



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

SCOTTISH  
GRADUATE  
SCHOOL FOR  
ARTS &  
HUMANITIES  
Sgoil Ceumnachaidh na h-Alba airson  
Ealain agus Daonnachdan

# SGSAH Open Studentship Competition

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# Session Outline

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The session will cover:

- Details of the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH)
- PhD funding available from SGSAH through the Open Studentship competition
- How to apply for this funding
- What SGSAH is looking for in an application



# Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH)

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- World's first national Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities
- Funded by Arts & Humanities Research Council & Scottish Funding Council
- 10 Scottish HEIs in the Doctoral Training Partnership
- Enhances and adds value to the HEI training provision
- DTP offers PhD funding within AHRC subject areas
- 3.5 years of full-time funding / 7 years of part-time funding
- 2025/26 will be the last intake of funded students.

# The Open Studentship Competition

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- Full awards on offer which include annual stipend

UKRI rate, currently £19,237 for full-time students and PhD tuition fee. Can offer part-time funding

- Approx. 60 SGSAH awards available for 2025 entry
- University can nominate up to 60 candidates including up to 19 International applicants
- Applicants need to meet University PhD entry criteria
- Current PhD students can apply if they will have at least 50% of the prescribed time remaining on 30 September 2025
- Funding requires you to be based in the UK during the studentship other than for periods of fieldwork.



# Fee Status

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- Awards are open to Home and International applicants.
- To qualify for Home status an applicant must:
  - Be a UK national (meeting residency requirements), OR
  - Have settled status, OR
  - Have pre-settled status **AND** meet residency requirement (3 years residency in the UK/EEA/Gibraltar/Switzerland immediately before the start of their PhD) OR
  - Have indefinite leave to enter or remain
- Any queries: contact [pgawards@ed.ac.uk](mailto:pgawards@ed.ac.uk)

# Timeline

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4 stages of SGSAH funding competition

- Institution selects nominees - Nov 2024 to Jan 2025
- SGSAH Portal Application - 3rd Feb to 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025 (12 noon GMT)
- SGSAH Panel Review - March 2025
- SGSAH Executive Panel and final decisions - end April 2025

# How to Apply: Institution Nomination Stage

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1. Make contact with UoE supervisor with your project details and **apply for a relevant PhD** at University of Edinburgh - be aware of varying admission deadlines.  
(Current PhD students need only to submit the SGSAH funding application to the School.)
2. Check School SGSAH funding application and admission deadlines - [www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/uk-eu/research-councils/ahrc](http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/uk-eu/research-councils/ahrc)
3. Read SGSAH guidance for Applicants - [www.sgsah.ac.uk/prospective/dtp](http://www.sgsah.ac.uk/prospective/dtp)
4. **Complete the SGSAH funding application form** and return it to the relevant School in time for their funding application deadline.

# How to Apply: Institution Nomination Stage

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5. Each School will consider applications and make their nominations by late December 2024.
6. College PGR team will email you if you are nominated and will ask for confirmation that you would like to submit a portal application with UoE. You can submit only once to the SGSAH portal.
7. Nominee to refine SGSAH funding application with PhD supervisor and supervisor to complete Institutional Statement of Support.
8. Both the SGSAH funding application and Institutional Statement of support are to be submitted to College review panel for feedback. Nominees are to submit a revised copy of your funding application to College before 17 January 2025. The review will take at least a week and feedback will be emailed to you.



# How to Apply: SGSAH Portal Application

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- Nominee to complete SGSAH online application form and upload it to the SGSAH portal along with Offer of PhD place + Transcripts of qualifications + Institutional Statement
- **Portal opens 3rd Feb 2025 and closes NOON GMT 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025**
- Do not leave submission to the last day, recommend 48 hours before deadline. No leeway if IT issues affect the applicant's side.
- Funding decision end April 2025



# Institutional Statement

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- Completed only for nominees
- Must be signed by School PGR Director
- **One draft must be sent to College for review/feedback before Jan 17th 2025. Review will take at least 1 week.**
- PhD Supervisor to provide ISS and email it to the nominee in time for portal submission deadline - **provide it no later than Feb 10<sup>th</sup>**
- **ISS needs to demonstrate world-leading supervisory and institutional fit for the specific project proposed**
- ISS will cover supervisory team expertise and environment, 6 relevant outputs from each supervisor, training and development plans and ethics
- ISS forms part of the SGSAH assessment
- ISS must be made gender neutral - do not use pronouns that reveal the applicant's gender.

