



ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme Competition

Guidance for Selection Process 2024/25

On 5 November 2024 the 2024/25 ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme Competition will launch, offering four postdoctoral fellowships funded by ESRC. As per the 2024/25 [ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship Call Specification](#), this opportunity is open to applicants who have completed their PhD at a UK Research Organisation and must be applying to an institution that is part of the SGSSS-DTP, and also administratively aligned to an SGSSS approved [Unit of Assessment \(UoA\)](#) within their proposed institution. The mentor does not need to have the same alignment, however, the application needs to be able to justify why it is an appropriate mentorship arrangement. Some HEIs may choose to impose additional local conditions for their nominations regarding the alignment of the mentor.

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: 4 pm on 13 January 2025
- Stage 2 Application Deadline: 4pm on 25 March 2025 (shortlisted applicants only)

The three review stages (and dates) are:

- HEI Review Stage: 17 January to 17 February 2025
- Peer Review Stage: 31 March to 28 April 2025
- Final Selection Review Stage: 6 May to 27 May 2025

Successful and unsuccessful candidates will be kept informed of 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 decide about whether 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 **17 January 2025**. 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 PGR Leads.

- 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 **4pm on 17 February 2025**. **Please note: once the HEI Champion has selected 'Mark as Complete' on an individual's application, an email will be sent automatically to the applicant regarding the outcome of their application.**
- Applicants will be updated on the outcome of the HEI Review Stage by SGSSS on a rolling basis but no later than 4pm on 17 February 2024. 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). HEI Champions are also asked to provide a summary of the process followed to assess and rank applications (500 words max) to team@sgsss.ac.uk within one week of candidate submission.
- To manage demand and meet timescales, each institution is encouraged to only shortlist the highest quality applications, capped at 4 (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.
- Assurance checks will be conducted by the SGSSS Associate Director (Postdocs) and the SGSSS Head of Strategy and Operations.

2. PEER REVIEW STAGE

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

- Two PGR Leads from the [Unit of Assessment \(UoA\)](#) the applicant has applied to, however these PGR Leads should not be from the same institution as the applicant's intended institution. Please note, each PGR Lead may be asked to review a maximum of 4 applications, however the actual number will likely be lower.
- SGSSS Associate Director (Postdocs). Please note, the Associate Director will be asked to review a maximum of 56 applications, however the actual number will likely be lower.

Access

Peer Reviewers will be given access to the relevant applications for review via [SGSSS Apply](#) from **31 March 2025**. 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 4pm on 28 April 2025.**

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. Applicants will then be updated on the outcome of the Peer Review Stage by SGSSS on **5 May 2025**.

3. FINAL SELECTION REVIEW STAGE

The final selection of the 4 applicants to be nominated for a fellowship will be conducted by the following Panel Members:

- **SGSSS Director**
- **SGSSS Dean's Group member (ideally from a non-represented HEI)**
- **Two members of SGSSS's Non-HEI Partners (SDS & SFC)**
- **Nominee from Research & Development, Partner HEI**

On **6 May 2025**, all panel members will be asked to review and rank the final shortlisted 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 **4pm on 27 May 2025**. 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 **the w/c 2 June**. During the Final Selection Panel, the 4 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 9 June 2025. 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.