

SGSSS-SFC Saltire Emerging Research Scheme for the Social Sciences Exchange Programme

Nominated Host University

This consortium will be led by the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS), which is based at the University of Edinburgh and involves all Scottish universities providing social science education - a further 15 HEI partners (Aberdeen, Abertay, Dundee, Glasgow Caledonian, Glasgow, Heriot Watt, Napier, Queen Margaret, RGU, SRUC, Stirling, Strathclyde, UHI and UWS). SGSSS has already successfully delivered against our remit to provide training and to offer internship opportunities for all doctoral students across Scotland who define themselves as social scientists as well as to early career researchers.

Brief description of proposed exchange programme

Key aims and objectives of the programme: The overarching aim is to facilitate opportunities for doctoral students (PGRs) and early career researchers (ECRs)¹ in the social sciences to develop new research relationships with European research partners that create legacy materials and relationships for the wider community. The objectives are to support PGRs and ECRs in:

- enabling research collaboration activity with European partners;
- fostering the development of long-term relationships between Scottish and European social science researchers, leading towards the development of future joint research initiatives;
- identifying common research priorities, promoting the sharing of research ideas (themes, data, new methodologies) and approaches to fostering inclusive research cultures between Scottish and European researchers;
- building professional networks with European collaborators;
- enabling knowledge transfer between Scottish and European partners, connecting researchers and expertise with the wider community;
- establishing networks with non-academic collaborators (policy makers, businesses, third sector organisations) and engaging with the wider population through public engagement activities;
- and, developing future leadership skills to develop capacity for application to external funders such as ESRC New Investigator awards.

As well as enhancing the career development opportunities of the individual PGRs and ECRs, the scheme will allow us to develop a longer-term legacy for our HEIs and for our broader research community, establishing the SGSSS as a partner of choice for European institutions.

Details of the proposed scheme: The programme will offer opportunities for incoming and outgoing social science PGRs and ECRs to apply for an exchange visit allowing them to spend up to 6 months under the guidance of a nominated academic mentor in a European host institution, undertaking a programme of learning, knowledge exchange, co-production of the building blocks for future research collaboration and contribution to broader cohort development. The exchange programme will build on the SGSSS's experience of awarding competitive funding, most notably our [Overseas Institutional Visits scheme](#) (OIVs). We have robust processes in place and the mode of promotion, application criteria and guidance, budgets, insurance, health and safety assessment, and wraparound support would draw on learning from our existing scheme. The scheme will operate through two routes. First, we will have an open call for applications (up to 6 opportunities) whereby doctoral students and ECRs can submit a proposal, aligned with one of our priority research themes, drawing on their developing networks including those of their research group(s). The SGSSS priority themes are based on the [National Outcomes](#) which track Scotland's progress in the [National Performance Framework](#). The National Outcomes are used by the SGSSS to demonstrate our contributions to Scottish policy and society. Second, we will develop targeted opportunities (up to 6) with existing partners within the SGSSS consortium. The partnership details will be finalised in autumn as we work with our existing training pathways to identify candidate partnerships for inclusion, and then prioritise the most promising opportunities for collaborative working with European partners. These are likely to include existing research infrastructure investments such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks.

An example of how we will develop an ongoing collaboration is provided by the SGSSS work with the [Big Data Centre for Environment & Health \(BERTHA\)](#), Aarhus University, Denmark: Our existing partnership illustrates how social science links across countries can develop capacity in challenge focused, interdisciplinary research. The work of BERTHA sits squarely in our theme of 'Global Health' and brings together researchers across disciplines as well as offering opportunities for developing advanced data skills. To date, SGSSS has utilised this partnership to cross-fertilise training opportunities with Scottish PGRs attending residential training focused on health focused application development in Denmark whilst

¹ We define ECRs as per the RSE [definition](#): ECR applicants must be within seven years of the award of their PhD (from the point of successful PhD viva to the point of applying) and be within seven years of their first academic appointment (paid contract of employment which lists research or teaching as the primary role).

