Scottish Graduate School of Social Science

Year in Review – 2022-23

Celebrating Success
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Thank You
Welcome to the SGSSS review of 2022-23. It has been a very busy but exciting year for SGSSS, our students, supervisor colleagues, HEI partners and other collaborators.

The focus of SGSSS is to fund and support doctoral students to become confident, accomplished social science researchers who will be able to address national and global challenges, making a difference across all sectors in Scotland, the UK and internationally. By working with our HEI and other partners, SGSSS delivers a range of training focused on research methods skills and wider transferable skills, cohort development events, collaboration opportunities, interdisciplinary working and knowledge exchange activities. Alongside all these activities is a focus on supporting our students through the challenging journey of a PhD.

2022-23 has been a very successful year and in the following pages you will read about our students, their research and the exciting opportunities they have explored through the SGSSS training, mentoring schemes, internship placements, overseas institutional visits and other activities. You will also read about the very valuable contributions of our partner organisations and the support they give SGSSS and our students.

This has also been a busy planning year as we prepared and submitted our bid to secure a new round of funding as an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). Thank you to the very wide range of people who contributed to our working groups and bid development teams.

2022-23 also marks my final year as SGSSS Director, as I conclude my term at the end of August. This is a great opportunity to introduce Professor Graeme Nixon as our incoming Director. Graeme is currently the Dean of Postgraduate Research at the University of Aberdeen, where he also holds a Personal Chair in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition and co-founded the Aberdeen Cardiovascular
and Diabetes Centre in 2018. Graeme has been involved with SGSSS for several years through his role as Dean, and it is great to know I am passing on the Director role to a highly experienced colleague with such enthusiasm and knowledge of SGSSS work. Good luck Graeme and I wish you every success in the new role.

I hope you find this year in review helpful in learning something about recent developments at the SGSSS. We are keen to stay in touch with our students, colleagues, partners and alumni. Please stay in touch via team@sgsss.ac.uk or on Twitter @SocSciScotland. Our website has lots of helpful information www.sgsss.ac.uk and you can also sign up to our weekly Friday Digest via Newsletter – SGSSS Social.

Thank you to everyone who has helped make 2022-23 such a successful year for SGSSS. We look forward to building on this in 2023-24.

Best wishes

[Signature]

Professor Jamie Pearce FAcSS FRSE FRSA
Director, SGSSS

Accessibility:
SGSSS is focused on ensuring accessibility is at the forefront of all our communications. For this newsletter, we’ve chosen a light grey background, sans serif font, and high-contrast section headings, all of which help dyslexic readers. If you would like to receive the document in another format, please feel free to contact us via team@sgsss.ac.uk
About SGSSS

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) is a nationwide partnership of 16 Scottish universities, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). We are the UK’s largest facilitator of funding, training, and support for doctoral students in social science.

SGSSS focus on equipping our PhD graduates to be independent thinkers able to contribute to addressing global and systemic problems. The scale of our DTP enables our graduates to apply their skills across sectors and to develop into future research leaders on the national and global stage. Working at the national scale allows us to draw upon a wide pool of training expertise (including ~2250 social scientists across Scotland) to deliver our vision for excellence in the social sciences. As well as our partner universities, SGSSS collaborates with many external and non-university partners, including the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, selected UKRI- and SFC-funded centres and units, and a range of actors in the public, private and civil sectors.

Our university partners are:
SGSSS is funded by:

[Logos of funding bodies]

SGSSS also work closely with:

[Logos of partner organizations]
Studentships

SGSSS were delighted to fund 64 new studentships starting 2022-23. Our new cohort of PhD researchers demonstrates the ongoing strength and depth of social science postgraduate research in Scotland. New students are working with eight universities across Scotland and a wide range of collaborative partners including Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Government, Forestry Land Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Fair-Trade Forum, and The Salvation Army.

Studentship applications are reviewed by a series of panels, with academic experts from SGSSS, universities, partner organisations and sector colleagues ensuring a rigorous assessment process. In 2022-23, the quality and quantity of applications was exceptionally high, reflecting the attractiveness of ESRC studentships and the opportunities for PhD students that SGSSS support.

