Skills Development Scotland
Collaborative PhD Programme

2019.

ESRC Economic & Social Research Council
Scottish Graduate School of Social Science
Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of the SDS Collaborative PhD Programme Brochure. The brochure provides a comprehensive summary of the activities and outputs of the PhD programme to date and highlights the value of the research to SDS.

SDS established the PhD programme, in partnership with the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS), to deepen our links with the academic community and bring fresh thinking to skills policy and delivery. It has attracted some outstanding doctoral students who are producing new, rigorous research on important and enduring skills issues from a Scottish perspective. This is a new body of knowledge in the making that will help Scotland’s skills provision remain relevant, responsive and forward-looking.

In addition to being identified by the Bartholomew Report as a model of good practice, the programme has also been described as a ‘Jewel in the Crown’ of collaborative PhD research. This owes much to the efforts of our partners in academia and to the contribution of colleagues within SDS, especially our PhD Sponsors, who work closely with the students to support their engagement with the programme and with the wider skills policy community.

Enabling effective knowledge exchange and policy impact to flow from the programme is fundamentally important for SDS. We have a robust infrastructure for sharing insights from the research across SDS and for helping to translate the research into policy and practice. In addition to our PhD Sponsors network, this includes a student seminar series, knowledge exchange events with senior SDS staff and wider networking events.

Alongside the PhD Programme, SDS also provides internship opportunities for doctoral candidates across Scotland. Students gain employability skills from working in a non-academic setting while SDS is able to use the intellectual resources of highly skilled doctoral students for small, focused pieces of work, adding further value to the skills evidence base.

To date, the programme has supported 21 PhD studentships. Eight students are either in the final stages of writing up their thesis or have completed. We anticipate that all of our students (around four per annum) will find good quality research related jobs as a result of participating in the collaborative PhD Programme. The rest of the Brochure provides more information on the PhD Programme and showcases the work of our students and interns.

The academic community is a vital resource in helping us to find out ‘what works’ in skills policy. Through the PhD Programme it offers in-depth knowledge, significant expertise, and a keen insight that can be used to inform skills policy and delivery and contribute to finding solutions to the big skills issues.

I commend the PhD programme to you. I hope you find the insights from our PhD students and sponsors interesting and informative.

Neville Prentice
Senior Director,
Service Development and Delivery,
Skills Development Scotland
What is the PhD Programme?

The SDS PhD programme is a partnership initiative between Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It was established to engage the academic community in Scotland to support policy-relevant skills research. The focus of the research is to examine key questions in skills policy, skills delivery and Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG). The programme will produce a new body of research aligned to the evolving skills agenda in Scotland. It will also help to develop a new group of researchers with an in-depth understanding of the unique Scottish skills landscape.

How does it work?

Up to four sponsored SDS PhD studentships are enrolled each year. SDS identifies important skills-related topics and works with SGSSS to invite PhD proposals from academic supervisors. SGSSS and SDS then hold a panel meeting to select the strongest proposals. Successful PhD proposals are co-funded by SDS and the ESRC.

SDS works closely with the host university, academic supervisors and the student to support successful completion of the PhD. Each PhD student has an SDS PhD Sponsor who links the student into SDS and the wider skills community. The SDS Sponsor also has an important role in promoting the PhD research to relevant SDS teams, ensuring that key findings from the research are embedded in the policy and practice of SDS.

The SDS sponsored PhD programme has also evolved over time and now includes the opportunity for some students to complete a fully funded Masters year prior to starting their PhD.

The SDS PhD Programme helps to inform research at the Centre for Work-based Learning. The Centre is a partnership between SDS, the University of Strathclyde, Heriot-Watt University and Robert Gordon University. Its goal is to influence policy and practice and to enhance the perception of work-based learning. This alignment will further seek to develop new and innovative high-quality research that is more closely linked to skills policy and practice.