# Supervision

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- Best team of supervisors and research environment available across the DTP
- Can propose cross-institutional supervision - this arrangement will normally only apply if you are successful in gaining SGSAH funding
- Set supervision percentages:  
  
75%/25%    50%/50%    60%/20%/20%
- Travel expenses for cross-supervision covered by SGSAH.

# Competition Panels

- Studentship applications are assessed by 1 of 11 SGSAH panels.
- The application will ask which panel relates to your proposed PhD study

Panels	Disciplines
A	Archaeology & Classics
B	Cultural & Museum Studies, Art History
C	Creative and Performing Arts and Design
D	History
E	Law & Legal Studies, International Development, Diplomacy, and International Relations
F	Linguistics
G	Media, Communications, Cultural Policy, Film & TV, Law, Library & Information Studies, International Development
H	Modern Languages
I	Philosophy
J	Scottish and English Literatures
K	Theology, Divinity, and Religions

# What is SGSAH looking for?

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The questions asked by SGSAH are:

- Why this applicant?
- Why this research project?
- Why this supervisory team and University / group of Universities?
- Why this DTP (SGSAH)?

# Scoring Criteria

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1. Qualifications or Relevant Professional Experience - 6 marks
2. Preparedness for Research - 10 marks
3. Quality of Research Proposal, Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement, and Impact (including Academic Impact) - 14 marks
4. Supervisory Expertise and Research Environment - 10 marks
5. Student's Training Needs and Institution's Proposed Plans and Provision - 10 marks

Read the grading descriptors in [SGSAH's full guidance notes](#), pp. 46-51.

# Ring-Fenced Studentships

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In accordance with UKRI and AHRC policy, permissible positive action is being applied to the 2025 SGSAH DTP Open Studentships, following a review of SGSAH Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) application and award data from previous years.

SGSAH is making available \*at least\* three ring-fenced studentships for applicants from UK-domiciled Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

These 3 ring-fenced studentships represent a \*minimum\* recruitment, with no maximum.

For 2025 entry, two additional ring-fenced places are available. One for care experienced applicants and one for refugee status applicants.

In terms of process, applicants will continue to complete the Equalities Monitoring Form, which is not seen by Reviewers. Applicants will also complete a Yes/No tick box to detail whether they are applying for one of the ring-fenced studentships.

This tick box will not be seen by Panel Reviews, who will score and rank applicants using the existing assessment criteria but will be made available to the final ranking meeting of Executive members.

# Widening Participation Flags

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SGSAH is aware that some people face unfair structural barriers, which may be reflected in an applicant's previous academic record, even though they are fully capable of producing interesting, important and original doctoral level research. To address this, SGSAH have identified a list of Widening Participation "flags".

Nominees who qualify on any of these criteria can choose to have your previous qualification/preparedness for research be under-weighted by SGSAH and your project proposal be over weighted.

Supervisory and Training needs scores will be unchanged.

If you wish to be considered for this reweighting, please tick any of the flags apply to you. The reweighting will be the same, irrespective of the number of flags.

Please note that this information will not be disclosed to reviewers. If, after the reweighting process, the total score is lower, your original score will be used.

- Trans applicants
- First generation at University
- Recipient of a means tested scholarship, or free school meals
- Disability/Chronic Illness



# Research Proposal (1,000 words)

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This needs to be spot on - ask your supervisors for help. Applications in the top band will have:

- An exceptional proposal in all of its components.
- Clear and cogent research questions. The proposal demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the research context and the contribution that the project will make to the field.
- Identified a clear gap in existing knowledge and made a compelling case for the significance of addressing this gap.
- The proposal is original and innovative, the methods are appropriate, and the project is feasible within the timescale of 3 ½ years.
- An entirely persuasive case has been made for the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/or impact (including academic impact) with demonstrably feasible plans for delivery within the timescales.
- Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed.
- Do not include hyperlinks, assessors will not review additional information.

# Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement & Impact

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- Who might be interested or involved in delivering or experiencing the change that may happen as a result of your findings?  
Why would these communities be interested?  
How might they benefit?  
How will you engage/communicate/network with these communities?  
Be realistic in your proposed plans - both in terms of resources and time - and ensure that your plans are ethical.
- Look at SGSAH's 10 core partner organizations - could you link up with them?
  - <https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/partners/partnerships/> - include BBC, Scottish Parliament, V&A, National Trust
  - And the much longer list of organizations SGSAH has worked with in the past/continues to work with
- Look at events you could link up with - e.g. the AHRC-funded Being Human Festival, a local film festival, upcoming anniversary...

# Sample Answer on Knowledge Exchange

In a post-9/11, post-ISIS world of ignorance and misunderstanding, one of the most important roles of academics is to lead and facilitate dialogue by answering difficult questions. My thesis examines not the plight of every-day British Muslims, but rather those labelled to be the 'enemy' of both Muslims and non-Muslims in the secular West. My research is part of a growing body of literature that shifts the emphasis from an "us versus them" narrative and critiques the role of the nation-state's security apparatus in devaluing Muslim lives in domestic and foreign policy. This perspective is becoming a part of the discussion in public activism, parliamentary debate, and in interfaith dialogue. This discourse has garnered the attention of Scottish Muslim organizations, including the Edinburgh Central Mosque and the Ahlul Bayt Society, which hold dialogues, lectures and classes on how these issues concern everyday Muslims. There are also several think tanks (e.g., the Ibn Rushd Centre) which lead efforts to educate and facilitate academic discussion. It is my hope not only that my thesis contributes to this growing dialogue, but that, as a Muslim and aspiring academic, I myself will eventually be able to join these communal efforts.

Valid point, but it doesn't address the question explicitly.

These points should already be clear to the reader by this stage in the application.

Again, this should already be clear from the earlier part of the research proposal. Use the space for KE/impact plans instead.

Good point. Is there a Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group that might be interested in your findings? E.g. the Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice?

Good to have names of specific organizations.

Too vague - SGSAAH needs to see a plan rather than a hope. Show how you will engage/communicate/network with these communities. What talks/blogposts/podcasts/activities could you propose, and how might they fit into the organizations' existing programmes? When would you deliver the activities?

# Preparedness for Proposed PhD Project

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- Evidence that the applicant is exceptionally well-prepared for their proposed research and for PhD level of study through either:
  - Previous highly relevant study (e.g.: the relevance of undergraduate and Masters' programme and dissertation topics; specific advanced methodological or skills training; proficiency in required language or technical skills; relevant employment-related or work-based learning experience etc.);
  - or Previous highly relevant professional experience (e.g. significant employment in a highly relevant field with equivalence to Masters' study; specific methodological training and/or experience etc.); and
- The training requirements identified demonstrate convincingly that the candidate has an excellent sense of what is required to enable them to complete the project successfully and has identified training available, making excellent use of their membership of the SGSAH AHRC DTP.
- The selectors won't see the degree transcripts, so highlight first-class results, prizes, relevant courses and excellent marks in the 'Preparedness' section of the form. Mention any publications, including non-academic ones.

# Sample Answer: Preparedness

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Project: 'Repurposed' Literature and the Climate Crisis

My academic interest, training, and involvement in the Environmental Humanities (the broad focus of my PhD project) was first fostered during my undergraduate degree in English. I received training and teaching in ecocriticism, and so became especially interested in working on landscapes, ecologies, and identity. With help from my tutors and supervisors, my writing on the environment developed enormously; I had work published (The Q Journal, 2019), received high First-Class Honours, the Dean's Commendation for Exceptional Academic Performance, and a mark of 84 - the highest grade awarded for my cohort. I further refined my research interests and specialised knowledge (on contemporary literature and the Anthropocene) during my MPhil in English, where I averaged 72% and received grants to conduct archival research at the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library. My extended coursework for module 'Cultures of the Anthropocene' examined and developed my own notion of 'repurposed poetics', receiving a mark of 73%. Professor Robert Macfarlane's expertise, combined with regularly attending the 'Anthropocene - Climate Histories' reading group was invaluable in providing firm theoretical and methodological footings. They also afforded innovative training in working across disciplines, opening up real discussions between students of English Language and Literature, Philosophy and Earth Sciences -the experience of which developed into my PhD research project.