The 2022-23 studentship awards process included the use of the “Whole Person Approach” to assessing PGR potential. This approach is designed to attract and recruit a wider set of PhD applicants, particularly from underrepresented groups. The Whole Person marking framework focuses on assessing candidate potential to flourish through their PhD research and contribute positively to the PhD community, ensuring the assessment goes beyond the traditionally narrow academic achievement definitions. We think that this approach is making an important difference and it is starting to be used by a range of our partners as well.

This cohort is the sixth cohort funded by ESRC as part of the first SGSSS Doctoral Training Partnership. We have been delighted to work with them throughout 2022-23 and look forward to supporting them on the rest of the PhD journey.

Studentships by numbers:

- 64 studentship awards for 2022-23
- 37 awards made through the Student-Led Competition
- 27 awards made through the Supervisor-Led Competitions, including three with Skills Development Scotland
- 12 awards were made projects that met the ESRC strategic “steers” definitions for Advanced Quantitative Methods, Datasets and Interdisciplinary pathways.
- 17 of our new cohort are international students (UKRI international caps apply to all studentship competitions) and are coming to Scotland from a wide range of countries including Chile, Nigeria, India, Peru, United States of America, and China.

During 2022-23 we also ran the studentship competitions for the seventh cohort of DTP students, who will start their PhD programmes in October 2023. 67 studentships have been awarded, based at 10 universities across Scotland and working with partners including Skills Development Scotland, National Literacy Trust, Wellbeing Economy
Alliance Scotland, and Dignity: Danish Institute Against Torture. We look forward to welcoming these students to SGSSS later this year.

2023-24 Studentships by numbers:
- 67 studentship awards for 2023-24
- 34 awards made through the Student-Led Competition
- 33 awards made through the Supervisor-Led Competitions, including two with Skills Development Scotland and two with Administrative Data Research Uk
- 16 awards were made projects that met the ESRC strategic “steers” definitions for Advanced Quantitative Methods, Datasets and Interdisciplinary pathways.
- 20 of our new cohort are international students (UKRI international caps apply to all studentship competitions) and are coming to Scotland from a wide range of countries including Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Chile and Kenya.

Postdoctoral Fellows

SGSSS participates in the ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme. This opportunity provides funding for a year (full time, two years part time) to give Fellows time and support to prepare for successful career in research in academia or beyond. The funding is intended to support people in the immediate postdoctoral stage of their career, consolidating their PhD and preparing the next phase of their work. Six Postdoctoral Fellowships were awarded for the 2022/23 academic year, based at the University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, and University of Strathclyde. The Postdoctoral Fellows began their fellowship with an induction day at the SGSSS offices in Edinburgh in October and have participated in two subsequent quarterly meetings with our final meeting to be held in August. This year’s cohort undertook a mock interview session with a panel of academics from the SGSSS directorate team at the quarterly meeting in May. They have participated in ongoing discussions about publishing, funding applications, and professional development opportunities.

Every year we have the difficult task of choosing between a very high standard of applications from across the Social Sciences. Previous holders of the Postdoctoral fellowships have gone onto jobs in academia in the UK and other parts of Europe and to work for research funding bodies.

Dr Chulani Kodikara, a current ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow based in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh has undertaken a wide range of activity during the past year. This includes participating in the Sri Lanka Roundtable organised by the University of Utrecht in June 2023, where Dr Kodikara presented a paper on “Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council: (Counter) Politics of Shame (and Honour)”. Dr Kodikara
has also published her research during this postdoctoral fellow year: “The Office on Missing Persons in Sri Lanka: Why Truth Is a Radical Proposition”, *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Volume 17, Issue 1, March 2023, pages 157-172, [https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijad005](https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijad005). After completion of her Fellowship, Dr Kodikara will start a Hilary Rodham Clinton Fellowship at Queens University, Belfast.
Training

Student Induction
Our annual training programme starts with our Student Induction in early November, where our new students gather to hear welcomes from our Directorate and SGSSS staff, find out about the opportunities they will have during their studentships, and begin to forge a sense of community as they meet each other and start to put faces to names. In November 2022 we welcomed 72 new students – comprised of those starting their +3, +3.25 and +3.5 programmes as well as those who had started a 1+3 the previous year – to the Court Hotel in Stirling for sessions including Hub Development, ESRC Training Funds, and “What I Wish I Knew”.