Benefits of the PhD Programme

Researchers with knowledge of our skills landscape
Access to high-quality research
Engage with and support the academic community

The SDS Collaborative PhD Programme has many benefits for SDS and its stakeholders:

- New investment in high quality skills research, providing a robust and rigorous approach to tackling key skills policy questions.
- Increased awareness of the value of academic research within the skills policy community
- New opportunities for doctoral candidates to develop their knowledge and understanding in a policy context
- A new cadre of high-quality academic researchers with a deep knowledge of the Scottish skills landscape and system
- New opportunities for PhD students to develop their skills and expertise within a workplace setting through PhD internships

Watch our short video, produced by one of our PhD students Gabi Lipan, to find out more about the programme. To watch the video search “Skills Development Scotland PhD” on YouTube.
Towards Social Responsibility: Job Quality and Workplace Innovation in Scotland’s Food Sector

**Academic Supervisors:** Prof Patricia Findlay & Dr Colin Lindsay  
**SDS Sponsor:** Derek Cairns

Zinat is in her fourth year studying innovative workplace practice and potential. Her research explores workplace innovation in Scotland from an industry perspective, looking at the organisational and institutional factors underpinning successful workplace learning and innovation. Her thesis examines the relationship between Socially Responsible Business (SRB) practice and desirable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in Scotland’s Food Sector. This focuses particularly on Employee Driven Innovation (EDI) and identifies what policy lessons can be drawn from the evidence, while also considering how key stakeholders can best support EDI and workplace innovation in ways that are sensitive to sectoral issues. Zinat uses a mixed-method approach to investigate her topic, using multi-level stakeholder surveys on job quality and satisfaction, socially responsible practice measures and workplace innovation to inform interviews with organisations.

The impact of job quality on mental health among young workers in the UK

**Academic Supervisors:** Prof Patricia Findlay & Prof Dora Scholarios  
**SDS Sponsor:** Malcolm Greig

Magdalena is currently close to completion of her PhD which explores job quality and mental health among young workers in four European countries. Magdalena’s study uses large-scale European surveys to examine how young workers evaluate the quality of their jobs in the context of the contemporary labour market, while focusing on the most significant factors that enable or challenge young adults in achieving or sustaining a high quality of working life, and the implications of job quality on their mental health.

In general, this research makes new contributions in three key areas of job quality: its components, predicting factors, and outcomes.

The potential impact of Graduate Apprenticeships on intergenerational social mobility in Scotland

**Academic Supervisors:** Prof Abigail Marks & Prof Mike Danson  
**SDS Sponsor:** Mairi Rule

Karen is in the third year of her PhD. The focus of this third year of study will be the collection of primary data from Graduate Apprenticeship Delivery Partners, Graduate Apprentices and their family members. Graduate Apprentices will be surveyed and interviewed to find out about their educational background and family backgrounds. In addition, they will be asked about their motivation and aspirations. Interviews will also take place with family members to ascertain the extent of intergenerational social mobility movement.

For social equity and to ensure Scottish organisations draw from the widest pool of talent available, Graduate Apprenticeships need to appeal to individuals from a range of backgrounds ensuring they represent diversity of gender, race, ability and social class background. This study hopes to recommend how information about Graduate Apprenticeships should be provided and disseminated to build awareness among existing and potential stakeholders. It will determine how learners from different social classes, not all of whom may have a family background of degree level study, may be supported to ensure successful completion of this qualification.
Stephen Hughes

Work-Based Learning (WBL) for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Academic Supervisors: Dr Pauline Anderson & Prof Dora Scholarios
SDS Sponsors: Suzie Bowman & Jonathan Clark

Stephen has recently completed a MRes in Business and Management as part of his 1+3 SDS studentship. Prior to this he completed an undergraduate degree in Business and worked as a Modern Apprenticeship assessor and trainer.

Stephen’s doctoral research focuses on Work-Based Learning (WBL) for the pedagogical practices at work in WBL programmes aimed at producing a workforce equipped for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. His research will consider some of the developments, innovations, challenges and opportunities around developing an Education 4.0-ready skills system for an Industry 4.0-ready workforce. With a particular focus on the Scottish economy, his research will consider the wider policy conditions required to make WBL an attractive and realistic proposition for all, particularly young people. The research questions will be refined based on the key lessons from the literature review.

