Scottish Graduate School of Social Science – Researcher Development Project Officer Secondment

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) are seeking to second a fixed term Researcher Development Project Officer to join our team as we implement and deliver the next phase of our Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). This post has been made available through funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

SGSSS is a national DTP of 16 universities focused on social science research excellence and impact. An exciting opportunity has arisen for a Researcher Development Project Officer to significantly contribute to the strategic aims of the newly recommissioned partnership (an investment of approximately £25m for 5-8 years and funding over 250 PhD studentships across Scotland). The role is focused on co-designing materials and implementing activities intended to engage doctoral scholars and supervisors.

Working as part of a focussed team within SGSSS, the post holder will work closely with our Associate Directors for Student Engagement and Supervisor Engagement, the SGSSS professional services team and our five newly appointed PhD student representatives (a remunerated role) to deliver specific objectives towards effective engagement with our PhD student cohort and supervisor communities (more details below).

This opportunity is available as a secondment from one of the SGSSS partner universities to SGSSS. It is expected that the appointed person will continue their current employment and substantive role, with time allocated to this SGSSS work as per an agreed pattern. SGSSS will then reimburse the home university for the appointee’s time and any expenses.

Research Development Role Details:

Title: SGSSS Researcher Development Project Officer

FTE: 0.3 FTE (open to negotiation; delivered through agreed hours within existing contract with home university).

Grade: This role is open to applicants from grades 7, 8 and 9. We aim to make this role a significant opportunity to benefit the role holder’s development and experience, as well as contribution to SGSSS.

Term: 1 year, or flexible dependent upon FTE commitment, starting ASAP.

Based at: The role can be undertaken from the role holder’s home university, but in person presence is expected at relevant meetings. These will be planned in advance with the wider Directorate and Professional Services team.
Role Purpose:
Working jointly with the team, the post holder will co-design materials and implement activities designed to engage doctoral scholars and supervisors in a proactive pursuit of a meaningful doctoral journey. Using evidence from best practice across the doctoral landscape, these will facilitate the implementation of SGSSS strategies to develop knowledge and capabilities supporting PhD students’ research development through the PhD journey and beyond – whether in academia, industry or elsewhere. They will also support PhD supervisors with developmental activities and sharing of best practice within our cross-institutional supervisor communities.

Main responsibilities:
(1) mapping out and developing processes to implement a Community of Practice for PhD supervisors with SGSSS’s partner HEI members
(2) organising co-designed workshops with PhD supervisors and PhD scholars in locations across Scotland to develop specific toolkits which will add significant value to the dynamic relationship of the supervisor and student.
(3) Assist in developing processes and activities to ensure the voice of the student is effectively represented across our national network.

The full job description is appended below this advert.

SGSSS Context:
Established in 2011, SGSSS brings together the expertise of 16 universities across Scotland to provide a world-class research environment for social science PhD researchers. SGSSS is led by the Director, supported by the Deputy Director (Training) and Deputy Director (Studentships and Partnerships), alongside a team of seven Associate Directors and a team of Professional Services staff.

In 2016, the SGSSS DTP was established. DTP funding was renewed in November 2023 for a further five cohorts of PhD students, with the first students starting in October 2024 (“DTP 2”). SGSSS’ ambitions for DTP 2 include the introduction of a Global Grand Challenges model for training pathways; redesign of methods training; evolving from “Training Needs Analysis” to “Development Needs Analysis”; focus on “Research in Practice”; increased supervisor support and network building; and ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. SGSSS also continues to offer its training and cohort development activities to all social science PhD students in Scotland, regardless of their funding status.

Further information is available at: www.sgsss.ac.uk

How to Apply:
Please send a CV and covering letter to team@sgsss.ac.uk (email title: “Researcher Development Application”) by 23:59 on 7 March 2024.

Your covering letter should explain i) your suitability for this role (see Person Specification) and ii) why you wish to be part of SGSSS, including what you wish to achieve during your term.

---

1 The SGSSS Grand Challenge pathways will be: Environment, Migration & Demographic Change; Social Inequalities; Communication, AI & New Technologies; Health, Wellbeing & Communities; Securities: Justice, Economies & Conflict; and Governance & Institutions.
Agreement to undertake the role (including commitment that suitable hours will be available to SGSSS throughout the term of this role) should be sought from your line manager and home institution in advance of application.

SGSSS has a strong commitment to accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion. We believe a diverse team bring the best range of experience, skills and perspectives. Applications are therefore particularly welcome from groups traditionally underrepresented within Higher Education.

If you believe you would add value to the SGSSS team but do not feel you meet the criteria, please consider getting in touch (via team@sgsss.ac.uk) to talk about the roles and your application.

If you would benefit from receiving this document in a different format, please email team@sgsss.ac.uk
SGSSS Researcher Development Project Officer (Secondment, Fixed Term)

Job Description

Job Title: SGSSS Researcher Development Project Officer (Fixed Term)

Department / School: Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS)

Reports To: Adina Dudau, SGSSS Associate Director (Supervisory Lead) and Dely Elliot, SGSSS Associate Director (Student Engagement)

Grade: 7, 8 or 9

Duration: TBC, dependent on working pattern. Expectation is for 0.3 FTE over 12 months, or a more condensed timeline but higher FTE commitment.