Hub Festival
In March, we ran our Hub festival, with the theme “Crisis! What crisis? Working through different types of crisis in your PhD”. 68 students signed up for this two-day event held at the University of Strathclyde, which was kicked off with a double keynote: first from our Associate Director Dr Adina Dudau about crisis, and second from Dr Jess Butler about the quality crisis in research publishing. Students then participated in a Three Minute Thesis competition and rounded off day one with a series of labs, focused on manuscripts, collaborative writing, and methods. On the second day, Jelena Milicev and Professor Stephany Biello gave a keynote on mental health and wellbeing in postgraduate research, followed by zine-making workshops split up by Hub – Economies, Mind and Technology; Society and Welfare; and People and Place. Dr Michaela Hruskova gave a closing plenary on professional identity, and then it was time for the awards for the Three Minute Thesis – these went to Mc Ronald I. Banderliche (Winner), Marcus Craigie (Runner Up) and Mary Abed Al Ahad (Runner Up).

Spring Into Methods
In April and May, Spring into Methods brought SGSSS together with the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH) to offer methods training to both social science and arts and humanities students across Scotland, through a competitive application process. These ran as 8 different workshops both online and in person, and 172 students who applied were awarded a space on sessions as diverse as Participatory Methods, Feminist Research, Personal Reflexivity, and Working with Objects.

Summer School
June brought our annual Summer School, the highlight in our training calendar: a hybrid residential and online event comprising 30 different sessions and workshops from more than 30 expert facilitators. For the in-person part, 229 students made their way to the John McIntyre Conference Centre next to the beautiful Holyrood Park. In between training sessions, more than 50 participants attended our traditional quiz night, got some green-space time with our visiting alpacas, and met each other over drinks during the welcome reception. Our online sessions proved even more popular, with 245 students signing up for a total of 8 workshops across two days. The opportunity to learn new skills, meet students from other universities and share conversations about career,
integrity, and research methods is something we are delighted to be able to facilitate, and we look forward to making Summer School even bigger and better next year. From the feedback we received, students’ most common highlights were the alpacas and the chance to socialise face-to-face with other students.

Student Feedback from Summer School:
“Really great event, helped me to meet other PGRs and really sparked ideas.”

“It was such a fantastic experience where we had opportunities to learn and network with others. I am thankful for this opportunity and appreciate the dedication of SGSSS to empower social science PhD researchers.”

“The presenter for the multi-disciplinary class was brilliant. They were really engaging and used a lot of their own experiences to explain the benefits and challenges of MD research.”

Summer School sessions included:
• Zine-making
• Data Visualisation Using R
• Normalising Vulnerability, Failure and Fallibility in Research
• Comparative Case Studies

Online sessions included:
• Publishing Strategies
• Responsible AI
• Introduction to Systematic Reviews
• Working With Focus Groups

Caption: Some of Team SGSSS with the alpacas at the 2023 Summer School (L-R: Linsey Fender, Katherine Stephen, Kelly Gardner, Andrea Torres.)
Alt text: four members of the SGSSS team stand in front of a pen of alpacas. The team are four women, all smiling at the camera. There are three alpacas, one brown and two white, in a metal pen on grass.

**Steers Events**
In June we held two Steers events. SGSSS Steers students are those with extra criteria to meet during their studentship, because ESRC has classified their projects as falling into one of three priority areas: Advanced Quantitative Methods, Datasets, or Interdisciplinary. This means that annually we offer sessions for the students to meet each other and discuss their specific criteria so that they feel fully supported to achieve them. We welcomed 31 AQM and Datasets students to Dovecot Studios to discussed administrative data and its uses; our Interdisciplinary event attracted 33 students to the inspiring Dynamic Earth venue to hear about challenges and strategies in interdisciplinarity, both within and outwith academia.

![Caption: Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh](image)
Alt text: an image of the main foyers of Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh. A very large inflated model of the earth is suspended from a white canvas ceiling. In the background is the SGSSS registration desk ready to receive event delegates.

**Final Year Conference**
On the same day as our Interdisciplinary Steers event at the same beautiful venue, Dynamic Earth, our final year students gathered for the Final Year Conference. This annual event discusses completing your PhD, career paths, skill self-assessment, and motivational topics at a point where typically students need that extra boost of encouragement to get their work over the line! This year we welcome speakers Professor Thusha Rajendran, Heid Jerstad from Sustrans, and newly graduated Dr Michelle Jamieson. Feedback we had from the event included:

“This was such a considered, well thought out conference. I had attended 4 days of conferences the week before and was feeling a bit demotivated, this was exactly what I needed. Thank you.”
“The keynote was excellent but I think what I appreciated most was Jo and Adina’s honest but also inspiring reflections on navigating a potential future academic career while remaining true to yourself and your values in terms of how you support and work with others.”