students from Aarhus took part in the SGSSS summer school. Within the current proposal, PGRs and ECRs from across Scotland could apply for an exchange visit (as described above) to BERTHA (and other identified partners) whilst reciprocal arrangements would be made for those from Danish partner institutions to study at relevant centres of excellence in Scotland. For our partnership with BERTHA these would include centres such as: Urban Big Data Centre; Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research; Centre for Research on Environment, Society & Health; Scottish Health Data Science; Longitudinal Studies Centre Scotland; Demographics at St Andrews; MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit. Co-funding will be sought from partners with level of investment forming part of the assessment process.

EDI and Placement Support: The scheme will be designed to facilitate participation from students of all backgrounds and minimise existing barriers (see EqIA). Our application support will include a webinar for students supporting them to source potential European partners as well as examples of how the placement could be designed and a Q&A with students who have participated in our existing OIV scheme. We will encourage flexibility in placement design, e.g., a short visit combined with a longer online engagement for those unable to be away for a prolonged period. All applicants will demonstrate how their proposal nurtures inclusive research cultures and considers under-represented groups in cohort building. There will be a comprehensive system of pre, during and post visit support for all successful applicants to help them define individual and collective benefits/outcomes, enhance readiness, maximise the value of their experience and finally reflect on and articulate learning. This will include training in project management, cultural intelligence and establishing networks; a buddy system including between ECRs and PGRs, virtual coffees/discussion forum; and an end of programme reflective interview (pulling out key learnings linked to the research development framework, and a workshop/case study development supporting future applicants).

Assessment of Applications: Applicants will submit: a description of the proposed placement (its key collaborative relationships and expected outputs for the individual and wider networks); a Training Needs Analysis; a fully costed budget including a statement of partner contribution; and, supporting statements from the supervisor and host institution. Using criteria developed from our existing OIV scheme and from the ESRC Network Scheme, we will assess applications based on:

Quality and feasibility of Proposed Collaboration (50%)

- Quality, coherence and feasibility of the proposal
- Fit of the proposal with the remit of the scheme and the applicant's Training Needs Analysis
- Quality of the supervisor's supporting statement including rationale & anticipated outcomes
- Quality of the host supervisor's statement, including work programme details (e.g. writing collaborations, networking, involvement in training, etc) and practical support planned.
- Risk assessment and contingency planning

Benefit and Impact (30%)

- Ability of the work programme to deliver value-added to the Doctoral/post-doctoral experience (including communication, KE, networking, leadership and other employability benefits).
- Ability of the work programme to nurture inclusive research cultures and contribute to wider cohort development activities for Scotland's wider PGR and ECR social science community (including consideration of under-represented groups).
- Added value to the Scottish and European social science community.
- Sustainability of the consortium, including establishing enduring and productive relationships beyond the placement, including generating future outputs and joint research projects.
- Potential for engagement with the wider population (e.g., public dissemination activities, research co-design practices).

Value for Money (20%)

- Value for money and appropriate costing of activities including match contributions.

When and how will be advertised: The scheme will be advertised through our existing communication channels including our Weekly Digest (circa 4000 subscribers), social media channels (>3000 followers) and through partner HEIs using our governance arrangements (PGR Deans and HEI-level Administrator

Leads). We are confident that we can communicate the opportunities quickly and efficiently to the whole social science community in Scotland.

