School of Geography and Sustainable Development PhD Scholarship Competitions 2024/25

SGSD/Edwards PhD Scholarships

The School of Geography and Sustainable Development (SGSD) at the University of St Andrews is delighted to announce the 2024/25 PhD Scholarship Competitions. Three fully funded PhD scholarships are available to join the School’s vibrant research community. Two scholarships are part of the SGSD scheme initiated in 2020, representing the School’s ongoing commitment to postgraduate research. One scholarship is specifically for candidates conducting research in the field of spatial data science for environmental geography (Edwards scholarship).

The successful candidates will receive funding for three years as follows: a stipend in line with UKRI rates (currently £18,662), an annual Research and Training Grant of £750-2000, and payment of tuition fees (home/international). All students funded from this call will also be expected to contribute to teaching within the School, typically taking on demonstrating, tutoring and marking duties (this will be paid separately and on top of the annual stipend) throughout their studies.

The scholarships are funded by the School of Geography and Sustainable Development, the Robertson Scholarship, the Edwards Scholarship, and the University of St Andrews Handsel scheme.

The competitions are open to candidates of all nationalities. Successful candidates will preferably start on 27th September 2024.

Application pathways

There are two ways to apply for the 2024/25 Scholarship Competitions:

1. Staff-led proposals – apply to an existing project

Academic staff within SGSD have been invited to submit proposals for PhD projects that they would like to supervise. These proposals can be found on the School website at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/geography-sustainable-development/prospective/pgr/. Prospective students are invited to apply to undertake one of the listed projects. Applicants should contact the named member of staff to discuss their fit to the project before submitting a formal application as outlined in the How to apply section below.

2. Student-led proposals – propose your own project

Prospective students wishing to study a PhD topic not already covered by the staff-led proposals are invited to write and submit their own proposal.

Proposal topics: Proposals for the two SGSD scholarships can address any topic that falls within the remit of the School of Geography and Sustainable Development. Please consider how your topic aligns with the research profile of your prospective supervisor(s). Given the School’s requirements for teaching support, please also explain in your cover letter in which areas you could contribute to teaching (your prospective supervisor(s) can advise you on our School’s teaching portfolio).

Proposals for the (one) Edwards scholarship must address topics that fall within the field of spatial data science for environmental geography. This includes, for example projects that apply new methods for spatial data analysis but does not include projects that focus primarily on the collection of environmental or spatial data.

Project proposals should be no more than 2 sides of A4 and should contain an overview and rationale for the project, aims, research questions and methods, and a breakdown and justification of the Research and Training Support Grant funding (RTSG) where the requested amount exceeds the standard allowance of £750 per annum (see the RTS Funding section below). Applicants must secure the support of a supervisor within SGSD, who must be named on the proposal. Details of academic staff and their supervisory interests can be found on the School’s People page and through the ‘Research projects’ section of the SGSD PGR webpage. Once support of a supervisor has been obtained, a formal application may be submitted as outlined in the How to apply section below.
Research and Training Support Funding

Successful students will as standard be provided with a Research and Training Support Grant (RTSG) at the present School rate (currently £750 per annum). Where the nature of the research means that greater expenses are expected (e.g. due to fieldwork or lab costs), staff/students can request additional funds up to a maximum total RTSG of £2000 per annum. Any request for additional funds must be clearly justified in the proposal and will be awarded at the discretion of the School. The School does not provide financial assistance to cover relocation and visa costs.

How to apply

Applications should be made via the central University of St Andrews system at [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/apply/postgraduate/research/](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/apply/postgraduate/research/). You should select School of Geography and Sustainable Development and clearly indicate in the funding section “SGSD Scholarship Competitions 2024/25”.

For the application you will need:

1. A covering letter, explaining your reason for wishing to undertake PhD study at SGSD and why you believe you are a good candidate to undertake the proposed research.
2. A Curriculum Vitae focusing on your academic track record and relevant experience.
3. Transcripts and/or certificates of academic qualifications. Check that you fit the entry requirements for University of St Andrews Postgraduate studies – scroll down to find requirements for your country: [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/).
4. If you are applying through the student-led proposal pathway, then you should include your research proposal, indicating whether your application should be considered for the SGSD scholarships or the Edwards scholarship. Students applying for a staff-led proposal do not need to include the proposal but should clearly state the title of the proposal and named supervisor in their application.
5. A writing sample of academic writing in English (e.g. your MSc thesis or a conference paper or a similar piece of work on your research).
6. Names and contact details of two referees who can provide references.
7. Evidence of English language capability, which may include evidence of prior Higher Education study in English or relevant certification (e.g. IELTS). For more information see [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/language-requirements/postgraduate/](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/language-requirements/postgraduate/).

