

Spring into Methods: Guidance 2025

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1. Overview

The Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) and the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) have collaborated on *Spring into Methods* to commission interactive, interdisciplinary and innovative research, knowledge exchange and impact methods training for our PhD researchers since 2018. We are relaunching the programme for 2025 with the ambition of innovating and moving to learning experiences that fuel our students' ambitions and widen their horizons.

We recommend that you read our guidance before applying to ensure that the proposal meets all requirements. Applications must be submitted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by **3pm on Friday 31 January 2025** within our applications portal at https://sgsah.smapply.io/prog/spring_into_methods_proposal/

SGSAH and SGSSS invite proposals from members of staff in any affiliated HEIs to offer training and events for delivery in Spring 2025. To increase accessibility, we ask for highly interactive proposals delivered online or in-person. A hybrid event is possible however, please ensure that you clearly outline the pedagogical rationale and technical approach.

Our main audiences are doctoral researchers from arts, humanities, and social sciences, but our emphasis on interdisciplinarity means we encourage applications from other disciplines, e.g., academics affiliated with the [SOCIAL Centre for Doctoral Training in Socially Intelligent Artificial Agents](#) and [SICSA](#), the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance.

We are inviting applications for two types of programmes, see points 1.1 and 1.2 below.

1.1 Addressing Grand Societal Challenges

These events should speak to societal challenges in one of these areas¹:

- Communication, AI and new technologies
- Environment, migration and demographic change
- Governance and institutions
- Sustainable and thriving economies
- Health, wellbeing and communities
- Securities: Justice and conflict
- Social inequalities

They could also articulate the [UN Sustainability Goals](#), and/or [Scotland's National Performance Framework](#). These should take an exciting problem-solving approach and appeal to students across disciplinary divides. There are no specific requirements for the style of training, but we welcome proposals that develop students' collaborative and team building skills, problem solving abilities, creative and solution-orientated thinking. We are keen to fund these events, and in some cases with an elevated budget in recognition of the additional resources that may be required for successful delivery.

1.2 Interdisciplinary Research Training

These events should focus on a method and be inclusive and relevant to students from across the arts, humanities and social sciences. Our emphasis is on interactive, interdisciplinary and innovative sessions that demonstrate both expertise in methods training and leadership to involve early career researchers in delivery.

¹ For clarity, these societal challenges are similar to the SGSSS challenge pathways (see www.sgsss.ac.uk), but not a direct mapping, as Spring into Methods is a collaborative initiative with SGSAH.

2. Planning the Event

- The event(s) should take place between Monday 21 April - Friday 16 May 2025 (avoiding any holidays including bank holidays on 5 and 27 May 2025).
- Considering diverse needs of potential attendees, the programme should be no more than 15 hours spread over an accessible timescale, e.g., 2 days in person: 4 x 3.5-hour sessions online.
- At least one Early Career Researcher (doctoral researcher or ECR on fixed-term research contract) should be included (but not as principal organiser) in the development and delivery of materials. See Section 2 on Budget for funding of ECRs.
- SGSAH and SGSSS will coordinate the administration for each event, including the application process, advertising, communication and evaluation. Following the communication of results, successful applicants will be required to complete a proforma within one week to confirm acceptance of the funding and final details.
- Please consider the maximum number of participants based on the method of delivery, level of interactivity and engagement throughout. We recognise that digital delivery may increase opportunities for participation in some cases. We are unlikely to support an event with less than 20 students. We will ensure that events are well publicised and that students have ample opportunity to register, however where there are insufficient numbers, we reserve the right to cancel events with sufficient notice, however we will cover any out-of-pocket expenses.
- Risk assessments must be completed for all in-person engagement, in line with HEI policies.

3. Budget

3.1 Maximum budget for development, design and delivery of each proposal

1. Addressing Grand Societal Challenges Applications

- Fully online: up to £2,000
- Hybrid / Fully in-person: up to £3,000

2. Interdisciplinary Research Training

- Fully online: up to £1,500
- Hybrid / Fully in-person: up to £2,500

Please note: for all in-person events, you should budget for a minimum of 20 attendees.

3.2 Eligible Costs

- Materials / resource development
- Doctoral/ Early Career Researchers to support delivery and preparation of materials up to £250 per half-day
- Catering costs for participants and organisers (in-person)
- Travel expenses/ overnight accommodation for organisers (in-person). As SGSSS and SGSAH are national Doctoral Training Partnerships, it is anticipated that all facilitators will be based in Scotland given the breadth and depth of expertise.

3.3 Ineligible Costs

- Room hires, as we expect host HEI to waive these costs
- Fees for permanent full-time staff employed at SGSAH/SGSSS member HEIs who are involved in the event, as we cannot make an additional payment to their salary
- Administration costs (SGSAH and SGSSS will coordinate the application process,

- advertising, communication and evaluation)
- Participants will be able to apply to their graduate school /DTP/ CTD for reimbursement of travel, accommodation, further subsistence for in-person events.

We require a clear breakdown of how requested funds will be used on the *Spring into Methods* application portal, including details of any materials, and daily/ hourly rates for assistance by fixed term ECRs or doctoral researchers.

4. Further Guidance on Event Planning

Proposal should clearly articulate which route they are applying for:

1. **Addressing Grand Societal Challenges:** Within this, specify which grand societal challenges the training is best aligned with. They could also link to the [UN Sustainability Goals](#) and/or [Scotland's National Performance Framework](#), considering cross disciplines using e.g. advanced general skills and methods or a hackathon style approach.
2. **Interdisciplinary Research Training:** In depth approach to a specific research method articulating how it will be interdisciplinary for the arts, humanities and social sciences.