My professional experiences will be invaluable in translating my findings into outreach work with local environmental conservation groups and public engagement partnerships. As Educational Outreach Officer for Falmouth Marine Conservation, I developed skills such as public-speaking, curriculum building and organising outreach programmes. Additionally, my qualifications and experience as an English teacher further demonstrate my passion and capability for effective knowledge exchange. I am comfortable leading community outreach projects and proficient in teaching and in engaging with all ages, attitudes, and backgrounds.

# Training Needs and SGSAH

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- Map out a clear training plan for the PhD - what will happen and when
- Look at discipline-specific training available in UoE (including via any research centres)
- Look at courses available via the UoE Institute for Academic Development - select examples
- Look at what training SGSAH currently offers - give examples of the sorts of training you would be interested in: [https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e\\_t/](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e_t/)
- Look at training offered by SGSAH Discipline+ Catalysts relevant to your research: [https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e\\_t/dp/](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e_t/dp/)
- Will you audit any MSc options?
- Think about any additional specialist training you may require - e.g. language training, palaeography, archive training...
- Link training to career aspirations.
- **SGSAH Internships / Artists in Residency / Visiting Doctoral Researchers**
- **SGSAH Cohort Development Funds**

Training/facilities available at UofE (Project: Sound Synthesis and Audio Effects Modelling)

The machine learning element of this project is a new direction in my academic training, so auditing the following classes will develop my expertise (year 1): INFD11005 Introductory Applied Machine Learning; ELEE11103 Machine Learning for Signal Processing; MATH11111 Fundamentals of Optimization.

For general career development, I will engage in courses offered by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), such as (years 1-4): Creating Impactful Public Engagement; Getting Started with Postgraduate Research; Writing for Publication.

Computing resources are essential for this project, and I will be supported through: Exclusive access to the AAG super computers within Evolution House, ECA; Eddie-the university-wide high-performance computing cluster.

Furthermore, the Reid School of Music grants me access to: Electroacoustic studios for recording instruments/voices; The Reid Concert Hall and St Cecilia's Hall for acoustic measurement; Music Store equipment: microphones, loudspeakers etc.

Finally, the CSTR grants me access to: an instrumented anechoic chamber; a perceptual testing facility with listening booths and high-quality audio playback.

#### SGSAH DTP

In addition to the core requirement (Professional Research, Leadership Programme, Discipline+ Catalysts, KE Hubs) I will take full advantage of the SGSAH DTP and seek funding for the following individual development activities:

Conference Attendance (years 1-4): successful doctoral projects within my field typically involve publishing a high volume of journal articles and conference proceedings, so I seek support for attendance at events including: International Conference on Digital Audio Effects (DAFx); Sound and Music Computing Conference; Audio Engineering Society Convention; Meetings of the Acoustical Society of America.

Visiting Doctoral Researcher (year 2): a research visit has been agreed to the world-leading Acoustics Laboratory at Aalto University in Finland, a long-time collaborative partner of both AAG and CSTR.

Doctoral Internship (year 3): a summer internship has been agreed with an industry partner of the AAG -Neural DSP, Helsinki.

# Advice from previous award holders

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- Start your application early - it takes time!
- Find the right supervisor for you
- Share your draft for proof-reading and feedback
- Keep the application clear and suitable for non-subject experts
- Think about impact and knowledge exchange
- Draft and re-draft!





# Any questions?

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- Postgraduate Research Student Office - [pgawards@ed.ac.uk](mailto:pgawards@ed.ac.uk)

# Acronyms

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- AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council
- BME – Black and Minority Ethnic
- DTP – Doctoral Training Partnership
- HEI – Higher Education Institution
- ISS – Institutional Statement of Support
- KE – Knowledge and Exchange
- SGSAH – Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities
- UKRI – UK Research and Innovation