

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) Internships Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The SGSSS internships scheme sees PhD social scientists work with non-academic organisations, to create impact for society and the economy. This is a paid, professional internships scheme which enables researchers to develop sector knowledge and transferable skills whilst also supporting the work of public, private and third sector organisations.

Since the scheme's inception, more than 250 internship placements have taken place with partners including The Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, RBS, The Young Foundation, and IOD PARC.

There are two routes into the internships scheme:

- The student-led scheme, whereby students can approach a partner to develop an internship proposal and pitch this to the SGSSS.
- The open competition, whereby researchers apply for an internship project devised by one of our open partners. There are two main windows for the open competition which generally result in interns being placed in the Spring and Autumn semesters.

SGSSS also advertises some opportunities on an ad hoc basis.

This FAQ document is designed to support researchers planning to apply to an internship placement through the SGSSS, and should also be useful for students currently undertaking an internship. Please contact the team on team@sgsss.ac.uk if you have further questions.

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1. What is the benefit of doing an SGSSS internship?

Collaboration is increasingly important for both academic and non-academic careers. Undertaking an internship through the SGSSS will give you an opportunity to step back from your research and academia, and understand the needs of a partner organisation as well as their working environment. This affords the chance to build transferable skills and sector knowledge that will enhance your CV, whilst also giving you the space for a fresh perspective on your PhD research.

Our Interns say:

“The internship has changed my perspective on future career plans. I now understand that there are other environments where you can utilise your research skills outside academia. I’ve really enjoyed working in government and would now definitely consider this as a good option for a future career.” – PhD Intern with Scottish Government

Learn more from the case studies presented on our website.

2. Are internships paid positions?

All students undertaking an internship through the SGSSS will receive a stipend that is commensurate with [Research Council doctoral stipend levels](#).

For ESRC-funded students, there will be no interruption to your funding – instead you will receive an additional three months funding when your studentship is complete.

For non-ESRC funded students, your institution will administer monthly payments during your internship to the amount of the stipend level. Any regular funding will typically pause for the duration of the internship and resume once the internship is complete. Students undertaking a part-time internships may continue to receive funding – see Q9

3. Who is eligible to do a SGSSS internship?

- Applicants must be registered for a PhD at a Scottish university in any social science discipline.
- Applicants must be in their 2nd or 3rd year (or part-time equivalent) at the date of the start of the internship and with more than 6 months left of their PhD.
- Applicants must be eligible to work in the UK.

4. I hold a Tier 4 Visa, am I eligible to apply?

Please note that UK public sector bodies have strict nationality and eligibility requirements, and that applicants that do not meet these criteria are not eligible to apply for internships with the Scottish Government, for example. Please [check your eligibility](#) before you make an application.

For opportunities without such restrictions, where possible, we offer internships on a part-time basis which may permit students on a Tier 4 visa to participate. Part-time internships would be calculated as 17.5 hours per week. If you hold a Tier 4 visa and are interested in applying then you will need to make sure that your university and funder would permit you to undertake the placement **before** making an application.

5. Why am I not eligible for the scheme if I am in my 1st / 4th year?

It is expected that a student completing an internship will have the requisite experience and skill-set in order to complete the work. It is felt that students in their first year will benefit more from focusing exclusively on their PhD studies and building up the requisite core skills. However, when you are coming towards the end of your first year, you can apply for an internship that would start during the second year of your studies. For example, you can apply for an internship in the summer of your first year that would start during your second year.

For students in the final six months of their third year and in their write-up year, it is normally envisaged that this period will facilitate the writing-up portion of the PhD and it would not be advisable to interrupt this or impede progress. If your PhD is funded, your funder may also restrict additional placements or a change to

your studies in the final six months of your funding. We therefore advise that students in that last six months of their third year do not apply, and we do not accept applications from students in their write-up year.

6. How do I apply for a SGSSS internship?

If you are interested in the student-led scheme and would like to set up your own internship with a partner, you can contact the team on team@sgsss.ac.uk for guidance and support on how best to approach a host.

We advertise the open call and ad hoc internship opportunities throughout the year, and applications will need to be made through our online application platform [SGSSS Apply](#). To get a notification of upcoming opportunities, make sure you have signed up for the weekly [SGSSS Digest](#).

Applications to SGSSS internships are collected via SGSSS Apply, the SGSSS electronic application system. Please, read the below information before applying.

The online process involves:

- Inputting information such as personal details, period of PhD study, pathway or discipline;
- Selecting the chosen internship host and title;
- Providing a description of the skills and experience you can bring to this internship (max 1000 words);
- Providing a short statement on your reasons for applying, what you'd hope to gain from an internship and how this fits with your PhD or career plans (max 500 words);
- Upload your CV (2 pages max);
- Uploading a Statement of Support from your Supervisor. Your supervisor will need to be aware of the timeline in order to contribute meaningfully to your application within the deadlines.

We strongly advise applicants to complete the application process at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. If you have any questions about this process, please contact us at team@sgsss.ac.uk.

7. Can I apply for more than one internship?

You can apply for up to five internships in any one call. For Scottish Government internships, there is an opportunity to apply to a "general pool" whereby you could be allocated to any of the advertised projects. You can highlight on the [SGSSS Apply](#) application form your preferences from the listed internships.

If you have already completed an internship and would like to apply for a second internship, you are able to do so provided that you still fit eligibility criteria. Please note that preference will be given to applicants who have not already completed an internship through SGSSS.

8. None of the internship projects advertised are connected to my academic research, should I apply?

We strongly encourage students to choose opportunities to work outside the area of their PhD topic in order to gain wider experience. Students are encouraged to carefully consider the information requested in the application form and pay particular attention to setting out their expertise in particular research methods to address the desired skills listed. Applicants are usually not required to have academic experience in the policy area of the internship unless specified in the project description.