Daniela Latina

Models of collaborative working in employability

Academic Supervisors: Dr Colin Lindsay & Prof Dennis Nickson
SDS Sponsor: Mike O’Donnell

Daniela is in the process of writing up her PhD and looks forward to submitting her thesis soon. Her research has explored the Scottish approach to collaborative working on employability and skills. Specifically, Daniela’s research has identified the strengths and limitations of the Scottish Employability Framework and Strategic Skills Pipeline models in aligning the work of partners in support of collaboration in the delivery of employability services.

Looking at what works well and why, Daniela seeks to identify effective practice and critical success factors in the governance of employability collaborations, as well as how these can be measured.

Gabi Lipan

Mind the GAP: An investigation into the factors influencing student, academic and employer perceptions of Graduate Attributes.

Academic Supervisors: Dr Amy Irvin & Dr Emily Nordmann
SDS Sponsor: Terry Dillon

Gabi is the SDS PhD Programme’s first 1+3 student. He completed his Masters degree at the University of Aberdeen and is currently in the second year of his PhD. Gabi’s research examines the factors influencing student, academic and employer perceptions of Graduate Attributes. At present, he aims to create a model of Core Graduate Attributes using perspectives from different stakeholders (e.g. academics, students, employers, policy-makers etc). These perspectives will be gathered through a custom interactive online survey. Before being finalised, the model will be further validated by a panel of experts using the Delphi Method.

Gabi has visited SDS several times to present the findings of his Masters and PhD work to date, as well as speaking with key colleagues in the business about the practical implications of his findings. This year, he presented his work through posters at the AGCAS Conference and the Advance HE Annual Conference.

Louise McAulay

Overcoming barriers to Labour Market entry amongst people with disabilities and long-term health conditions and their unpaid carers

Academic Supervisors: Prof Paul Lambert & Dr Alasdair Rutherford
SDS Sponsor: Karen Kerr

Louise is currently in the first year of her PhD after completing her MSc in Social Research and Social Statistics as part of a 1/3 PhD at the University of Stirling. Prior to this she worked as an Evaluation and Research Graduate Intern for Skills Development Scotland.

In her PhD, Louise is examining experiences of labour market entry and participation for individuals who suffer from long-term health conditions/disabilities and those who provide their unpaid care. The research aims to achieve this through the analysis of three existing high-quality, large-scale social survey datasets, which include data on Scotland. The data analysis will be used to explore how employment outcomes in Scotland are influenced by direct experience of disability/long-term health conditions as an unpaid carer. This analysis will be compared against current policy initiatives to identify potential areas for improvement.
Alana McGuire

The Impact of Big Data on Skill Requirements

Academic Supervisors: Dr Alasdair Rutherford & Prof Paul Lambert
SDS Sponsor: Derek Hawthorne

Alana began her PhD in October 2015 and is approaching the end of her third year. Her research looks at how Big Data may have affected labour market skills in Scotland, focusing on the tourism and life sciences sectors. She explores how important Big Data is becoming within organisations and how this may be changing employee job roles and skills demand. The challenges that employees may face when trying to bring Big Data into their organisation to help inform strategic decisions are also explored. Alana is using a mixed methods approach, including statistical analysis of large-scale surveys such as the Employer Skills Survey, the Labour Force Survey, and the British Cohort Study. As well as this, Alana has conducted interviews with case study organisations in Scotland from the tourism and life sciences sectors.

Alana’s research will identify the combination of underlying skills that are needed to be able to work with Big Data and will identify the differences in required skill levels between sectors. Alana’s research will also explore sociological elements of Big Data skills including whether there is evidence of social, gender and ethnic inequalities in the possession of Big Data skills.

Lyndsey Middleton

Enhancing the capacity for workplace learning and innovation in Scotland

Academic Supervisors: Prof Hazel Hall & Prof Robert Raeside
SDS Sponsor: Kirstine Hale

Lyndsey is in the fourth year of her PhD. She currently studies part time at Edinburgh Napier University whilst working as an Assistant Statistician at the Scottish Government. Her research investigates innovation and best practice in skills development in the workplace in Scotland, drawing comparisons both across the UK and internationally. Lyndsey looks at the factors that support innovative work behaviour and explores how employee-led workplace learning can be encouraged to deliver innovation.