NB: this opportunity is available as a secondment (full time or part time) from one of the SGSSS partner universities to SGSSS. It is expected that the appointed person will continue their current employment and substantive role, with time allocated to this SGSSS work as per an agreed pattern. SGSSS will then reimburse the home university for the appointee’s time and any expenses.

Job Purpose

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) is a national doctoral training partnership (DTP) of 16 universities focused on social science research excellence and impact, equipping PhD graduates to develop into future research leaders on the national and global stage.

As a result of funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), an exciting opportunity has arisen for a researcher development project officer to significantly contribute to the strategic aims of the newly recommissioned ERSC-funded DTP (an investment of approximately £25m for 5-8 years and funding over 250 PhD studentships across Scotland). Working as part of a focussed team within SGSSS, the post holder will work closely with our Associate Directors for Student Engagement and Supervisor Engagement, the SGSSS professional services team and our five newly appointed PhD student representatives (a remunerated role) to deliver specific objectives towards effective engagement with our PhD student cohort and supervisor communities.

Working jointly with the team, the post holder will co-design materials and implement activities designed to engage doctoral scholars and supervisors in a proactive pursuit of a meaningful doctoral journey. Using evidence from best practice across the doctoral landscape, these will facilitate the implementation of SGSSS strategies to develop knowledge and capabilities supporting PhD students’ research development through the PhD journey and beyond – whether in academia, industry or
elsewhere. They will also support PhD supervisors with developmental activities and sharing of best practice within our cross-institutional supervisor communities.

Main responsibilities

(1) mapping out and developing processes to implement a Community of Practice for PhD supervisors with SGSSS’s partner HEI members

(2) organising co-designed workshops with PhD supervisors and PhD scholars in locations across Scotland to develop specific toolkits which will add significant value to the dynamic relationship of the supervisor and student.

(3) assist in developing processes and activities to ensure the voice of the student is effectively represented across our national network.

Key contacts / Relationships:

• Associate Director for Student Engagement
• Associate Director for Supervisory Engagement
• Rest of SGSSS, including academic colleagues and Professional Services team
• SGSSS students and supervisors

Planning & Organising

• The post requires the ability to work autonomously and take independent action.
• Planning a programme of work, balancing changing short-term demands with longer term development projects.
• Collect data from a variety of sources to be communicated via appropriate media.
• Be flexible, act swiftly, mobilise resources, coordinate with internal and external partners and liaise with senior staff.
• The postholder will work collaboratively and flexibly, ensuring that student experience and cohort building support is provided across existing and incoming cohorts.

Problem Solving

• Prioritise and allocate work on the basis of competing priorities to ensure that all projects are delivered on time and to the correct standard.
• Responsible for planning and organising their own work and that of a team of colleagues who may be involved in different types of work and will encounter changing and/or conflicting priorities
• The postholder will monitor all activities within their area of work, ensuring that they meet SGSSS objectives.

Decision Making

• To make decisions in accordance with SGSSS policy and ESRC guidelines to ensure quality of output.
• To work on a problem within existing specifications and standards.
• To decide when an issue is sufficiently complex/sensitive that it should be referred upwards.
- To recommend and implement improvements to existing processes and procedures.
- Resolving problems raised by doctoral scholars and their supervisors, interpreting and applying policy where necessary

**Knowledge Skills and Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education, Qualifications &amp; Training</td>
<td>• A PhD in any subject area</td>
<td>• A PhD in a Social Science discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relevant work experience in design and delivery of research development projects</td>
<td>• Experience of PhD supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; Experience</td>
<td>• Strong project management and organisational skills with the ability to work independently</td>
<td>• Knowledge and experience of offering doctoral training provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Excellent interpersonal skills – able to work in a team and adopt a flexible and consultative approach.</td>
<td>• Knowledge and understanding of UK Research Council studentship guidelines and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to diplomatically manage relations with a variety of stakeholders both academic and non-academic and including those senior to the post holder.</td>
<td>• Experience of planning, coordinating and administering training events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An excellent communicator – well developed oral skills and an ability to write clear and concise analytical reports.</td>
<td>• Knowledge of specific digital tools such as SharePoint, Wordpress, Canva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Experience of working with sensitive information, knowledge of data protection and information security/governance, and maintaining respect confidentiality at all times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Information**

Established in 2011, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences brings together the expertise of sixteen universities across Scotland to provide a world-class research environment for social science PhD researchers. The core professional services team are based within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.
Following a successful recommissioning in 2016, the Doctoral Training Partnership was established as part of a UK-wide national network of DTPs. The first doctoral students were welcomed in October 2017 and the first postdoctoral fellows in 2019.

In November 2023, DTP funding was renewed for a further five cohorts of PhD students, with the first students starting in October 2024.

Approximately 55 PhD projects and 6-9 fellowships are currently funded annually. However, the majority of training and other activities offered by SGSSS are available to any Social Science doctoral student at one of our sixteen partner universities.

The Doctoral Training Partnership grant from ESRC supports annual Open, Supervisor-led and Collaborative studentship competitions while the SFC and HEI funding supports the annual summer school, a programme of advanced training, a range of collaborative opportunities and the development of on-line training resources. Students are also offered internship opportunities with a range of private, public and third-sector partners, and access to a series of mentoring programmes.

As Scotland’s national graduate school for social sciences, SGSSS is able to respond to and influence best practice across the sector, act collaboratively to promote social science research and doctoral training policy and promote the very best doctoral experience.

SGSSS is situated within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences within the University of Edinburgh.