Scottish Graduate School of Social Science  

Associate Director

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) are seeking to appoint an **Associate Director (Challenge Pathways and Postdoctoral Fellows)** to join our team and contribute to the exciting implementation and delivery of the next phase of our Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP).

SGSSS is a nationwide partnership of 16 universities focused on social science excellence, equipping PhD graduates and Postdoctoral Fellows to develop into future research leaders on the national and global stage. This is a fantastic opportunity to contribute significantly to the strategic development of social sciences postgraduate research, and the formation of research leaders in Scotland and beyond.

**Associate Director Role Details:**

**Title:**
Associate Director (Challenge Pathways and Postdoctoral Fellows).

**FTE:**
0.3 FTE (*delivered through workmodelled hours within existing university contract*).

**Grade:**
This role is open to academic applicants from grade 8, 9 and 10 or equivalent (as this description is as per the University of Edinburgh grading system). We are aiming to build a team that includes a mix of colleagues with different backgrounds, experience and insight.

**Term:**
3 years, 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, training events, student activities etc. These will be planned in advance with the wider Directorate and Professional Services team.

**Role Purpose:**
The Associate Directors support the Director and Deputy Directors in delivering the strategic and operational objectives of SGSSS. The role holders are part of the team that ensures SGSSS is an inclusive and collaborative consortium, delivering effective and accessible postgraduate funding and training in the social sciences, Scotland-wide.

**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 Doctoral Training Partnership (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. The SGSSS Grand Challenge pathways are: Environment, Migration & Demographic Change; Social Inequalities; Communication, AI & New Technologies; Health, Wellbeing & Communities; Securities: Justice, Economies & Conflict; and Governance & Institutions.

Other innovations for DTP 2 include the 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.

The ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow scheme was renewed in early 2024, and SGSSS have had their funding continued: the next cohort of Fellows will be recruited in the coming months and will start their year long Fellowships in October 2024.

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

**Associate Director Main Responsibilities:**
This role will have two key priorities:

- Challenge Pathways – leading and delivering cohort building and communication work; and
- Postdoctoral Fellows - leading the recruitment, oversight and cohort development.

**Challenge Pathways:**
This role will be focused on the new Global Grand Challenge training pathways being introduced as part of DTP 2. The role will be critical components of the challenge-led DTP which will allow SGSSS PhD students to understand the value to their research in much broader contexts and to a wide range of stakeholders. The Associate Director will be responsible for overseeing all activity related to two (from six) of the DTP training pathways, ensuring SGSSS students have a coordinated, effective and engaging structure to support their PhD research. Main responsibilities include:

- Working with the Deputy Director (Studentships and Partnerships), develop innovative and imaginative cohort building and communication strategies to energise challenge training pathways.
- Working with the other Associate Directors to design and deliver cohort building events, responding to identified development needs within the Challenge Pathways and highlighting broader routes to societal impact;
- Contribute to cross-cohort training and development events such as student induction, Summer School, Final Year Conference;
- Support the Deputy Director (Studentships) in the studentship competitions, including through panel reviews and coordination.

**Postdoctoral Fellows (“PDF”):**
This role will be the lead for the PDF scheme, throughout the Fellowship lifecycle. Main responsibilities include:

- Overall responsibility for Fellow recruitment and support.
- Leadership of the application review process, including reviewing and coordinating scores and panel decisions to ensure the best applicants are awarded Fellowships.
- Designing and delivering the PDF quarterly meetings, for Fellows’ cohort development and support.
- Engaging with the Fellows to support them in maximising the opportunities of the Fellowship.
• Working with the Research Impact and Partnerships Coordinator (SGSSS team member) to deliver all of the above and respond to any reporting and queries from the ESRC.

General Responsibilities:
All Associate Directors support the SGSSS studentship competitions through application reviews and panel membership. Additionally, all Associate Directors are asked to be responsible for specific leadership tasks: allocation of these will depend on applicants’ experience and skills. They are likely to be cross-SGSSS initiatives responding to emerging UKRI/ESRC or SFC priorities.

The appointed Associate Directors will be important in shaping the strategic development of the SGSSS Directorate, together with the current members, and informing effective ways of working within the new DTP. Working together as part of a strong and committed team, the areas of responsibility are likely to evolve over time depending on priorities/expertise and there will be scope for role holders to work across specific portfolios.

Person Specification – knowledge, experience and skills:
• The posts require a member of academic staff on a continuing contract at an SGSSS partner HEI.
• The role holder should have experience of and a passion for PhD and ECR support, student experience and student development, coupled with knowledge of the PhD lifecycle.
• The role holder will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the PhD funding and training environment in Scotland, ideally including an understanding of the ESRC recommissioning objectives for DTPs.
• Experience should include delivering PGR and ECR level training and/or PGR and ECR cohort development activities.
• The role holder should be able to demonstrate an ability to think and act strategically, with a strong ambition to enhance social sciences in Scotland.
• The Associate Directors will contribute creatively to a small and focused team: demonstrable teamworking skills are essential, particularly taking into account the geographical spread of SGSSS colleagues.
• Clear and effective communication skills are essential.
• A strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is required, including the application of practical initiatives to realise this commitment.
• Associate Directors serve as “ambassadors” for SGSSS, therefore relationship and network building skills are important.

To apply:
Please send a CV and covering letter to team@sgsss.ac.uk (email title: “Associate Director Application”) by 23:59 on Friday 29 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 the SGSSS Directorate, including what you wish to achieve during your term.

Agreement to undertake the role (including commitment that 0.3 FTE workmodelled hours will be available to SGSSS throughout the term of this role) should be sought from 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