Applying for an interdisciplinary studentship

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Outline

1. The interdisciplinary steer
2. What does 'interdisciplinary' mean in this context?
3. Current studentships
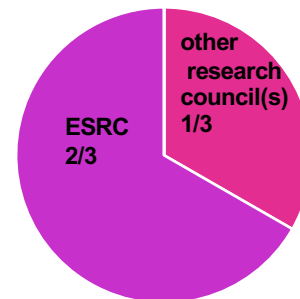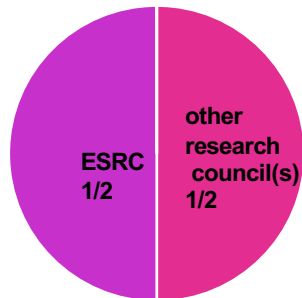4. Writing your proposal
5. Assessment process

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The interdisciplinary steer

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

- One of these steers is for interdisciplinary studentships
  - they are supervisor-led, ie the proposal is submitted by the supervisor, not by the student
  - ESRC funds 4 SGSSS interdisciplinary studentships each year

- Each student has one supervisor who is a social scientist who works alongside a supervisor whose research is within another research council remit.

- It's important to read the guidance available at www.sgsss.ac.uk/studentships/steers-competition/

What does 'interdisciplinary' mean in this context?

- Applications must be genuinely interdisciplinary

- Studentships must be at least 50% social science, but no more than two thirds.

  - ❖ ie disciplinary contributions should be between half ESRC and half other research council(s) and two-thirds ESRC and one-third other research council(s)

Studentships awarded 2017

Research Council remit	HEI	Pathway	Project title
ESRC/MRC	Edinburgh	Health	A realist evaluation of Path for All's *Workplace Step Count Challenge*
ESRC/AHRC	Stirling	Science, Technology, Innovation, Information & Communication Studies	Living the news: Interactivity and the promise of immersion in transmedial digital journalism
ESRC/MRC	Edinburgh	Social Anthropology	"Do you take sugar?" Value, consumption, and sugar politics in Scotland
ESRC/EPSRC	Glasgow	Psychology	Computing the face syntax of social communication
ESRC/AHRC	Stirling	Sociology	Moving beyond 'common sense' understandings of nature and society in the Scottish Highlands: A study of socio-natural relations and heritage in Wester Ross

Studentships awarded 2018

Research Council remit	HEI	Pathway	Project title
ESRC/MRC/EPSRC	Strathclyde	Psychology	The effects of combined brain stimulation and mirror therapy on movement, daily living and quality of life in stroke survivors
ESRC/AHRC	Strathclyde	Education	Advancing the state-of-the-art in child development and autism with precise human movement analysis
ESRC/MRC	Stirling	Health, Families, Relationships and Demographic Change	How might access to, and engagement with, diverse forms of 'greenspace' support reductions in the use of alcohol and drugs among young people in Scotland?

Studentships awarded 2019

Research Council remit	HEI	Pathway	Project title
ESRC/NERC	Glasgow	Human Geography, Environment & Urban Planning	Mining the Anthropocene: Interrogating heritage and nature at Spireslack
ESRC/EPSRC	Edinburgh	Education	Making sense of teachers' communities of practice with social and epistemic network analysis
ESRC/NERC/ AHRC	Glasgow	Human Geography, Environment & Urban Planning	Exploring the social, historical and environmental legacies of steel slag
ESRC/NERC	Stirling	Human Geography, Environment & Urban Planning	Water journeys: accessing safe drinking water in Tanzania
ESRC/BBSRC	SRUC	Human Geography, Environment & Urban Planning	Farmer's cattle breeding choices: balancing productivity, sustainability and food security objectives

Studentships awarded 2020

Research Council remit	HEI	Pathway	Project title
ESRC/MRC	Glasgow	Psychology	Improving sleep after stroke: a behavioural intervention for treating post-stroke insomnia (ISLES)
ESRC/BBSRC/ NERC/AHRC	Edinburgh	Human Geography, Environment & Urban Planning	Meat futures: socioeconomic geographies of livestock production and consumption
ESRC/MRC	Glasgow	Psychology	Investigating the suitability of neurofeedback to improve post-stroke fatigue
ESRC/MRC/ BBSRC/EPSRC	St Andrews	Health, Families, Relationships and Demographic Change	Development of a Bayesian network approach for analysing interdisciplinary social science and biological data: the case of health inequalities

Writing your application 1: the basics

Not sure about ESRC disciplines? Check at

esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/is-my-research-suitable-for-esrc-funding/discipline-classifications/

Other research councils:

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)

Medical Research Council (MRC)

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

SGSSS does not have a quota to meet for specific research councils

Writing your application 2: remit and rationale

- Make a case for why the stated research problem needs an interdisciplinary approach

  - what added value does an interdisciplinary approach bring?
  - this could apply to methods, concepts, theories, bodies of literatures
  - think about the role of interdisciplinarity at different stages
  - what are the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach for impact and KE?

- Be clear about the ways in which the research questions relate to the remits of the relevant research council(s)

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Writing your application 3: training

- Outline specific training needs for the interdisciplinary elements of the project and how they will be met

  - ❖ what challenges will the interdisciplinary nature of the project present?
  - ❖ consider whether it will take longer for a student to get up to speed – learning how to use equipment, familiarisation with new concepts, methods, theories
  - ❖ adjust the timescale to take account of possible extra training needs
  - ❖ how will the training be distributed across the two (or three, if necessary) supervisors?
  - ❖ how will this training prepare the student to work across disciplinary boundaries?

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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's interdisciplinary
  - ❖ provide a detailed and convincing timetable
  - ❖ students should adhere to the disciplinary steer throughout the 3 years
  - ❖ the proposed project is for a PhD student, not for a research assistant

- What experience of ID research do the supervisors have?
  - ❖ have they worked together before?
  - ❖ how will supervision be allocated and managed?

- How will you recruit a suitable student?

- How will the research environment support interdisciplinary work?

The process: Expression of Interest

- Expression of Interest (500 words)
  - ❖ This should be developed by both supervisors
    1. *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.*
    2. *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; one external checks that the steer criteria have been met
  - ❖ 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 interdisciplinary 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: one will be assigned to cover the remit of the additional research council (eg AHRC, EPSRC)

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

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More information: www.sgsss.ac.uk/

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Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

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