

# School of Geography and Sustainable Development PhD Studentship Competition 2023/4

## SGSD PhD Studentships

The [School of Geography and Sustainable Development](#) (SGSD) at the [University of St Andrews](#) is delighted to announce the 2023 PhD Studentship Competition. **Six 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. Four scholarships are for candidates who will contribute to the development of a new digital MSc in Data Literacy for Social and Environmental Justice.

The successful candidates will receive **funding for three years** as follows: a stipend in line with UKRI rates (currently £17,668), 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 the teaching process 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. In terms of the **development of the new MSc programme**, students will help teaching staff with preparing and testing lab materials for new courses (e.g. statistics, data analysis, GIS or remote sensing labs on topics suitable for social and environmental justice), delivering these labs remotely and provide co-supervision for MSc dissertations on topics related to own research.

The Studentships are funded by the School of Geography and Sustainable Development, the Robertson Scholarship, the University of St Andrews Handsel scheme and the University of St Andrews grant to establish the new digital MSc.

The competition is open to candidates of all nationalities. Successful candidates will preferably start on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (with a potential of an earlier start in agreement with supervisor and coordinator of the new MSc).

## Application pathways

There are two ways to apply for the 2023/4 Studentship Competition:

### 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: Given the nature of funding and School's requirement for teaching support (in particular as related to the development of the new MSc), **we are calling for proposals in the following areas:**

- Quantitative data analysis in population or environmental geography
- Geographic information science / spatial data science
- Remote sensing for environmental or social justice

**Five of the six scholarships** will be awarded to topics in these areas. The remaining **one position** is available for **any topic** pertinent to the School.

If you are preparing your own proposal for the five defined positions, please, explain in your proposal, how it relates to the above topics and/or the new MSc in Data Literacy for the Social and Environmental Justice.

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.

### 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/>. You should select School of Geography and Sustainable Development and clearly indicate in the funding section "SGSD Scholarship Competition 2023/4".

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/>.
4. If you are applying through the student-led proposal pathway, then you should include your **research proposal**. 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/>.

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/>. 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/> 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 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 17.00** (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 and Possibility (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 2022. The School has 37 academic staff, 17 postdoctoral fellows and 37 PhD students, supported by 2 technicians and 6 administrative staff.

The School is also currently in the process of developing a new digital MSc in Data Literacy for Social and Environmental Justice, for which we are hiring four new lecturers in quantitative methods for population/environmental geography and spatial data science. Four PhD studentships that we are advertising through this call have been generously funded by the University of St Andrews, to help with the development of the new MSc programme.

## Postgraduate Research Study in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development

The School's [37 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 fortnightly 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 deskpace, 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 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.

## Contact

Please address enquiries to the PGR Administrator, Helen Olaez, at [gsdpgradadmin@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:gsdpgradadmin@st-andrews.ac.uk) and include "SGSD Scholarship Competition 2023/4" in the subject line of your email.