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Key stages and dates of programme

- Early September: Opportunity promoted to SGSSS community.
- Mid-Sept: Application workshop for interested applicants including guidance on how to find/approach a partner
- Deadline: Mid October (coincide with our OIV deadline)
- Outcomes: Early November for placements running from January.
- January: Pre-departure event
- Ongoing Jan- July: Placement support programme
- January – June: placements take place
- June/July: Post placement reflective interview and sharing of learning

Brief description of consortium and its suitability for delivering the proposed programme (3 paragraphs max)

Established a decade ago, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) is the largest and most inclusive of the ESRC-funded Doctoral Training Partnerships, providing the front door to Scottish social science research and training. Our national partnership draws on the expertise of all 16 Scottish Universities enabling us to bring together the best social science ideas, skills and initiatives from across the country to contribute to the national ambitions detailed in Scotland's National Performance Framework. We are achieving our objectives for deep and enduring partnerships with key influencers in the public, private and third sectors. Our mechanisms for partnership building are proving successful in supporting our students in developing collaborative skills and ensuring they are able to realise and accelerate the impact of their research. In the last ten years we have facilitated 200+ 3-month internships for our student body in public, private and third sector organisations in Scotland, the UK and beyond. Our Scotland-wide approach also facilitates a high-quality training environment with inclusivity and interdisciplinarity at the core; since October 2017, over 2400 places have been taken up at 60 events spread across the country, including working with DTP colleagues funded through other research councils. Critically, we work hard to include all HEIs to avoid a divided cohort of students between 'elite' DTP and non-DTP students. Thus, whilst our core funding comes from the ESRC to support studentships, training, collaboration etc. for that cohort, additional investment from the SFC enables us to ensure our multiple opportunities are available to *all* social science students across Scotland. A key strategic priority over the past four years has been internationalisation and we have provided multiple networking, training and collaborative opportunities for SGSSS students including events focused on 'grand challenges' and international collaboration, and a programme of overseas institutional visits.

In order to successfully operate across the Scottish HEIs, the SGSSS has developed a robust set of governance arrangements which includes our: Supervisor Board (ensuring VP-level representation from partner HEIs); External Partners Group (advising on emerging opportunities with input from public and private sectors, and the RSE); Deans Group (each HEI represented by the PGR Dean - or equivalent - with operational responsibility in their HEI); and an HEI Administrator Leads Group (bringing together key professional services staff). In addition, we have a Student Representatives group which ensures the views and ideas from our student body are central to the development of the SGSSS. Within the core leadership and management team in the SGSSS we have an Associate Director who has responsibility for our internationalisation work across the studentship competitions, training and collaboration.

Given this long track-record of collaborative working across all the Scottish universities, the SGSSS is exceptionally well-placed to deliver an exchange programme during the 2021-22 academic year. The SGSSS has in place well-tested and carefully refined processes for the competitive award of funding including our annual studentship competitions (around 60 per year), internships (around 65 per year), and, importantly, our Overseas Institutional Visits (OIV) scheme. Ordinarily (pre-pandemic), we make around 8 awards each year through our OIV scheme and have in the past supported SGSSS students in making short visits (typically 1-3 months) to overseas partner universities including in France, Netherlands and Italy. These have facilitated longer-term research networks and have contributed to

research impact. The OIV scheme is currently only available to our ESRC-funded students, and we are unable to offer an equivalent opportunity to our remaining 3000+ social science students across Scotland. One of the significant benefits of this scheme would be the ability to extend our established commitment to inclusivity to this much wider cohort.

Contingency plans

If required, we would reconfigure the budget to maximise the number of opportunities whilst also maximising the potential for short KE visits at the end of placements if viable. If physical travel is not possible for any/all of the exchange visits, we will ensure the following elements are in place:

- A visitor email and identified academic mentor and PGR buddy.
- An e-induction programme including opportunities to meet partner colleagues and communicate exchange aims.
- A weekly meeting of student with mentor to ensure that learning objectives are being met.
- Inclusion of student in seminar series and other knowledge exchange events (including with non-academic audiences)
- Student to facilitate a joint learning event between home and exchange institution.
- An e-support network of exchange students meeting monthly with Action Learning Support

Proposed exchange programme summary (3 paragraphs)