**Student Led Training**
The Student-Led Training (SLT) Fund is a training initiative open to all social science PhD students studying in Scotland, regardless of funding status. As well as allowing students to lead on deciding what events they would find most value, student organisers gain leadership and management skills, all while delivering the highest quality advanced training.

In 2022/23 SGSSS held two calls for SLT proposals. We awarded funding to ten proposals in July 2022 and eight proposals in February 2023. The sessions were mainly held online and covered topics as diverse as climate grief, menstruation, Stata (statistical software for data science), distributed lag models and co-creation workshops, researching vulnerable groups.

414 students registered to attend SLT sessions and most sessions had waiting lists for participation. Student feedback included:

“It has allowed us to reflect on our previous experiences and how we can improve in our rapport-building with research participants.”

“It was lovely to participate in the workshop!”

“Clear presentation, high relevance to my work, good mix of theory and practice, engaging”

“Hearing the experiences of the speakers was enlightening”

“It was such a valuable experience, and I am so grateful that I was selected to facilitate this event. Communication with the SGSSS was great.”

**Pathway Led Training**
The Pathway Training Fund is designed to support the delivery of advanced and specialist disciplinary training. Training is advanced when compared to the core training received at Masters level, both in terms of research methods and substantive content. It is developed by academic representatives from across all 15 SGSSS pathways. In 2022/23, four proposals were funded. These included in-person residential courses for social anthropologists, an online accountancy and finance colloquium, and a course on building skills and methods for studying other places.
Organiser feedback included: “Thanks again to the SGSSS PTF scheme. Every year this event is really appreciated by students and signposted as a crucial event in their professional development.”
Internships

SGSSS has partnered with 5 organisations to run 48 internships in 2022/23. PhD interns have worked on a variety of placements across the public sector, with Scottish Government, Environmental Standards Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, and Healthcare Improvement Scotland. We also partnered with the Children and Young People’s Centre for Justice at the University of Strathclyde to develop a placement which sought to further knowledge about child criminal exploitation in Scotland.

PhD interns said:
- “The internship gave me invaluable practical understanding of how policy is created and understood within organisations”
- “Knowing the working environment outside academia is essential to know about the downsides and advantages of each sector. It helped me value certain aspects of academia more and strengthened my position of knowing that there are other good alternatives if an academic career does not work out”

Our partner organisations said:
- “Our PhD intern was enthusiastic and willing to hit the ground running and throw herself into the work. She grew in confidence during her internship and was up to push herself outside her comfort zone”
- “It was a pleasure working with our PhD intern and the work he produced exceeded our expectations, allowing us to make good progress on a project we would otherwise not have been able to. He was a valued member of the team and brought new insights to our work from his PhD experience.”

Mentoring schemes

SGSSS runs two flagship mentoring schemes. The RSE Mentoring Scheme, led in partnership with the Royal Society of Edinburgh, matches ESRC-funded students with leading academics from the RSE network to explore interdisciplinarity and collaboration. The Career Pathways Mentoring Scheme matches current PhD students with PhD alumni who have gone on to work in the public, private or third sectors, to support those students in understanding what different career paths can look like.

We received 42 applications across both schemes in 2022/23 and were able to make 22 matches. The programmes kicked off with an in-person Launch Event in January 2023 at the Royal Society of Edinburgh building on George Street. Mentors and mentees had the chance to meet one another and discuss different approaches to mentoring in a session led by Charlotte Bonner-Evans of the Future Leaders Fellows Development Network.
Overseas Fieldwork and Overseas Institutional Visits

In addition to fees and stipends, our ESRC funded students are entitled to apply for a series of additional funding opportunities to enhance their student experience.