From the information science perspective, Lyndsey considers the specific requirements for individuals to develop innovative work behaviour through processes of workplace learning. Collecting data from organisations within Scotland, England and Finland, Lyndsey examines how successful workplace learning, in relation to innovative work behaviour, can be both determined and identified within organisations. Lyndsey’s research will lead to the creation of a framework to explain the development of innovative work behaviour through workplace learning processes, and the factors that influence this relationship. The research draws upon aspects of information behaviour and use, organisational culture and strategy as part of the framework development.

Rachael Murphy

Work Readiness: Understanding its complexity

Academic Supervisors: Dr Scott Hurrell & Prof Dora Scholarios
SDS Sponsor: David Coyne

Rachael is in her third year of her PhD, now studying part-time. Rachael’s research is looking at the complexity of work readiness, trying to better understand it’s meaning across a range of stakeholders and look at enablers and barriers to its development. Rachael is currently completing her data collection, which has involved interviews with young people, employers and practitioners working in supporting people into work.

Her research explores: how work readiness is understood by different stakeholders, what the roles are of different stakeholders in developing work readiness, and the impact of contextual and environmental factors in developing work readiness.

The research is focused particularly on three groups of young people. The first two, care experienced and disabled young people, are included because of the poorer employment outcomes seen in these groups. The third group is young people who have not been in higher education. There are natural cross-overs and intersections in these groups.

Kane Needham

The role of social networking sites in career management

Academic Supervisors: Dr Dave Griffiths & Prof Paul Lambert
SDS Sponsor: Keith Falconer

Kane is currently in the latter stages of writing up his PhD, and is employed as a researcher at Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University. Kane’s research looks at the role of engagement in Social Networking Sites (SNS) in career attainment and aspiration. He analyses large-scale survey data to map internet and SNS usage by demographic characteristics for a range of social groups. Kane conducted three case studies aligned to the survey populations which will provide detailed snapshots of SNS usage throughout the life-stage. The findings of Kane’s PhD will provide detailed evidence towards targeted interventions by protected characteristics and occupational class.

In both his PhD and employment, Kane’s research interests centre around employment, access to opportunity, the power of social connections, and effects of structural inequality. Upon completion of his PhD, Kane intends to continue working within higher education – further developing his skills as a researcher, afforded by participation in the SDS PhD programme, and to disseminate the findings of his work amongst non-academic and academic audiences.
**Paul Quigley**

**How do employers engage with apprenticeships?**

Academic Supervisors: Melanie Simms & Chris Warhurst  
SDS Sponsor: Alison McConnell and Graeme Hendry

Paul is currently completing an MRes in Management as part of a 1+3 PhD at the University of Glasgow. He holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology & Politics, and a MSc in Human Resource Management.

Paul’s research will focus on what motivates employers when they consider engaging with apprenticeships by hiring and training new staff. The project will specifically seek to consider the impact that the recently introduced Apprenticeship Levy has had on not just the quantity of apprenticeships, but also the quality of the training and certification provided. A mixed methods approach will be used to track the numbers of new apprenticeships offered as the legislation develops, whilst semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a range of stakeholders across a variety of organisations and sectors to create an all-encompassing picture of apprenticeships in Scotland.

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**Petri Simonen**

**Key influences for the young people in Scotland for choosing apprenticeship pathways into the world of work**

Academic Supervisors: Dr Oscar Valiente and Dr Oscar Odena  
SDS Sponsor: Andrea Glass

Petri started his PhD studies in October 2018 in the University of Glasgow. He holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology & Politics, and a MSc in Human Resource Management.

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**Gaile Siusyte**

**Supporting the key influencers on young people’s career development**

Academic Supervisors: Dr Dave Griffiths and Dr Marina Shapira  
SDS Sponsor: Ken Edwards

Gaile is currently in the first year of her PhD after recently completing her MSc in Social Research and Social Statistics as part of a 1+3 PhD. Before joining the PhD programme, Gaile graduated with a BA (Hons) degree in Psychology and Sociology. She discovered the PhD Programme during her undergraduate degree and wanted to pursue this opportunity to expand her knowledge and skills further, while working on a topic that interests her.