The [application portal](#) will permit applicants to identify which route their proposed event meets. We require details on how the proposal will provide in-depth training of value to doctoral researchers across the arts, humanities and social sciences and/or where these intersect with other disciplines. As well as being interdisciplinary, training should be innovative and highly interactive, providing participants with an opportunity to share their own work and engage with others. Please ensure sessions are widely accessible to students of different experiences/expertise; this may be achieved by providing pre-session materials or being explicit about prerequisite skills.

We encourage events which may include an external partner (such as a third sector organisation) in the delivery of training, where appropriate.

Once the training has been commissioned, doctoral researchers across the UK (irrespective of their funding) will be invited to apply. The selection process will aim to balance students attending from across SGSSS and SGSAH with those from other CDTs, and DTPs across the UK. ESRC and AHRC funded PhD candidates from out-with Scotland are free to attend but must seek funding for travel and expenses from their home HEI or graduate school.

5. Delivery Model

Whilst we hope and expect in-person training to be possible, we welcome proposals for online and hybrid delivery. If hybrid, please specify what provision will be provided to ensure a good hybrid experience. Irrespective of approach, we encourage a combination of synchronous engagement, including group/break out opportunities for students to engage with others, and asynchronous engagement that enables students to work at their own pace (for example, providing pre-reading for in-person events).

Proposals should articulate the legacy of training beyond the events and what online learning resources could be available to all SGSAH and SGSSS researchers. Resource contributions could include video recordings of presentations, podcasts, reading lists, templates or other learning materials.

6. Potential Topics for Spring into Methods 2025

6.1 Grand Societal Challenges Applications

We are keen to encourage proposals that present new ideas that demonstrate innovation, international significance, or interdisciplinarity. In recognition of the demands around new development and delivery, we have increased the budget for this theme to accommodate any extra resources required.

Drawing from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, we are keen to see proposals that meet grand challenges and seek to address wicked problems. (A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult to solve because of its interconnected nature with other problems.) This could include, (but is not limited to):

- Sustainable Living
- Climate Emergency
- Harnessing Artificial Intelligence

6.1 Interdisciplinary Research Training

Based on training needs analyses, we would welcome applications that can showcase machine learning/AI skills; training that incorporates data management/research integrity; training that considers the post-qualitative turn; and training that involves numbers.

We are keen to see new ideas, however selected previous topics have included:

- Building research methods on principles of equality, diversity and inclusion
- Decolonising Methods
- Methods and Climate Crisis
- Feminist research methods
- Post-humanist or more-than-human research
- Rethinking 'vulnerability' in participatory research

Please note, we can accept applications for previous events where evidence is provided of the event's success and planned updates based on feedback. Additionally, we welcome applications for novel areas.

7. How will the process be managed?

Applicants can access the online application system at:

https://sgsah.smapply.io/prog/spring_into_methods_proposal/ or via the SGSAH or SGSSS websites.

You will need to create an account on the system using an institutional email address. Please check your spam or junk filters for any emails from the system.

Use the 'save and continue editing' button as you go in order not to lose your draft. Once you have completed each section, press 'Mark as Complete' (although you can still edit each section until you submit the application).

When your application is complete, please use the 'Submit' button. Once you have submitted you cannot edit the application further. **Deadline for proposals is 3pm on Friday 31 January 2025.** Applications will be reviewed by a panel drawn from across the SGSAH and SGSSS directorates or their nominees, with input from SOCIAL CDT and SICSA if appropriate. You will be notified of the outcome by the week commencing **17 February 2025.**

8. What happens if you are successful?

- Successful applicants will be issued an award letter and required to confirm their intention to proceed. At this point, we will also ask for confirmation of the event and a short description for advertising purposes via a proforma (link to which will be provided in your award letter).
- SGSAH and SGSSS will publicise the events through their communication channels. Organisers are expected to use their own means of communication with doctoral researchers, directing them to the central application system.
- SGSAH and SGSSS will manage the registration process for each event and will launch a call for doctoral researchers/attendees. We aim to include an equal number of arts, humanities and social science participants at each training event. SGSAH and SGSSS will set up registration systems to allow for attendance booking, monitoring and data collection. Where demand exceeds places, we will manage reserve lists.
- We will communicate full attendance to event organisers the week before the event.
- The named lead organiser will manage delivery of the event and is responsible for submitting an attendance list within two weeks of the final session to team@sgsss.ac.uk.
- The lead organiser is responsible for submitting a post-event report. Details will be provided on the letter of award.
- The lead organiser is responsible for providing an invoice for the SGSAH/SGSSS contribution, as per the agreed limits in the award letter. We can only receive one invoice from one institution for an event. Please use the reference number on the purchase order included in your award letter. Invoices will only be paid on receipt of evaluation forms and must be submitted within 8 weeks of the end of the event. Invoices received after this may not be reimbursed.
- SGSAH/SGSSS will process invoices and transfer funds.

If you have any queries, please contact team@sgsss.ac.uk or enquiries@sgsah.ac.uk

9. Timetable

Monday 25 November 2024	Application portal opens
Wednesday 4 December (2-3pm)	Webinar for prospective applicants
Friday 31 Jan 2025	Deadline for proposals
Week of 17 February 2025	Applicants informed of decision
Monday 3 March 2025	Deadline for successful applicants to complete proforma
Friday 07 March 2025	Start promotion of events to students
Monday 31 March 2025	Deadline for students to sign up
Week ending 11 April 2025	Students on waiting list informed (where relevant)
Monday 21 April – Friday 16 May 2025, (avoiding holidays)	Events take place
Monday 30 June 2025	Evaluation forms and invoices submitted