Applying for a Datasets studentship

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Outline

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2. What data can be used and what should a project aim to do?
3. Examples of studentships
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The Datasets steer

- Since 2017, ESRC has provided SGSSS with an additional allocation of studentships known as 'steer studentships' which aim to develop specific advanced skills.

- One of these steers is for Datasets Studentships
  - ❖ they are supervisor-led, i.e. the proposal is submitted by the supervisor, not by the student

- ESRC funds 4 SGSSS Datasets studentships each year

- Each student has two supervisors with sufficient expertise to cover the data and methodological skills and the substantive themes of the proposal

What counts as data in the datasets steer?

- Wide range of datasets are permitted and applications are NOT restricted to ESRC-funded data
  - Longitudinal data
  - Biosocial resources (e.g. ELSA),
  - Big Data (e.g. ADRN, consumer data),
  - Qualitative resources (e.g. Timescapes)
  - International comparative measures
  - Other data sources or combinations of above data
- Evaluation of proposals involves academics with expertise in data science across varied sources of data and different disciplines

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"A Life Lived for Others": Volunteering Participation and Transitions in Older Age

1. Examine dynamics of participation in volunteering in later life in the context of demographic, employment and other social change
2. Key strength of the proposal is its use of longitudinal data
   1. English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)
   2. Length of study spans a sufficient time period to explore the detail of transitions into and out of volunteering across later life in a novel way
   3. New understandings compared to analysis of cross-sectional data that misses dynamics of participation in volunteering
   4. Wider policy insights: volunteering in later life has been linked to improved health/wellbeing outcomes and brings societal benefits

The right to play – a comparison of rural and urban outdoor play opportunities, environments and experiences

1. Framed around the tension between growth in indoor, sedentary, screen-based play activities versus outdoor play and the benefits of outdoor play for health and development

2. Mixed Methods comprising analysis of outdoor play/participation in urban and rural environments combining insights from:
    1. Survey data benchmarked against;
    2. Qualitative case-studies using visual methods to explore young people's outdoor play environments and experiences

3. Interdisciplinary supervision team with skills to cover breadth of data and methods analysed in the project

Writing your proposal 1: demonstrate the value of the proposed data science

In your application you may consider:

- Are you analysing a new dataset or one neglected in social science research
- Are you analysing data in a new and innovative way?
- Are you making new linkages between data sources?
- Can you combine insights from data analysis across experimental and established data or with primary data collection?
- How will your proposed data analysis progress knowledge in the substantive research area?

Writing your proposal 2: training

- How will training needs be met and monitored throughout the project

- what challenges will the data utilised in the project present?

- consider whether it will take longer for a student to get up to speed –
  - ❖ learning how to use data management software,
  - ❖ data cleaning,
  - ❖ Developing data applications
  - ❖ Data linkage
  - ❖ Complex Survey Designs
  - ❖ Non-response and small samples
  - ❖ Challenges linking to concepts, theories and data

- May need to adjust the timescales to meet project aims

- Consider the distribution of training across the two (or three, if necessary) supervisors and perhaps also external partners?

Writing your proposal 3: data issues

- Accessing data (time, feasibility and steps to enable secure access)

- Analytic issues: (small) Sample size (particularly after stratification)

- (large) sample size, Complex Survey Designs, comparability over time and across national contexts, data cleaning

- Use established data to benchmark experimental sources or consider if there is scope for primary data collection to complement analysis of existing data

- Costs of data access – investigate (SGSSS do not cover these)

- If using data generated as part of an earlier project you must ensure that:
    - ❖ The primary project funding period has ended
    - ❖ The project has one publication in a peer-reviewed journal
    - ❖ The project has been externally funded and awarded through a peer-review process

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Writing your application 4: being realistic

- The project must be suitable for completion in three years
  - ❖ extra time is not available because it follows an innovative data science design
  - ❖ provide a detailed and convincing timetable that includes time to access and prepare data
  - ❖ the proposed project is for a PhD student, not for a research assistant
- What experience of data science research do the supervisors have?
  - ❖ have they worked together before?
  - ❖ how will supervision be allocated and managed?
  - ❖ What contacts to they have to individuals and institutions specializing in particular data sources or data science techniques
- How will you recruit a suitable student?
- How will the research environment support advanced data science work?

The process: Expression of Interest

- Expression of Interest (500 words)
  - ❖ This should be developed by both supervisors
  - ❖ *In 250 words or fewer, please outline the key strengths of the proposed supervisory team including how they will contribute to ensuring that the appointed student would emerge from the PhD with enhanced skills.*
  - ❖ *In no more than 250 words and using the ESRC Guidance on Steers and Targets, describe how the proposed approach and supervisory team meet the relevant steer.*
  - ❖ Make sure that you address ethics.

- Reviewed by members of the SGSSS directorate;
  - ❖ we avoid reviewers considering applications from their own HEI

- 12 go through to full proposal
  - ❖ 4 of these will typically be selected for funding

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The process: full proposal

- Abstract - 300 words

- Impact summary - 250 words

- Fit with Datasets steer - 250 words

- Feasibility of project being completed in three years - 250 words

- Case for support – 2250 words (exc references)

- Risk assessment – 250 words

- Strengths of supervisory team – 350 words (update from video)

The process: review

- Three external peer-reviewers with expertise in data science across a variety of data and disciplines

- Panel meeting
  - ❖ Directorate, Deans' Network & expert reviewers
  - ❖ 4 Dataset steer studentships awarded

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