ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme Competition
Guidance for Selection Process 2022/23

On 01 November 2022 the 2022/23 ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme Competition will launch, offering six postdoctoral fellowships funded by ESRC. As per the 2022/23 ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Call Specification, this opportunity is open to applicants who have completed their PhD at an institution that is part of a DTP and must be applying to an institution that is part of the SGSSS-DTP, aligned to an accredited pathway.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Competition is made up of a two-stage application process and a three-stage review process. For the full competition timeline, see here.

The two application stage deadlines are:
- Stage 1 Application Deadline: 4pm on 12 January 2023
- Stage 2 Application Deadline: 4pm on 23 March 2023 (shortlisted applicants only)

The three review stages (and dates) are:
- HEI Review Stage: 18 January 2023 to 16 February 2023
- Peer Review Stage: 24 March 2023 to 28 March 2023
- Final Selection Review Stage: 4 May 2022 to 25 May 2023

Successful and unsuccessful candidates will be kept informed on their progress through the competition by SGSSS at all relevant stages, however any feedback should be provided by the HEI Champion (as these fellowships are staff positions, not studentships).

1. HEI REVIEW STAGE

Applicants are required to submit a Stage 1 application via the SGSSS application system, SGSSS Apply. The Stage 1 application should consist of:

- Stage 1 Application Form (includes the proposal and CV),
- Official confirmation of eligible PhD (awarded or pending)
- Mentor Statement of Support (500 words maximum)

The Stage 1 Application Form provides the basis for intended host HEIs to make a decision about whether or not to support the application to Stage 2.

HEI Review Stage Process:

- Stage 1 applications will be accessible via SGSSS Apply for institutional ‘HEI Champions’ on 18 January 2023. Institutions, led by the HEI Champion, will then decide which candidates to shortlist, i.e. invite to submit a ‘full’ Stage 2 application.
- To ensure academic quality, equity and diversity, Stage 1 applications should be assessed by a balanced panel within each institution, comprising of the HEI Champion and at least two appropriate Pathway Representatives (Pathway Reps).
- To guide consistency and facilitate benchmarking, HEI review panels must use the Stage 1
**Fellowship Marking Framework** (total score out of 25).

- Each HEI Champion must submit candidate scores and comments (shortlisted/not shortlisted) through *SGSSS Apply* by 5pm on 16 February 2023. HEI Champions are also asked to provide a summary of the process followed to assess and rank applications (500 words max).
- To manage demand and meet timescales, each institution is encouraged to only shortlist the highest quality applications, capped at 6 (this is the same number as available fellowships). Please note, unsuccessful applicants at this stage will be advised to contact their HEI Champion, should they want feedback on their application.
- After an Equal Opportunities check conducted by the SGSSS Associate Director (Postdocs) and the SGSSS Head of Strategy and Operations, applicants will be updated on the outcome of the HEI Review Stage by SGSSS. Shortlisted candidates will work with host institutions to produce a full Stage 2 application, in line with ESRC requirements (see the guidance on our website [here](#) for more details).

2. **PEER REVIEW STAGE**

The Peer Review Stage will be conducted by various members of the SGSSS governance structure:

- Two Pathway Reps from the pathway the applicant has applied to (this could include the Pathway Convenor), however these Pathway Reps should not be from the same institution as the applicant’s intended institution. Please note, each Pathway Rep will be asked to review a maximum of 6 applications, however the actual number will likely be much lower.
- Two members of the SGSSS Deans Group. Please note, each Dean will be asked to review a maximum of 72 applications, however the actual number will likely be much lower.
- SGSSS Associate Director (Postdocs). Please note, the Associate Director will be asked to review a maximum of 72 applications, however the actual number will likely be much lower.

**Access**

Peer Reviewers will be given access to the relevant applications for review via *SGSSS Apply* from 29 March 2023. Stage 2 applications will consist of the following documents:

- Case for support (including Abstract/summary of progress; Impacts of fellow’s research; Research-related achievements; Planned programme of activities)
- Justification of resources
- CV
- Head of Department statement
- Mentor statement and summary CV
- Referee statement
- Workplan
- Data management plan (if applicable)
- List of publications (if applicable)
- Other attachments (e.g. If the fellow is intending to visit an overseas institution within the period of the fellowship, a letter of support from the institution must be provided, supporting the visit in principle).

**Assessment, Scores and Rankings**

Peer reviewers will assess and rank applications. To guide consistency, reviewers will use the [Stage 2 Fellowship Marking Framework](#) based on ESRC criteria.
Peer reviewers will enter their scores and comments via SGSSS Apply. **Peer reviewers must complete inputting their scores and comments by the deadline of 5pm on 27 April 2023.**

All applications will then be ranked according to the averaged peer review scores, completed by SGSSS. The SGSSS Director and Associate Director (Postdocs) will then complete a light touch review of the application scores and rankings to establish the cut-off point for applications to go forward to the Final Selection Review Stage. We expect this to be the top 20 ranked applications (this is an approximation). Applicants will then be updated on the outcome of the Peer Review Stage by SGSSS on 03 May 2023.

**3. FINAL SELECTION REVIEW STAGE**

The final selection of the 6 applicants to be nominated for a fellowship will be conducted by the following Panel Members:

- SGSSS Director
- One external DTP Director
- Two members of SGSSS's External Partners Group
- Lead of one Impact Acceleration Account
- Nominee from the Royal Society of Edinburgh
- Nominee from Research & Development, Partner HEI

**SGSSS Hub Leads** will be in attendance for reference by the Panel on matters relating to the disciplines in their respective Hubs.

**SGSSS Knowledge Exchange and Partnerships Manager** will also be in attendance for reference on impact activities.

On 04 May 2023, all panel members will be asked to review and rank the final shortlisted applications (approx. 20 applications) using the scores, rankings and comments collated during the Peer Review Stage of the competition as a guide. Panel members are not required to score the applications, but rather to rank them in the order they deem appropriate. The deadline for panel members to complete this task (via SGSSS Apply) is **12pm on 25 May 2023**. The rankings from all panel members will then be collated and averaged, resulting in a “Pre-Selection Panel Rank”, which will then be discussed during the Final Selection Panel meeting on **07 June 2023**. During the Final Selection Panel, the 6 applications to be nominated for a fellowship award will be agreed, along with a reserve list.

All successful (including those on the reserve list) and unsuccessful applicants will then be contacted by SGSSS on 16 June 2023. Applicants will be directed to the SGSSS Associate Director (Postdoctoral Fellows) should they request additional feedback.

If you have any queries regarding the process outlined in this guidance document, please contact SGSSS on team@sgsss.ac.uk.