Gaile was attracted to this PhD topic as it is closely related to her previous research interests, which include social stratification and inequality related to gender, education, class, access and social mobility. This studentship will involve quantitative analysis of secondary datasets (such as PISA, YET and Youth Cohort Studies), primary questionnaires and interviews with young adults and the identified ‘key influencers’.

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**Katherine Stephen**

**Meta-skills maturity for future workplaces**

Academic Supervisors: Laura Muir  
SDS Sponsor: Tony Coultas

Katherine is in her Masters year of a 1+3 PhD with the theme of ‘meta-skills maturity for future workplaces’. Katherine is studying her Masters at the university of Edinburgh and will be completing her PhD in the School of Computing at Edinburgh Napier. She will be researching how people learn in the workplace and their awareness of those cognitive processes, and how they impact on factors such as resilience, adaptability and collaboration. The purpose of this is to develop tools and practices to ensure that the current and next generations of the Scottish workforce are prepared to adapt and manage their position within the future labour market, with its challenges of automation, socio-political change and multi-job careers.

Katherine has a varied background in music, nautical science, and has a postgraduate diploma in Career Guidance and Development. She hopes to bring this broad experience into her studies to analyse a wide range of industries and work styles.

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Fanni is currently undertaking a Master of Research in Business and Management at the University of Stirling as part of her 1+3 PhD. She graduated from the University of Stirling with a BA (Hons) Human Resource Management and Marketing in 2017 and completed her MSc in Human Resource Management at the University of Strathclyde earlier this year.

Fanni’s research aims to understand the impact of technological change on the skills requirement of jobs in the Scottish labour market. Her PhD will review how Scotland’s future workforce will differ from today’s and examine the key drivers of these changes. As part of the research, current models of future technological change on skill demands will be analysed and applied to existing databases, such as the Skills and Employer Survey and Workplace Employment Relations Survey. This will identify potential change areas and enable the development of a set of models that are applicable to Scotland. Finally, the research will analyse the implications for Scotland’s lifelong skills strategy.

The effects of new technologies on skills and employment

Academic Supervisors: Prof Ronald McQuaid & Dr Belgin Okay-Somerville
SDS Sponsor: Liz Byrne

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Bozena Wielgoszewska

Understanding university graduates’ social mobility trajectories: How does the route affect the outcome?

Academic Supervisors: Dr Zhiqiang Feng, Prof Chris Dibben & Dr Darja Reuschke
SDS Sponsors: Tony Coulitas

Bozena’s research examined the relationships between individual’s work histories and their social mobility trajectories, accounting for several additional characteristics. Her research used a sample of over 1000 graduates from the 1970 British Cohort Study to reconstruct their economic histories before deploying sequence analysis to derive a typology of graduates’ progression through social classes and a typology of career pathways. It was found that a relationship exists between career type and social mobility trajectories however additional factors (such as the social, geographical and individual attributes, internal migration trajectories and higher education) also play a role. Bozena’s research shows that career type is the missing link in contemporary social mobility research.

After completing her PhD, Bozena moved to London to work at University College London as part of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

John Mowbray

The role of networking and social media tools during job search: An information behaviour perspective

Academic Supervisors: Prof Hazel Hall, Prof Robert Raeside & Dr Peter Robertson
SDS Sponsors: Keith Falconer

John’s research investigates job search networking amongst 16-24 year olds living in Scotland. John explored the role of social media platforms in job searching through conducting interviews, focus groups and a survey. John’s research found that frequent networking both offline and on social media is associated with positive job search outcomes – especially with family networking and use of Facebook for job searching. However, contextual factors including demographic can influence this. Furthermore, it was found that young people face multiple barriers to networking and so do not always utilise their networks effectively. Through John’s engagement with SDS, John has used his findings to create a detailed list of recommendations for practitioners.

John graduated in Winter 2018 and is employed in the Statistical Governance Team at NHS Scotland. John continues to be engaged with SDS and led a formal Knowledge Exchange event held in January.
Internship Opportunities

PhD students in Scotland have the opportunity to complete an internship as part of the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science Internship Scheme (including employers such as the Scottish Government, the National Health Service and Skills Development Scotland). SDS piloted an internship scheme with two of our students in 2016. In total, eight of our students had completed internships by the end of 2018. Over the past year, we have hosted three students, as detailed below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Internship Project</th>
<th>Where</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca McCartan</td>
<td>Data analysis for the Apprenticeship Wellbeing Survey</td>
<td>Evaluation and Research Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zinat Asif</td>
<td>Employers and Career Management Skills</td>
<td>PACE Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Riley</td>
<td>Equalities Research Support</td>
<td>Evaluation and Research Team</td>
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Watch our short video to listen to the experiences of our PhD interns and to find out more about the scheme. To watch the video search 'Skills Development Scotland PhD' on YouTube.