Overseas Institutional Visits (“OIVs”) are funded trips of up to a month to an academic institution outside of the UK, in order to build academic networks, expand horizons and work on specific projects that will enhance the student’s PhD. In 2022-23, we funded 9 of these OIVs, and students visited Spain, Canada, Norway, Italy, the USA, Japan and Finland. Here’s what they had to say about their experiences:

Laureen Walker, who visited Girona, Spain: “During my time in Girona, I had to speak about my research in both English and Spanish, which required me to distil the
message of my research in a clear and concise manner. Equally, in preparing and planning to present my research, I had to really hone in on the most salient aspects and the most relevant theories, which has been invaluable for me. My stay in Girona has also given me a much-needed pause from data collection and the day-to-day grind of a PhD. It has given me the space to reflect on my PhD journey so far, what I have achieved and what I still need to do. It has also given me a bit of distance from my thesis, so that I can return to it with increased clarity and focus.”

Laura Fey, who visited Alberta, Canada: “I am very grateful for the close and engaged supervision that I am receiving here in Canada and all the opportunities I am receiving to learn and develop into an academic… On one side, it feels like I arrived only yesterday, on the other side, when I think about everything I have done and experienced it feels like I am here for much longer already.”

Sarune Savickaite, who visited Tokyo, Japan: “One of the key aspects for my TNA this year was to seek mentorship from female academics, as most of the supervision I had thus far was led by male researchers. Although I had all the support I could ask for my PhD, as an immigrant and early career female researcher, I felt that I wanted to learn from international team and successful lab lead. I aspire to have my own lab one day and learning from Prof Nagai and her team was incredibly valuable.”
Overseas Fieldwork
Around 10% of our students have planned fieldwork that takes them abroad, and SGSSS offers them the funding to cover travel and other expenses. It has been especially nice to facilitate this in 2022-2023 after the past two years of extreme travel restrictions. Seven students undertook their Overseas Fieldwork this academic year, to places including Kazakhstan, Jamaica, India, and Palestine.
Work of SGSSS Student Representatives

Our student reps are PhD students from across Scotland, representing our students in the various levels of governance within SGSSS. In 2022/23 the SGSSS student representatives were Daisy Bao, Jessica Cleary and Yuemiao Ma. Katherine Stephen, Michael Vallely and Jon Macfarlane also held these roles for part of the year.

Student reps have the opportunity to get involved in lots of different activities, including leading the organisation of the Student-Led Symposium, which this year was on the theme of “Building Communities” and held at the University of Strathclyde in June. An unusual highlight of the day can be seen here: [https://twitter.com/i/status/1669672459874738182](https://twitter.com/i/status/1669672459874738182)

For the Student-Led Symposium, the regular student reps were supported by Sne Zondo, Qianyu Yang Marianne Wilson and Kate Molyneaux.

Other activities our student reps have been involved with are sitting on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee, being a part of the Studentships working group, and sharing their experiences with students at the Student Induction and in information webinars. Thank you to all our student reps for their hard work, advice and support throughout the past year.

**Focusing on the future:** working with the existing student reps, SGSSS have developed a new role of “Student Associate Officer”, which will be a paid role focused on student representation, consultation and governance participation. We are aiming to introduce these roles in the coming academic year.

Black History Month

In October 2022, SGSSS once again collaborated with our colleagues in the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH) to run a series of Lunchtime Talk events discussing and celebrating the history, achievements and contributions of black and minority ethnic people from across and beyond Scotland. The Lunchtime Talks were very well received and covered a wide range of topics, including: “Doctors on the move: Unpacking the consequences of doctors of Nigerian doctors’ migration to the UK” by Mohammed Abdullahi, “Dreaming Women Like Us” by Esther Uwandu and “Hybridisation and Identity in Academia – a Black Experience” by Dr Shelly-Ann Gajadhar. Dr Gajadhar (who runs [Alphastute Limited](http://www.alphastute.co.uk)) also provided coaching and support to the students presenting during the talks.

**Get involved:** plans for Black History Month 2023 are already underway – look for information on the SGSSS and SGSAH websites and social media: [www.blackhistorymonthscotland.org](http://www.blackhistorymonthscotland.org).
Collaboration Showcase and Impact Competition

The Collaboration Showcase took place on 31 May 2023 at the beautiful V&A Dundee. We were joined by a wide range of partners across academia and from external organisations. We were also very pleased to welcome Scotland’s Deputy First Minister, Shona Robison, to the event.

The Collaboration Showcase is designed to bring together our partners for formal and informal conversations about social science research. Our panel of students and hosts reflected on their placement experiences to help us all consider how placements can become a greater part of doctoral study moving forwards.

