

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

Contents

This guidance provides an introduction to the SGSSS Impact Competition, materials to support and application, and information about eligibility and timelines. There is also information about appropriate use of funds for the prize money.

If you have any questions about the contents of this document, please contact Dr Anna-Marie Linnell (SGSSS Knowledge Exchange and Partnerships Manager) on team@sgsss.ac.uk.

1. Overview

- 1.1. Competition aims
- 1.2. Defining 'impact'
- 1.3. Pathways to impact
- 1.4. Measuring impact

2. Application process

- 2.1. Eligibility
- 2.2. Assessment process
- 2.3. Assessment criteria
- 2.4. Application timeline

3. Follow-on funding

- 3.1. Prizes for candidates
- 3.2. Conditions for funding
- 3.3. Examples of previous winners

4. Appendices

- 4.1. Application questions for "Planned Impact"
- 4.2. Application questions for "Achieved Impact"

SGSSS Impact Competition

Applicant Guidance 2023

1. Overview

1.1 Competition aims

The SGSSS Impact Competition gives Social Science PhD students across Scotland an opportunity to reflect on how their research can make a meaningful difference beyond their own research field.

The competition aims to:

1. Offer you an opportunity to identify and articulate your pathways to impact.
2. Champion a culture of creating meaningful impact across the SGSSS student community and the wider public.
3. Inspire further impact, helping you progress with your pathway to impact through follow-on funding for winning projects.

1.2 Defining 'impact'

The SGSSS defines impact using the terms of the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), as the [“demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy.”](#)

We understand that, depending on where you are at with your PhD, you will be at a different stage of your journey to create impact. This aspect will be carefully considered during our review of applications so that you will be assessed against peers that are at similar stages of their journey. More information is provided in section 1.5

For the purposes of the SGSSS Impact Competition, 'impact' can include:

- An **effect on, change or benefit to society and the economy**. This includes a positive change on the activity, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of key beneficiaries.
- The **positive academic contribution** that excellent research can make to the understanding and advancement of scientific method or theory across disciplines.

For instance, applicants could submit an application based on their PhD research, an internship or an OIV (Overseas Institutional Visits Scheme).

Beneficiaries can be:

- A non-academic audience, community, constituency, organisation or individuals.
- An academic audience, community, or consortium.
- Based locally, regionally, or internationally. Although researchers must be registered at a Scottish University to be eligible for this competition, their impact can take place anywhere in the UK and overseas.

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

1.3 Pathways to impact

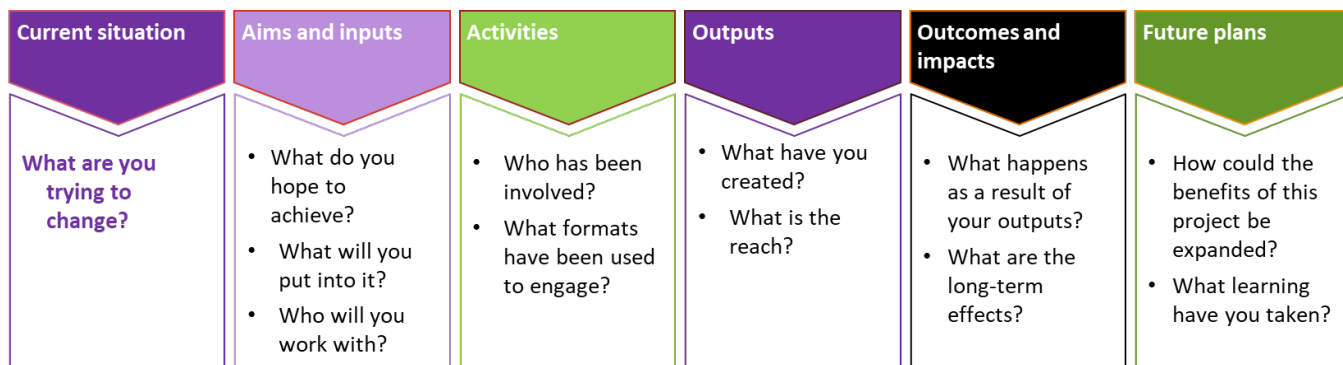
We expect applicants for this competition to be at distinct stages on their pathway to impact, and the entire process is designed to help you with that journey by providing an opportunity for you to reflect on what you are planning to achieve, what you have achieved so far, and what you could do next with some follow-on funding.

To reflect on where you are in your impact journey and participate to this competition, you can start by identifying:

1. The outputs that have been realised (or that you are planning to realise in the next years of your PhD).
2. The outcomes that have been achieved (or that you are planning to realise in the next years of your PhD).
3. The impact that has already been realised (or has the potential to be realised in the future).

Additionally, if you do not have one already, you may wish to draw up a logic model for your project. For instance, the model in Figure 3, originally designed as a planning tool, can be useful for evaluation as well.

Figure 1: Pathways to Impact diagram



Logic model adapted from the National Centre for Co-ordinating Public Engagement:
https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/evaluating_your_public_engagement_work.pdf

The key caveat to using a logic model to plan/evaluate impact is that it can suggest the process is linear. It is also worth considering that, in a truly collaborative project, engagement with stakeholders (those you are seeking to benefit or persuade, for example) may be embedded all the way through and can change the shape of the project.

