



SGSSS SDS Collaborative Studentship Competition 2022/23

PhD Programme Topic Descriptions

This document outlines the four topics identified by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the 2022/23 competition call.

1.	<p>Proposed Title: Understanding career decision making using data from Growing Up in Scotland (GUS)</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is a longitudinal survey which tracks the lives of thousands of children and their families through the early years, childhood and beyond. The dataset is recognised as a key source of information for policy makers in a range of services including health, education, and social work. In October 2021, questions suggested by SDS were included in the survey focusing on post-school destinations; awareness of apprenticeships and SDS services; views about types of careers; career management skills; and what influences career decisions. A PhD using data from GUS will provide the opportunity to explore this unique data set in depth. This PhD will have a strong policy focus feeding into the Careers Review, which aims to ensure that career services are fit for purpose and future proofed to meet the demands of a changing world of work.</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Working closely with SDS, the key focus of this PhD will be to understand the multifaceted factors that impact on the career decisions of young people in Scotland. Specific objectives will be to understand in the context of international academic and policy literatures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What factors influence the career decisions of young people, taking into account household circumstances, demographics, health, socio-economic status, and geography.• The post-school transitions of young people and what impacts on these.• The role of parents and carers in shaping the career decisions and post school destinations of young people.• The policy implications of the research in relation to the Careers Review, the work of SDS and the broader policy audience in Scotland and beyond. <p>Research Methods</p> <p>This PhD will involve quantitative analysis of the GUS data set. Access to complementary SDS datasets may be possible. We are also open to the suggestion of inclusion of other datasets as part of the research. Policy considerations should be a key component of this PhD and reflected in the methods and plans for knowledge exchange.</p> <p>Benefits and outcomes for SDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This PhD would inform our approach to CIAG (Careers Information Advice and Guidance) in SDS and provide valuable evidence for the Careers Review and wider government policy approaches.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the GUS data would allow SDS to understand the wide range of factors shaping career choices, including socio-demographic information, health, household details and economic data.
<p>2.</p>	<p>Proposed Title: Role of skills in addressing economic inactivity in Scotland</p> <p>Background</p> <p>In Scotland around 22% of the working age population (16-64) are economically inactive. Long-term ill-health and early retirement account for the largest proportions of the economically inactive and the figures for both these groups have increased post pandemic. Alongside these trends, Scotland is also facing challenges in relation to skills shortages, a tight labour market, an ageing population and increasing levels of poverty and in-work poverty. These are likely to impacted further by economic pressures and the cost-of-living crisis. A PhD would help us understand the role of skills development in supporting those who are economically inactive but could be supported back into the labour market (recognising that not all those who are economically inactive are able to enter the labour market).</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Working closely with SDS, the main aim of this PhD would be to understand the role of skills development in identifying which groups in the economically inactive population in Scotland could be encouraged back into the labour market. Specific objectives would be to understand in the context of international academic and policy literatures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The different subgroups in the economically inactive population, including those who could potentially return to the world of work with suitable support. The key challenges facing the economically inactive in relation to skills development and returning to the labour market. The policy landscape in relation to economic inactivity. In particular, the role of careers advice and work-based learning in supporting those who are economically inactive. The impact of demographic changes and an ageing population on the labour market. The trends in relation to economic inactivity in Scotland and how these compare to rUK and internationally. The links between economic inactivity and poverty, and how economic inactivity interacts with other equality characteristics such as gender, disability, and race. The role of employers in addressing economic inactivity. <p>Research Methods</p> <p>We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach but anticipate this PhD would require a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Policy considerations should be a key component of this PhD and reflected in the methods and plans for knowledge exchange.</p> <p>Benefits and outcomes for SDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This PhD would inform our work on supporting those who are economically inactive from a skills perspective. It would increase our understanding of economic inactivity in Scotland and how it interacts with poverty and other equality characteristics.
<p>3.</p>	<p>Proposed Title: Productivity, skills, and digital transformation</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Future skills requirements are a key challenge for the Scottish economy. Skills are important drivers of productivity and high levels of skills and education can increase productivity. The Scottish Government has an ambition to reach the top quartile of OECD (Organisation for</p>

Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in terms of productivity but currently sits below the median. Increasing productivity has the potential to build a more resilient economy with positive impacts for workers and employers. Alongside this, the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital technologies have the potential to transform workplaces, upskill individuals, and improve productivity.

Aims and Objectives

Working closely with SDS, the main aim of this PhD would be to understand the role of skills in increasing productivity. The specific objectives would be to understand in the context of international academic and policy literatures:

- Future oriented strategies to enable 'high performing workplaces' deliver more and greater productivity.
- The relationship between productivity and skills and what it means for policy. In particular, the other drivers of productivity and the relative importance of skills.
- Productivity and skills strategies in the Scottish context and how Scotland compares to rUK and internationally.
- What high performing workplaces look like and what are the productivity models.
- How to support lower skilled workers and less productive businesses and to ensure increases in productivity benefit all groups and businesses.
- The role of digital transformation and AI in increasing productivity.
- The role of work-based learning in increasing productivity.
- The role of workplace diversity in increasing productivity.
- The policy context in relation to productivity and skills.

Research Methods

We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated this PhD will require a mixed methods approach combining primary and secondary research. Policy considerations should be a key component of this PhD and reflected in the methods and plans for knowledge exchange.

Benefits and outcomes for SDS

- The PhD would help SDS understand the role of the skills system in improving productivity and the impact of digital transformation.
- It would help SDS understand how best to support employers and individual workers to improve productivity through skills support.

4. Proposed Title: Role of skills in supporting entrepreneurship among young people

Background

Entrepreneurship brings many benefits to individuals and the economy. Entrepreneurship can have a positive impact on economic growth, innovation, creativity, and job creation. Research indicates that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of young people starting their own businesses. However, less is known about how to support and grow entrepreneurial activity among young people.

Aims and Objectives

Working closely with SDS, the main aim of this PhD would be to understand the role of the skills system in supporting and developing entrepreneurship among young people. A key focus would be on producing practical policy and practice outcomes to support entrepreneurship in Scotland and beyond. Specific objectives would be to understand, in the context of international academic and policy literature:

- The role of CIAG (Careers Information Advice and Guidance) in supporting entrepreneurship and making it a career path open to all young people.
- The role of enterprise education in promoting business creation as a career option.
- The landscape of young entrepreneurs in Scotland – what industries and sectors are they in, what are their demographics?
- The barriers young people may face in setting up their own business and how those from disadvantaged backgrounds can be encouraged and supported.

Research Methods

We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach. It is anticipated this PhD would require a mixed methods approach combining primary and secondary research. Policy considerations should be a key component of this PhD and reflected in the methods and plans for knowledge exchange.

Benefits and outcomes for SDS

- PhD would help SDS understand the role of entrepreneurship as a route to building skills and business creation.
- It would inform our approach to CIAG in supporting young entrepreneurs.
- It would help us support entrepreneurship as a career route open to all.