Impact Competition

Social science PhD research has the potential to make an incredible difference for communities in Scotland and beyond. The SGSSS Impact Competition sets out to showcase the amazing work that students are doing and provide funds to support them with maximizing the impact of their work.

This year SGSSS received more than 30 applications across two categories of “planned impact” and “achieved impact”. An expert review panel of academics, knowledge exchange professionals and external partners assessed the applications. Three
candidates were shortlisted in each category, and more than 1000 votes were cast in a public vote to determine the winners. Professor Nick Bailey presented the awards to the fantastic winners of the SGSSS Impact Competition 2023.

**Planned Impact:**
- Shortlisted: Marcus William Craigie (University of Aberdeen and James Hutton Institute)
- Shortlisted: Louisa Gilchrist (Heriot-Watt University)
- Winner: Arushi Mathur (University of Strathclyde)

![Caption: Professor Nick Bailey and our Planned Impact Competition candidates, L-R: Nick Bailey, Arushi Mathur, Louisa Gilchrist and Marcus Craigie](image)

Alt text: the Planned Impact Competition shortlisted candidates stand in a group with Professor Nick Bailey. From left to right they are: Nick Bailey, Arushi Mathur, Louisa Gilchrist and Marcus Craigie. The competition candidates are all holding their certificates. In the background is a blue and pink stage and screen saying, “Planned Impact Category”.

Photo credit: Chris Scott Photography Dundee

**Achieved Impact:**
- Shortlisted: Rosie Priest (University of Stirling)
- Winner: Laura Jones (University of Dundee)
- Winner: Karen Fullerton-Chambers (University of the West of Scotland)
Scotland’s Deputy First Minister, Shona Robison spoke with the finalists for the SGSSS Impact Competition to learn more about their work and its potential reach across policy areas. Each winner will also receive £500 to put towards the further impact of their research.
Caption: L-R: Achieved Impact Competition winner Laura Jones, Deputy First Minister Shona Robison and Kathryn Sharp of Dundee City Council
Alt text: From left to right, Laura Jones, Deputy First Minister Shona Robison and Kathryn Sharp of Dundee City Council smile at the camera. The three women are standing in the V&A Dundee, in front of posters that summarise Laura’s research.
Photo credit: Chris Scott Photography Dundee
Celebrating Success of PhD Completions

We always enjoy celebrating the completion of their PhD journey with our SGSSS students – well done to each and every one! We are so proud of all SGSSS student achievements and look forward to following your ongoing success in the future.

We receive this feedback from of our recent graduates, Rebecca Grant:

“The SGSSS kindly supported my 1+3 MRes and PhD since 2018 and also supported a 4-month COVID-19 extension and a 3-month internship with the Scottish Government. I wanted to thank the whole SGSSS team for the opportunity to carry out research for the PhD and for the opportunities that SGSSS funding has enabled.

Through the funding provided by the SGSSS I have been able to work with the Scottish Government and to conduct research in Rwanda and in the UK on challenges and opportunities linked to renewable energies in low-income settings. I have also been able to carry out remote research with the University of Rwanda through funding provided by the SGSSS. Collectively, and with the prestige of the SGSSS, these have been invaluable opportunities and experiences to have undertaken. I owe a huge amount to the SGSSS.”

Rebecca Grant, SGSSS studentship holder at University of Edinburgh (PhD submission in Summer 2023); her post PhD role is with a private sector consultancy firm.
Doctoral Training Partnership Funding

A key focus for the past year has been SGSSS’ bid to secure a new round of funding as an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). 2023/24 will see the final funded cohort of students from the current DTP start their PhD programmes. Our funders, ESRC, announced in June 22 that a further five years of funding was available, subject to a competitive bid process.

SGSSS organised a wide range of working groups with colleagues, students, partners and other stakeholders, focused on a range of topics including student culture and support; skills, training and employability; equality, diversity and inclusion; and collaboration and impact. A VERY big thank you to everyone who contributed to these working groups and to the design and writing of the bid.

The final bid was submitted on 14 February 2023, the Directorate team then received and responded to peer review comments and attended an interview with ESRC colleagues in Swindon. Final outcomes are expected in early Autumn 2023, but preparatory work has already started on reviewing and redesigning studentship application processes, training modules and Research in Practice support and internship opportunities. We hope that in this review next year we will be describing a successful implementation year, ahead of the first new cohort starting in October 2024.