9. Can I work on my PhD at the same time as doing an internship?

Part-time students can work on a part-time internship at the same time as working on their studies part-time. Please see Question 10 for further information.

If you are registered as a full-time student, and are not on a Tier 4 visa, it is expected that you will focus on the internship and take a break from PhD work. Previous interns have felt the benefit of stepping back from their PhD and gaining new perspectives. That said, in some cases there may be a strong argument for a

full-time student doing an internship part-time and continuing their studies part-time. Such requests would be considered on a case by case basis and would require the approval of your University and Funder.

Tier 4 students can only undertake internships part-time and must remain enrolled in their PhD. See Q.4

10. I am a part-time student, can I undertake an internship on a part-time basis?

Yes, provided the internship is advertised as a part-time option: not all projects can be offered part-time because they are time-sensitive. You must be in your third, fourth, fifth or sixth year of part-time study (equivalent to second or third year full time) when you start the internship.

Part-time internships can last for up to six months and you would be paid the stipend pro rata. In total, you can take up to three months of full-time study for your internship (pro rata).

11. What type of expenses can I claim during my internship?

Students can claim up to a maximum of £2,400 (for a three-month full-time internship) to cover all reasonable travel and accommodation costs for the period of the internship – for example commuting or relocation costs. For full details of what can be claimed, please see the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). **All expense claims relating to internships must be claimed from your institution. For further information on how to claim at your institution, contact your local [HEI Admin Lead](#).**

12. I am based more than 30 miles from my internship location. Can the SGSSS support me to commute or relocate for the duration?

The SGSSS wants to ensure that students are not subject to greater expense by undertaking the internship – for example by having to pay rent in two places at the same time. You can claim up to a maximum of £2,400 (for a three month internship) to cover reasonable additional travel and accommodation for the period of the internship.

For full details of what can be claimed, please see the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). **All expense claims relating to internships must be claimed from your institution. For further information on how to claim at your institution, contact your local [HEI Admin Lead](#).**

Please note, internships taking place remotely may still require you to be located within the United Kingdom (such as internships with the Scottish Government). If you will not be residing in the UK at the time of placement, please ensure that you discuss this with the SGSSS team prior to submitting an application.

13. I need to relocate and rent a property for the duration of the internship – can I receive funds in advance?

Yes, you will need to provide a signed tenancy agreement stating the property's address, the duration of the lease and the price per month. Students are to ensure that rental amounts are not excessive. We will not pay for students staying with family.

For full details of what can be claimed, please see the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). **All expense claims relating to internships must be claimed from your institution. For further information on how to claim at your institution, contact your local [HEI Admin Lead](#).**

14. I need to book travel and a season ticket is very expensive – can I receive funds in advance?

Yes - you will need to send a price projection/a link to the stated cost on the travel website. Please purchase weekly or monthly season tickets for public transport wherever possible in order to claim back for travel.

Please note that students are expected to use the most economical method of travel. You will need to provide receipts to your institution for the travel you have purchased in order to claim for these expenses.

For full details of what can be claimed, please see the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). **All expense claims relating to internships must be claimed from your institution. For further information on how to claim at your institution, contact your local [HEI Admin Lead](#).**

15. I have children and taking up an internship would entail increased childcare costs – will this be taken into account?

Yes – a student may claim up to a maximum of £2,400 for reasonable travel/accommodation and additional childcare costs. It is reasonable to be able to claim for costs related to childcare that are additional as a result of participating in the scheme (i.e. additional costs directly related to scheme participation, not costs that you would have carried anyway). Costs will be reimbursed as long as childcare is booked with a registered scheme/ care supplier etc. and on provision of receipts or invoices.

For full details of what can be claimed, please see the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). **All expense claims relating to internships must be claimed from your institution. For further information on how to claim at your institution, contact your local [HEI Admin Lead](#).**

16. My internship host requires me to apply for Disclosure Scotland – can I recover this cost?

Yes, your host should reimburse you for this cost if it is necessary for the internship.

17. Am I entitled to annual leave during my internship?

Interns normally work 37 hours per week, Monday-Friday over a three-month internship. They are entitled to six days leave plus any Public Holidays that arise during the internship. Flexi-time working can be discussed and agreed with the local line manager. Leave and flexi-time working are at the discretion of the local line manager, based on the terms of the Placement Agreement you will sign when you start your internship.

18. What happens if I am unwell during the internship?

If you are unwell during the internship and are not able to work, you need to inform the host organisation and the SGSSS before the start of work that day. You will then need to inform the host organisation and the SGSSS when you are able to start working again. You can contact the SGSSS by emailing: team@sgsss.ac.uk.

SGSSS will support absence for medical reasons for up to 3 weeks during a three-month full-time internship. This is calculated pro rata from UKRI guidelines on sickness and absence. If an absence exceeds 3 weeks, SGSSS is likely to advise that the internship should be terminated and payments will cease. It may be possible to resume the internship at a later date but only in cases where the host and SGSSS agree that the internship still aligns with the host's requirements.

19. I have personal circumstances that make me unsure if an internship is possible, is there someone I can speak to?

Yes, please contact the SGSSS team at team@sgsss.ac.uk if you would like discuss a specific circumstance that may be making you feel unsure whether an internship is possible. This may include (but is not limited to) caring responsibilities, disability and/or need for flexible/remote working patterns. Many of our partners can offer flexibility, and we encourage you to reach out to us to discuss this further prior to making an application.

20. Where can I find further information?

- SGSSS Expenses Policy: https://social.sgsss.ac.uk/files/documents/sgsss-expenses-policy_july-2021.pdf
- HEI Admin Leads: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/about-us/#HEI-Admins>
- Current Internship Opportunities: <https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/internships/current-opportunities/>