For general criteria for entry to PhD programmes at the University of St Andrews see: [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/apply/postgraduate/research/](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/apply/postgraduate/research/). Note that entry requirements vary by country. For UK students, the minimum academic qualification is a 2:1 Honours Degree in a relevant subject. International students should check requirements for their country here: [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/entry/). Select your country here and check Postgraduate – academic requirements and English requirements.

The successful applicants will be expected to engage in full time study at the University of St Andrews, and reside within a commutable distance of St Andrews, in keeping with the university’s Location of Studies policy.

The closing date for applications is Friday, 9th February 2024, 5 PM (UK time).

Selection Process

Due to the mixed staff/student-led approach, applications will be judged based on the academic track record and relevant experience of the candidate and their fit to the proposed work, rather than based on the proposal itself (though student-led proposals must be approved by the named supervisor and will be reviewed for feasibility). Where supervisors have received multiple applicants for their advertised projects (or requests to supervise student-led proposals), they will be required to nominate one applicant to go through to the School competition. Nominated applications will be reviewed by a panel of staff from SGSD. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview, which will occur online, through MS Teams. Candidates will be informed of the outcome following interviews.
About the School of Geography and Sustainable Development

The School of Geography and Sustainable Development occupies the Irvine Building which is located in the historic town centre near the University Library and overlooks St Andrews Bay. The School is well-known for world-leading research in a number of areas and has three research groups: Environmental Change, Population and Health, and Geographies of Sustainability, Society, Inequalities, and Possibilities (GOSSIP). It further hosts the Bell-Edwards Geographic Data Institute (BEGIN), which specialises in analysis and modelling of geographic data. According to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, 94% of research conducted in SGSD was classified as world-leading or internationally excellent, with an internationally excellent research environment in the School. The School also has a well-established reputation for high teaching quality and was ranked fourth in the UK by The Times Good University Guide 2024 and the Guardian University Guide 2024. The School has 44 academic staff, 11 postdoctoral fellows and 44 PhD students, supported by 3 technicians and 9 administrative staff.

Postgraduate Research Study in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development

The School’s 44 PhD students (in St Andrews these are called research postgraduates, PGRs) are a vital part of its research culture. PGRs are engaged across the research interests of the School and all PGRs are members of Research Group(s). In addition to regular supervision and research group meetings, PGRs gather monthly for Lunch&Learn sessions with discussions related to PhD life and future careers, and there is a programme of social activities throughout the year, led by the PGR Reps. PGR Reps are members of the Postgraduate Committee which oversees PGR matters for the School and is Chaired by the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

PGRs are provided with desk space, co-located with staff in the Irvine Building. All incoming PGRs are provided with a laptop. PGRs have access to all the facilities of the University, including social, sporting and library facilities. PGRs also have the opportunity to undertake skills training provided by the Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development (CEED) at St Andrews including their GradSkills Programme.

Progress through the PhD is monitored via the Annual PGR Conference and Review Meeting which take place in April. Through this process, together with supervision and training, the School achieves outstanding rates of PhD completion. Our PGR graduates have gone on to jobs in academia, industry, government, and consultancy in the UK and elsewhere.

Note about finances for international applicants

Given the high cost of living in the UK, the stipend in this call will cover cost of living expenses for the successful candidates but is not sufficient to cover additional costs for any of their dependants. If you are considering bringing dependants, please be aware that you need an alternative source of funding. Also please note that the stipend does not cover visa or relocation costs and that you will be required to cover those yourself. See here for an approximate estimate of costs: cost of living expenses.

Contact

Please address enquiries to the PGR Administrator, Helen Olaez, at gsdpgradmin@st-andrews.ac.uk and include “SGSD Scholarship Competitions 2024/25” in the subject line of your email.