1.4 Measuring impact

SGSSS accepts the following evidence as part of the Impact Competition:

- Quantitative evidence.
- Qualitative evidence.

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

- Information about short-term, medium-term and long-term impacts.
- Information about impacts that have been achieved, or that are yet to be realised

Ideally, applications would include a combination of various kinds of evidence to demonstrate the well-rounded and continuing impacts of the project. You can include evidence of impact that you had planned, and also evidence of unanticipated impacts that arose as you went through the project (for example, positive feedback from stakeholders that you had not initially planned to engage).

For advice on quantitative measures for impact, we would recommend RAND Europe's [Guidance for standardising quantitative indicators of impact within REF case studies](#) (2018). Commissioned by HEFCE, this document provides an overview of some standard measures for quantifying impact, based on the 2014 REF case study submissions. A graphic summarising some of their top tips is below in Figure 2.

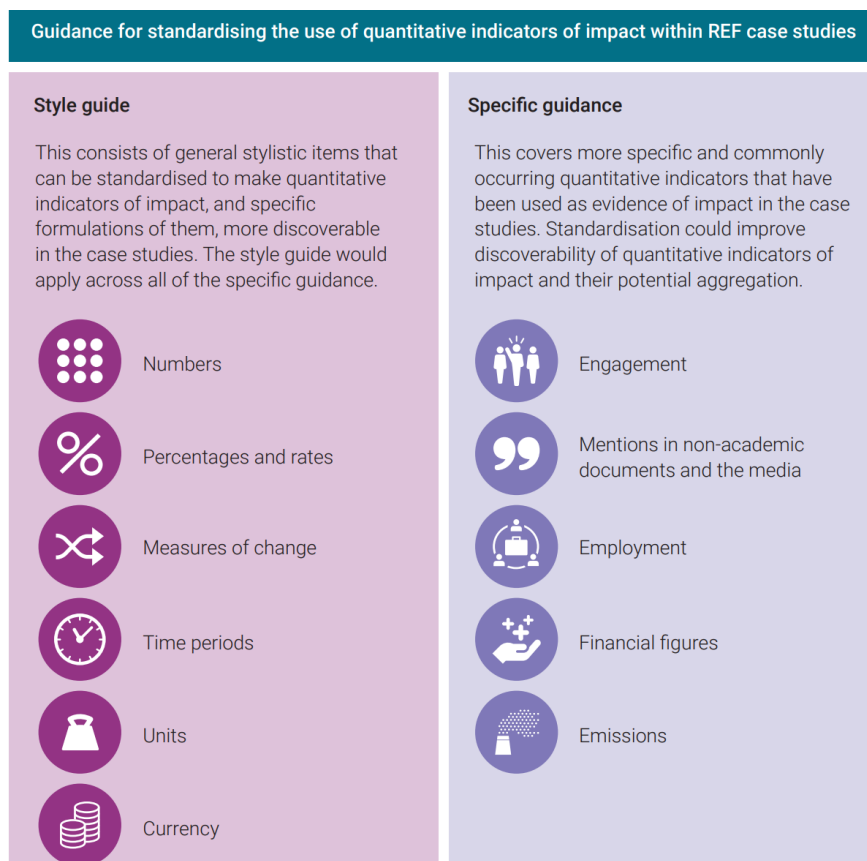


Figure 2: Guidance for quantitative indicators of impact.

Sarah Parks, Becky Ioppolo, Martin Stepanek and Salil Gunashekar, *Guidance for standardising quantitative indicators of impact within REF case studies*, Cambridge: Rand Europe, 2018

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

2. The application process

2.1 Eligibility

The SGSSS Impact Competition is open to all PhD social science students registered at a Scottish University: applicants do not have to be ESRC funded.

There are two categories for the SGSSS Impact Competition:

1. Planned Impact: applications are open for any student in their first year of PhD study (or part-time equivalent). *Please note: students in their second or third year are not eligible to submit under the Planned Impact category.*
2. Achieved impact: applications are open for any student in their second or third year of PhD study (or part-time equivalent).

2.2 Assessment process

There are two rounds of assessment for the Impact Competition. Students need to be able to commit to participate in both stages of assessment when they complete the initial application form.

Round One: Panel review

- Applicants submit an application [via Social](#) by Wednesday 22 March. The questions you are asked can be found in the Appendices (Section 4).
- Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of knowledge exchange leaders within universities, non-academic organisations that work closely with academics on research projects, and early career academics that are leading innovative impact projects.
- Up to three candidates will be shortlisted for each category “Planned Impact” or “Achieved Impact”.

Round Two: Public vote

- Applicants that are shortlisted in Round One will be invited to produce a poster and short video to present their submission. These resources should be aimed at a non-academic audience. Candidates will be provided with resources and guidance to support them in producing the poster effectively.
- The posters and videos will be put to an online public vote for 1 week in May. The winner in each category will be determined by the number of votes received.