SGSSS Staffing Changes

During 2022/23, our SGSSS team said goodbye to our colleague Jared De Bruin, who started a new role with our colleagues in the Social AI CDT. During the year we welcomed Linsey Fender as the new Head of Strategy and Operations, Andrea Torres as our new Studentships Coordinator, and Katherine Stephen as our new Student Experience Coordinator.

We also said goodbye and thank you to Kiril Sharapov and Alan Marshall, both of whom came to the end of their Associate Director terms during the year. Their work and contribution over the years was very much appreciated. Thank you both and best wishes for the future.
Looking Ahead

After a full and successful 2022/23, SGSSS are already planning and looking ahead to 2023/34. Key activities and milestones include:

- **Our Cohort 7 students are starting their PhD journey:** as mentioned above, 67 students have been awarded studentships on a mixture of training programmes. We also have two students supported through the ESRC Administrative Data Research UK programme. One of our students has received Stuart Hall Fellowships in addition to their studentships the Stuart Hall Foundation supports postgraduate researchers from non-traditional and disadvantaged backgrounds through training and networks across the UK. We look forward to welcoming all our new students and supporting them on their exciting PhD journeys.

- **New internship opportunities:** we have a fantastic range of placements available for Autumn 2023, with public sector organisations, in higher education, and with a charity focused on bringing marine science history to life. Topics include exploring key themes in online violence against women and girls (Scottish Government), creating outputs and visualisations for data around young people’s choices in education (Skills Development Scotland), working with community groups to develop an engagement plan (SS Explorer), producing recommendations for better use of data in the benefits system (Social Security Scotland), and an opportunity to work with SGSSS directly. There will also be a further exciting round of internships available in Summer 2024.

- **DTP 2 preparation:** we will be spending significant time in 2023/24 preparing for the new opportunities of further DTP funding, with new studentships, a focus on “Grand Challenges” and the key objective of increasing our “research in practice” training for students, including further internship opportunities and associated training to help students prepare for life beyond their PhD. An exciting year ahead!
How to Get Involved with SGSSS

We hope you have enjoyed reading about the SGSSS activities over the past year. There are many ways to connect with SGSSS and work with us. Please get in touch, we would be delighted to hear from you!

**Future studentships and fellowships** – keen to apply for a SGSSS studentship or Postdoctoral Fellowship? We post our information on our website – look out for 2023/24 updates coming soon: [SGSSS Studentships](#) and [SGSSS Postdoctoral Fellowships](#)

**Existing students** – our [Student Handbook](#) has a lot of great information, and you can also register with [SOCIAL](#) to stay in touch with events, opportunities and fellow students.

**Supervisors and colleagues** – there is a lot of guidance and information on our [website](#) and we are developing new ideas for supervisor forums and a community of practice. Please get in touch if you have any great ideas to share! We also look forward to seeing you at our HEI visits in August and September 2023.

**Alumni** – we would love to hear about our PhD alumni are now involved with. Please join our [Alumni Community](#) and keep in touch. You might also wish to consider becoming involved in our mentoring or internship programmes? Please see below for details.

**Partners** – we are always keen to build on our existing great partnerships and create new connections. If you would like to explore opportunities to support a [collaborative research project](#), [host an internship](#) or become involved with our [mentoring programmes](#), please get in touch.

Our team can be reached via [team@sgsss.ac.uk](mailto:team@sgsss.ac.uk) or on Twitter @SocSciScotland. Our website has lots of helpful information [www.sgsss.ac.uk](http://www.sgsss.ac.uk) and you can also sign up to our Friday Digest via [Newsletter – SGSSS Social](#).
Thank you to everyone who works with us

As we approach the end of academic year 2022/23 and the start of an exciting new year, a big thank you from all the SGSSS team to everyone who works with us. Students, supervisors, all governance colleagues (Supervisory Board, Deans, Pathway Convenors and Reps, HEI Admin Leads), colleagues from ESRC, SFC, Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and all partners – the work of SGSSS is only achievable through great collaboration with you all. Thank you for helping make this another very successful year for SGSSS. We look forward to working with you in 2023/24.

Team SGSSS