Led by the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) on behalf of 16 Scottish universities, this consortium bid seeks to facilitate opportunities for doctoral students and ECRs in the social sciences across Scotland to develop new research relationships with European research partners. Building on our decade-long experience of successfully facilitating training and collaboration opportunities for our 3000+ students, and running competitive funding schemes including our annual studentship competitions (in particular, our overseas institutional visits scheme) and our more recent PDF scheme, we are well-placed to deliver on the ambitions of the SFC Saltire Emerging Researcher Scheme. Our ambitions for this scheme are to support doctoral students and early career researchers in: developing an enduring legacy of research collaborations between Scottish and European social science researchers; identifying common research priorities and promoting the sharing of research ideas between Scottish and European researchers; enabling knowledge transfer across pan-European academic and policy networks with Scottish HEIs at the core; and developing future research leadership skills amongst doctoral students and early career researchers.

The programme will offer opportunities for incoming and outgoing social science PGRs and ECRs to apply for an exchange visit allowing them to spend up to 6 months under the guidance of a nominated academic mentor in a European host institution, undertaking a programme of learning, knowledge exchange, co-production of the building blocks for future research collaboration and contribution to broader cohort development. The scheme will operate through two routes. First, we will have an open call for applications whereby doctoral students and ECRs can submit a proposal, aligned with one of our priority areas of research (based on the National performance Framework), that draws on the networks they have begun to develop and/or the existing connections in their own research group. Second, we will develop targeted opportunities with existing key partners within the consortium whereby we will identify and prioritise the most promising opportunities that build on existing networks amongst the SGSSS community in terms of the collaborative working with European partners (e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks, or large UKRI investments. All applications will be expected to demonstrate a benefit across a wider cohort of students, ECRs and/or their institutions such as organising networking events for stakeholders or identifying opportunities for future collaborative working.

The exchange programme will be advertised through our well-established communication channels and build on the SGSSS's experience of awarding competitive funding, most notably our Overseas Institutional Visits scheme. We have robust processes in place and the mode of promotion, application criteria and guidance, budgets, insurance, health and safety assessment, and wraparound support would all draw on

learning from our existing scheme. All applications will be assessed according to the: Quality and Feasibility of Proposed Collaboration (50%); Benefit and Impact (30%); and Value for Money (20%). Further, the scheme will also be designed to facilitate participation from students of all Institutions and backgrounds and minimise existing barriers, including support at each stage of the journey from pre-application to programme reflection.

In sum the opportunity to host this scheme will be transformative for the SGSSS, its partner organisations and constituents, ensuring that our existing good practice in supporting international exchange visits is extended to a wider constituency of students and ECRs, enabling a robust foundation for future research collaborations with our European partners and establishing the SGSSS as a partner of choice for European research institutions.

Programme income (including all sources) and expenditure statement

Within the £10,000 per placement (maximum), a proportion would be available for the applicant to prepare a placement budget that would cover stipend for the duration of the placement (in cases where funding was paused); travel (including COVID testing if required); accommodation and other costs associated with placement-specific activities. A separate budget would be available to support any EDI needs (e.g. special transport requirements). A top slice (approx. £5K) would be reserved to support programme administration and costs associated with placement training and support.

Outline of Programme Income and Expenditure

Income/In-kind contributions	Amount	Comments
Placement costs for incoming researchers from European partner institutions	in-kind	Supporting up to 6 placements in SGSSS HEIs from existing European partners who would pay all placement costs for their researchers based on the same arrangements as the outgoing scheme.
Co-funding for placement support	£2500	Funding from existing SGSSS budget as placement support will be linked with support offered on existing OIV scheme
Expenditure		
Placement Costs: May include: stipend, travel, accommodation and other costs associated with placement-specific activities e.g. supporting a seminar	£90,000	Supporting up to 6 placements in the open call and 6 targeted opportunities from SGSSS HEIs to European partners
Programme administration and costs associated with placement training and support.	£5000	Includes modest staff time to administer the scheme and training facilitators to deliver support sessions
EDI budget (e.g. special transport requirements, specialised software etc.)	£5000	