

SGSSS SDS Collaborative Competition 2021/22

PhD Programme Topic Descriptions

This document outlines the four topics identified by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the 2021/22 competition call.

<p>1.</p>	<p>Proposed Title: Labour market outcomes and pathways for care experienced young people</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Care experienced young people face multiple barriers in transitioning from school and their outcomes tend to be far poorer than other groups of young people. We have some understanding of the experiences of care experienced young people at school and in further and higher education. However, a significant evidence gap exists in relation to our understanding of the skills requirements and labour market experiences of care experienced young people in Scotland. A PhD in this area would fill this gap in evidence with a particular focus on the Scottish skills system.</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>The aim of this PhD would be to gain an understanding of the labour market experiences of care experienced young people in Scotland. The specific objectives would be to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scottish context for care experienced young people within the international and UK literature. • The barriers care experienced young people face in entering and progressing in the labour market. • The sectors and industries care experienced young people go into and their related skills requirements. • The uptake and experience of work-based learning (WBL) routes among care experienced young people. • How transitions differ for care experienced young people by further education, higher education and work-based learning routes. • The intersectional impacts for care experienced young people in terms of race, disability, gender and poverty. <p>As a corporate parent, SDS would fully support the recruitment of a care experienced person for this studentship. We would encourage supervisors to include this in their application.</p> <p>Research Methods</p> <p>We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated it would require a mixed methods approach combining primary and secondary research.</p> <p>Benefits and outcomes for SDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fits with our commitment as a corporate parent. • This PhD would provide policy and practice insights on how to better support care experienced young people as they transition from education to the labour market with a focus on WBL routes.
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2. Proposed Title: The economic benefits of work-based learning and Foundation Apprenticeships

Background

Foundations Apprenticeships (FA) are an innovative model of work-based learning pathways that are still being developed and not yet well researched. A PhD would enhance understanding of their effectiveness. It would also help us understand the wider role of work based learning (WBL) in relation to economic recovery in a post- COVID-19 labour market.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this PhD would be to understand the relative impact of undertaking a FA on labour market outcomes. This PhD will:

- Contextualise the understanding of FAs with international literature on WBL and vocational training.
- Seek to understand the relationship between FA achievement and later employment outcomes, including earnings.
- Identify links between specific FA pathways/progression routes and labour market outcomes.
- Assess in which sectors and for which demographic groups FAs provide the best labour market outcomes.
- Look at how the mix of learning (WBL/FE/HE) has changed in recent decades and consider how this aligns with the needs of key sectors in economic recovery.
- Outline the role of WBL in supporting sustainable economic growth, with a particular focus on FAs.
- Establish if, how and why WBL/apprenticeships enhance economic recovery compared to FE and HE.
- Provide robust evidence on the economic impacts of undertaking an FA, crucially compared with a control group of individuals with similar school and post-school qualifications.

Research Methods

We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated that there will be strong quantitative element to this PhD making use of SDS internal datasets, the Labour Force Survey and the Annual Population Survey.

Benefits and outcomes for SDS

- It will provide an understanding of the relationship between FAs and labour market outcomes.
- Insight into relative benefits of WBL compared to FE and HE.
- It would fill the evidence gap in relation to role of WBL in supporting economic recovery and provide insight into the Scottish context.

3. Proposed Title: Poverty, social disadvantage and social mobility in Scotland’s skills landscape

Background

Poverty and social disadvantage are key challenges facing Scotland. Poverty has a significant negative impact on labour market and educational outcomes. Those living in the most deprived areas are less likely to progress onto higher education and are more likely to enter low skilled and low paid employment. In-work poverty is also a growing issue for many households. In addition, poverty interacts with other equality characteristics to produce the greatest inequalities.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this PhD would be to understand the relationship between poverty, social mobility and skills in Scotland. To understand:

- The Scottish context on poverty and skills in relation to international and UK literature.
- How social disadvantage and poverty affect the skills landscape in Scotland.
- The relationship between social mobility and skills and the role of skills development in contributing to social mobility.
- The barriers faced by those living in poverty in Scotland with regards to the skills system.
- How poverty interacts with other equality characteristics.
- The extent of in-work poverty in Scotland and what this means for skills development.
- The role of work-based learning in the skills landscape in relation to social disadvantage and poverty.

Research Methods

We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated it would require a mixed methods approach combining primary and secondary research. Potential datasets may include Understanding Society; Growing up in Scotland; Family Resources Survey.

We would like the applicant to consider how the studentship could include the views of key stakeholder groups in developing the research. This is in recognition that policy in relation to poverty requires a multi-agency approach. SDS would therefore welcome the involvement of a small project advisory group to shape the work of this studentship. The proposal should discuss how this might operate and how, and what, organisations might be included.

Benefits and outcomes for SDS

- A PhD would provide robust evidence to support SDS policy development around those living in poverty.
- Poverty and how it interacts with skills and other protected characteristics is a complex subject, and a PhD would allow robust and detailed analysis to be undertaken.
- Poverty is a key focus of our refreshed Equality Outcomes and this PhD would provide key evidence.

4. Proposed Title: Transformative skills and implications for skills development

Background

Future skills requirements are a key challenge for the Scottish economy. A key focus of this PhD would be on digital skills and the green economy. Digital transformation will have a significant impact on work organisation and skills requirements in the future. In addition, the transition to net zero carbon emissions will transform our economy and society, including the kinds of jobs we do and skills we need. The scale and pace of change needed across sectors will demand a significant realignment of our investment in education, training, and work-based learning. There is no existing research that provides a current, comprehensive, and coherent view of the skills impact of these transitions in Scotland. Insights from a PhD would increase our understanding of these dynamic areas.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the PhD will be to examine the impact of future skills transitions in Scotland. In particular to:

- To understand the Scottish context in relation to international and UK literature.
- Ascertain how prepared key Scottish sectors are for these labour market transformations.
- Identify what barriers these sectors face in making these transitions.
- Identify how investment in education, training and WBL can be realigned to support these transitions.
- Identify the degree to which COVID-19 has accelerated or altered the trajectory of these transformations.
- Identify how the skills base has changed due to these transformations and how is it likely to change in the future.
- Access the impact of these transformations on education, training and skills delivery.

Research Methods

We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated it would require a mixed methods approach combining primary and secondary research. Key datasets might include the Labour Force Survey; Annual Population Survey; and Scottish Skills Survey.

Benefits and outcomes for SDS

- SDS understands how to help make the learning and skills system more responsive to these transformations in the economy.
- SDS can identify barriers to developing transformative skills and contribute to more responsive skills planning and provision.
- SDS can enhance access to skills training critical to this transition, which will increase productivity and enhance growth.
- SDS can help the skills and learning system to effectively meet current and future demand.