cannot be exceeded due to the 30% cap imposed by UKRI.
11. Scores and comments are required by Pathway Reps and Convenors when initially reviewing applications (this is done via *SGSSS Apply*). However, when pathways decide on which applications to nominate for the Hub Review Stage, only ranks (1 to 6, or below if applicable) and comments are required. Each Pathway Convenor will be responsible for submitting the final nominations for their pathway via *SGSSS Apply*.
12. Pathway Convenors are to submit their Pathway's nominations (ranks and comments only, not scores) via *SGSSS Apply*, by the deadline of 13 March 2023 at 5pm.
13. On 17 March 2023, 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.

¹² 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. Studentship Marking Framework

To view the SGSSS Studentship Marking Framework, please click [here](#). Please note, since 2021/22, this single Marking Framework replaces the two Marking Frameworks from prior years (1+3 and +3).