

Spring into Methods: Guidance 2026

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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 2026 with the ambition of innovating and moving to learning experiences that fuel our students' ambitions and widen their horizons.

We recommend that you read this guidance before applying, to ensure that the proposal meets all requirements, including the financial requirements and limitations.

Applications must be submitted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by **3pm on Friday 30 January 2026** within our applications portal at:

https://sgsah.smapply.io/prog/sim_proposal/

We will be hosting an **Information Webinar between 10am-11am on Wednesday 3 December** to provide guidance and answer your questions about building your Spring into Methods proposal. Please register for the webinar via this link: [SGSAH/SGSSS Spring into Methods Webinar Registration](#).

We invite proposals from members of staff in any [SGSAH](#) and [SGSSS](#) affiliated HEIs to offer training and events for delivery in Spring 2026. 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, including the resources you will use to ensure a successful hybrid environment.

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 CDT](#) and [SICSA](#).

These events should focus on research method (s) 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.

For this call, we also welcome applications addressing grand societal challenges (see below) which might articulate with 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.

2. Planning the Event

- The event(s) should take place between **Monday 20 April - Friday 15 May 2026** (we would advise avoiding any regional holidays such as the Bank Holiday on 4 May 2026).
- Considering diverse needs of potential attendees, the programme should be no less than 3.5 hours, and no more than 15 hours spread over an accessible timescale, e.g., two days in person: four 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 and communication.
- Following the communication of workshop application results, successful applicants will be required to complete a proforma within one week to confirm acceptance of the funding and final details. This information will be used to promote the events.
- 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 very unlikely to support an event with a target audience of less than 20 students.
- If you wish to run a hybrid event, please ensure that you **clearly** outline the pedagogical rationale and technical approach, including the resources required to ensure a successful hybrid environment.
- 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. Event Routes

Workshop proposals 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 (see below). 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 support events which may include an external partner (such as a third sector organisations) in the delivery of training, where appropriate. Any associated costs in relation to this should be clearly articulated and justified in the proposed budget.

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 (in the event of oversubscription, SGSSS and SGSAH aligned students will be prioritised). 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.

4. Potential Topics for Spring into Methods 2026

4.1 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.

These events could speak to societal challenges in these potentially overlapping areas, or otherwise relating to the UN SDGs or Scotland's NPF:

- Communication, AI and new technologies;
- Environment, migration and demographic change;
- Governance and institutions;
- Peace, justice and strong institutions;
- Sustainable and thriving economies;
- Health, wellbeing and communities;
- Social inequalities; and
- Inclusive culture, heritage and creative practice.

4.2 Interdisciplinary Research Training

Based on training needs analyses, we would welcome applications that can showcase:

- Creative/critical use of artificial intelligence;
- Use of archive materials;
- Building creative practice into research projects;
- Institutional ethnography; and
- Conducting Research with Communities.

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.

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 for both in person and online participants**, i.e. include an outline of the pedagogical rationale and technical approach, including the resources you will use to ensure a successful hybrid environment.

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. Budget

6.1 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 hybrid and in-person events, you should budget for a minimum of 20 attendees.

6.2 Eligible Costs

- Materials/creation of resources
- Doctoral student/Early Career Researchers to support preparation and delivery: **£250 (inclusive of preparation and delivery) per half-day per person.** Full details of their responsibilities and participation should be made clear in the application. **Other payment rates will not be accepted by the panel.**
- Catering costs for participants and organisers (in-person).
- Reasonable travel expenses/overnight accommodation for organisers (in-person), where on-the-day travel is not reasonable, and where costs are in line with our standard expenses policies. 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.

6.3 Ineligible Costs

- Room hires, as we expect host HEI to waive these costs. (In exceptional circumstances, if an applicant is unable to secure teaching space without charge, or requires specialist space for a particular reason, this should be explained in the application, along with any helpful records showing a lack of bookable space etc. Whilst these will be considered as exceptions, due to budget constraints there is unfortunately no guarantee the panel will be able to approve applications requiring such additional costs.)
- Purchase of any equipment with a residual capital value including laptops, cameras etc., although equipment hire is acceptable.
- 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).
- Event attendee costs: participants will be able to apply to their graduate school/DTP/CTD for reimbursement of travel, accommodation etc.

We require a clear financial breakdown of how requested funds will be used on the Spring into Methods application portal, including details of any materials, and what activities doctoral researchers/ECRs will be involved with (noting the fixed rate of £250 for development and delivery per half day for these groups). If a proposed budget does not adhere to the guidance above, it is highly unlikely that the project will be funded.

7. How will the process be managed?

Applicants can access the online application system at:

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

You will need to create an account on the system using an institutional email address. (If needed, 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 30 January 2026.** Applications will be reviewed by a panel drawn from across the SGSAH and SGSSS directorates. You will be notified of the outcome by the week commencing **16 February 2026.**

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 also 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 researcher attendees. Where possible, 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 enable 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.
- **For applicants who have been involved in Spring Into Methods in previous years,** please be aware that the systems used by SGSAH and SGSSS have changed, and therefore your experience of both application and the attendee registration/information sharing process is likely to be different to your prior experience.
- 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.
 - Invoices should be sent to enquiries@sgsah.ac.uk.
 - 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 eight 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 24 November 2025	Launch call for Spring Into Methods workshop proposals
10 – 11am, Wednesday 3 December 2025	Webinar for prospective applicants; via Zoom Register via this link: Spring into Methods Information Webinar Registration
3pm, Friday 30 January 2026	Deadline for workshop proposals
w/c Monday 16 February 2026	Applicants informed of decision
Monday 2 March 2026	Deadline for successful applicants to complete event proforma
Friday 6 March 2026	Events will be promoted to students
Monday 30 March 2026	Deadline for students to sign up to events
Monday 20 April – Friday 15 May 2026	Window for events to take place
Monday 29 June 2026	Deadline for evaluation forms and invoices to be submitted