The winners of each category will be announced at the annual SGSSS Collaboration Showcase on Wednesday 31st May 2023. All shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend the Collaboration Showcase and exhibit a hard copy of their poster (printing and expenses covered by SGSSS).

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

2.3 Assessment criteria

The table below details the specific assessment criteria for each category.

	FIRST CATEGORY	SECOND CATEGORY
Focus on	✓ Planned and expected impact that is intended to develop in the next years of the PhD	✓ Achieved and ongoing impact
Scale and significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What outputs are planned and what are the likely benefits for different stakeholders? ✓ Are these outputs feasible given current plans? Would they be supported by follow-on funding? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What were the outputs of the project, and how far-reaching are the benefits for different stakeholders? ✓ What are the opportunities to expand the existing benefits for key stakeholders through the follow-on funding?
Relationship between researcher and impact	✓ How clear are the potential links between the research planned or underway and the stated potential impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clear are the links between the underpinning research and the impact? ✓ What opportunities are there for future research and impact as a result of this work?
Clarify and concision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clearly are the planned outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project articulated? ✓ What consideration has been given to the evidence that will be needed to justify and monitor impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clearly are the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project articulated? ✓ How effectively is qualitative and/or quantitative evidence used to explain the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project?

2.4 Application timeline

Key Events	Date
Deadline for applications	22/03/2023
Review panel shortlist applications	March - April
Shortlisted applicants invited to create poster and video	By 19/04/2023
Deadline for shortlisted applicants to submit poster and video	05/05/2023
Public vote on shortlisted applications	w/c 15/05/2023
Winners announced	31/05/2023

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

3. Follow-on funding

3.1 Prizes for candidates

This competition aims to inspire future impact and help students further along their pathway to impact through follow-on funding.

There is £1000 prize funding in total available for the Impact Competition, split across the two categories. The respective winners of the “planned impact” and “achieved impact” categories can win £500 each.

3.2 Conditions for funding

The follow-on funding will be paid by the SGSSS to the researcher as they start generating the further impact and based on the needs of the project. The researcher can claim up to their allowance and will need to submit evidence of the costs they are incurring and the relevance to the project.

The follow-on funding can be used for:

- Further dissemination of impact based on the project that has taken place.
- A follow-on project that builds on the findings or impact of the original project to develop clear benefits for stakeholders.

The follow-on funding cannot be used for:

- The researcher’s time (i.e. working hours).
- A new research project that does not have clear benefits and impact linked with the original submission.

The follow-on funding **must** be claimed through your University which will be reimbursed by the SGSSS within 12 months of the award having been made, and all direct activities connected with the funding must take place within 12 months of the award.

If the funding has not been claimed within 12 months, the candidates will forfeit the award.

3.3 Examples of former winners



[Jenn Glinski was the winner of the 2020 Impact Competition, for a three-month internship which enabled the Royal Bank of Scotland to transform their approach to supporting customers facing economic abuse in their relationship.](#) Jenn used her follow-on funding to attend and lead a workshop at an international conference, raising awareness about these issues and methodological approaches to tackling them.

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023



[Oliver Hamlet was a runner-up in the 2020 Impact Competition and awarded £500 follow-on funding.](#) Oliver used his funding to further disseminate the impact of his project, developing resources that were posted to air crews internationally. His project was reported in regional media and in specialised news outlets such as Air Med and Rescue Magazine.

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

4. Appendices

The application form for both categories of the competition should be completed on Social. You can save and return to drafts of the application on Social. However, as we understand that some prospective candidates will prefer to draft their application out with the online system, we have included the questions below for your reference.

4.1 Application questions for “Planned Impact”

Please write a short summary of the impact you intend to develop in the next years of your PhD (up to 100 words). *Please refer to the definition of impact in the Impact Competition Guidance.*

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Please write a description of your research (up to 500 words). *This description should outline what your research topic is, and how your research underpins the impact you intend to developed.*

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Please write a fuller description of your planned impact (up to 750 words). *Creating impact is a journey and we acknowledge that students will be at different stages on that journey. Consider here your pathway to impact and how you can articulate your potential impacts at this stage. There is more guidance on this in the Impact Competition Guidance. If relevant, you can use up to 5 sources to support this statement, which should be referenced as part of the word count.*

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How would you use the follow-on funding to further the impact from your research? (up to 500 words) *Winning applicants will receive £500 follow-on funding. Please outline how you would use the follow-on funding*

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SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2023

4.2 Application questions for “Achieved Impact”

Please write a short summary of the impact you have developed so far in your PhD (up to 100 words). *Please consider the definition of impact in the Impact Competition Guidance.*

Please write a description of your research (up to 500 words). *This description should outline what your research topic is, and how your research underpins the impact you intend to developed.*

Please write a description of your impact (up to 750 words). *Creating impact is a journey and we acknowledge that students will be at different stages on that journey. Consider here your pathway to impact, and how you can articulate potential impacts at this stage. There is more information about this in the Impact Competition Guidance. If relevant, you can use up to 5 sources to support this statement, which should be referenced as part of the word count.*

How would you use the follow-on funding to further the impact from your research? (up to 500 words) *Winning applicants will receive £500 follow-on funding. Please outline how you would use the follow-on funding*
