

SGSSS SDS Collaborative Studentship Competition 2023/24

PhD Programme Topic Descriptions

This document outlines the four topics identified by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the 2023/24 competition call.

1.	<p>Proposed Title: Role of careers information, advice and guidance in addressing poverty and socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Poverty and socio-economic disadvantage are known to have a negative impact on career outcomes. Poverty is strongly associated with poorer educational achievement, low-skilled work, unemployment, economic inactivity and underemployment. Careers information advice and guidance (CIAG) has the potential to play a role in addressing economic disadvantage. Furthermore, addressing poverty and disadvantage is a key strategic focus for Skills Development Scotland (SDS) as outlined in the SDS Strategic Plan; the Careers Review; and our Equality Outcomes.</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Working closely with SDS, the focus of this PhD would be to understand how CIAG can be used support those living in poverty. Specific objectives would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the extent and nature of the barriers to accessing and engaging with CIAG services for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This would include adults and young people still at school. • To conduct a review of national and international evidence on the role of CIAG in addressing poverty. • To develop a definition of poverty relevant to the CIAG model in Scotland. • To contextualise the research in the policy landscape in Scotland, recognising addressing poverty requires a joined-up approach. <p>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.</p> <p>Research Methods</p> <p>We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach but anticipate this PhD would benefit from a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods where viable within the time constraints of a funded project. Potential datasets may include Understanding Society; Growing up in Scotland; Scottish Household Survey; Scottish Census; Family Resources Survey. As part of the collaborative PhD the student would have access to relevant SDS data. We would also like to see the lived experience of poverty reflected in the methods through the inclusion of qualitative approaches.</p>
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	<p>In addition, 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"> • Poverty and how it interacts with CIAG skills development is a complex subject and a PhD would allow robust and detailed analysis to be undertaken. • A PhD would provide robust evidence to help SDS more fully understand the challenges facing those in poverty and help inform our approaches to service design, change and improvement.
2.	<p>Proposed Title: Careers information advice and guidance for adults through the lifecycle</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Non-linear careers, technological changes, population ageing, the changing nature of work and economic challenges all mean that adults may need to access careers advice at many stages across the life cycle. To provide an effective all-age service, CIAG practitioners need to understand the impact of these changes on adult customers and the best ways to provide CIAG throughout the lifecycle. For example, older workers can face negative attitudes in the labour market with perceived age bias in recruitment and greater barriers to re-employment, necessitating additional support from CIAG professionals to navigate these issues.</p> <p>The Careers Review has recognised that an all-age strategy and approach is required as part of Scotland's Career Strategy.</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Working closely with SDS, the focus of this PhD would be to understand how CIAG can be used to support adults across all stages of the lifecycle. Specific objectives would be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what support adults need from CIAG practitioners to support them to navigate the changing labour market. • Identify the different barriers faced by individuals at different life stages along with recommendations to support individuals to lessen the impact of these where possible and the extent to which ageing is a careers issue. • Understand the intersectional element of the lifecycle with other protected characteristics in terms of labour market experiences of individuals at different life stages from different groups. • Conduct a review of national and international evidence on the role of CIAG across the lifecycle. <p>Research Methods</p> <p>We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach but anticipate this PhD would benefit from a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. As part of the collaborative PhD, the PhD student would be provided with access to relevant SDS data and research respondents where applicable.</p> <p>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"> • The PhD would provide data, evidence and insights to drive improvements to our all-age services approach and support the Careers Review. In addition, it will provide CIAG colleagues in SDS and the Career Services Collaborative with an evidence-based approach to working with adults at all life stages.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PhD on this topic would address the knowledge gap around supporting adults across the lifecycle in CIAG, particularly focusing on age and other protected characteristics.
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3.	<p>Proposed Title: Diversification of the Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) workforce in Scotland</p> <p>Background</p> <p>The UK CIAG workforce is predominantly comprised of older, white, able-bodied women. Workforce demographics do not therefore reflect the range and diversity of clients that careers professionals work with. Research suggests that individuals often become a careers adviser as a second or third career, with fewer young people entering the profession. Emerging research on career guidance in the UK suggests that careers professionals from more diverse backgrounds may experience unfair treatment, racism, stereotyping, unconscious bias and discrimination. It is recognised that effective career guidance can help to create a more balanced and inclusive workforce, yet research is lacking when it comes to extending the lens of diversity and inclusivity to the careers workforce itself. Finally, technology, such as developments in AI, may have an important role in the future in addressing diversity in the CIAG workforce and in service provision. The Careers Service Collaborative as part of the Career Review has recognised the importance of diversifying the CIAG workforce to reflect the diversity of customers supported, as part of Scotland's Career Strategy.</p> <p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Working closely with SDS, the focus of this PhD would be to better understand workforce diversity of careers professionals in Scotland and its impact. Specific objectives would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore and identify the benefits of having a diverse careers profession to better support customers seeking CIAG support. • To understand the extent and nature of any barriers to entering and progressing within the careers profession for a diverse range of individuals. • To develop recommendations on how to attract a more diverse workforce in CIAG roles through a systematic consideration of international academic and policy literatures. • To explore the experiences of diverse careers professionals and what can be learned to support recruitment, retention and progression approaches/policies. • To gather case studies of diverse careers professionals to support future recruitment. • To understand the potential and challenges of new technologies and AI in addressing CIAG workforce diversity and providing a more diverse service. <p>Research Methods</p> <p>We are open to suggestions on the methodological approach but anticipate this PhD would benefit from a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods where viable within the time constraints of a funded project. As part of the collaborative PhD, the PhD student would be provided with access to relevant SDS data and research respondents where applicable.</p> <p>Benefits and outcomes for SDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PhD would provide data, evidence and insights to inform training and recruitment practices of organisations in the Careers Service Collaborative such as SDS employing careers professionals. • A PhD on this topic would address the knowledge gap around diversification of CIAG professionals in Scotland.
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