A Closer Look at Rebecca’s internship

Strathclyde University PhD candidate Rebecca McCartan joined SDS in March 2018 to undertake an internship.

Rebecca said: “I wanted to get a flavour of something else that wasn’t university. Having gone from my undergraduate degree to my master’s degree to my PhD, everything I had done research-wise had been within a university. I wanted to get some experience of working in research outwith a university environment.”

Rebecca, who is from Glasgow, spent her internship working with the SDS evaluation and research team, analysing the data from the recent Apprenticeship Wellbeing Survey.

“The focus of it was to look at more of the softer outcomes for Modern Apprentices in addition to career progression and personal development,” she explained.

“The project itself is really interesting as it’s quite a new area. It’s also great to work on a project that will have implications for policy and services.”

Rebecca’s PhD work focuses on psychology, specifically around behaviour change in drivers – so the apprenticeship research was quite different for her, but she enjoyed getting a taste of something different and seeing how research is conducted and used outside of academia.

She added: “It’s been beneficial to use the skills I’ve learned during my university degrees in a different area to my PhD research. It has also increased my employability skills as it provided me with the opportunity to work on multiple projects at once and work to tight deadlines.

“It was also great that I was integrated into the team by getting to be involved in group activities. The team were really welcoming, helpful and friendly, which made the entire internship experience more enjoyable.

Rebecca continued: “Before doing the internship, I didn’t have much experience of working in a research environment outside of academia so I wasn’t sure whether I would like it or not. But it’s definitely an option for me now, as I enjoyed every minute of it.

“It has made me more open to the idea of working outside of a university. I would definitely recommend undertaking an internship at SDS during your PhD, as it’s an amazing opportunity to learn new skills in a supportive and encouraging environment.”

“Working as part of a wider research team has been a great learning experience. I’ve had the opportunity to work on projects across several topics and learn from colleagues with a wealth of experience. This internship has given me a clear goal for my career upon graduating”

Lauren
3rd year PhD Student
Robert Gordon University
Dissemination Events with SDS Colleagues

SDS sponsors work closely with our students throughout their research to ensure that key insights and learning from the PhD are captured and fed through to policy and practice within SDS. This is achieved through the support of our PhD sponsors and by organising dissemination events for SDS colleagues.

In September, a sharing of learning event was held where a number of first year students presented their masters research to their sponsors, SDS staff members and fellow PhD students. This provided the opportunity for the students to share their research findings and discuss the influence of these findings moving into the first year of their PhD research.

Knowledge Exchange

As well as informal seminars throughout the year facilitated by students’ SDS sponsors, a formal Knowledge Exchange event is held to communicate PhD students’ research findings to senior staff.

In January 2019, the first Knowledge Exchange event was hosted with recent PhD graduate John Mowbray as speaker. During an interactive presentation, John informed colleagues of his main research findings and policy implications.

Sandra Cheyne, CMS Policy and Professional Practice Manager, attended the event and said: “The Knowledge Exchange Event was an effective way of disseminating PhD research to the business. John’s research offers important insights into how networking can be effectively utilised, providing us with a robust evidence base. The world is constantly changing, with knowledge and research being vitally important in order to continually improve and evolve our service offer.”

Working with his SDS Sponsor (Keith Falconer) John launched his Policy Briefing Paper at the event – a resource aimed at distilling PhD findings into a policy focussed format. This is a document that all SDS sponsored PhD students will be asked to complete in the final stages of their research.

Wider Networking Events

The Skills Development Scotland PhD Networking Event was held at the start of 2018. The event was an opportunity for our students, partners and stakeholders to gather together in a lively and engaging atmosphere to explore new ideas and present their research.

SDS sponsored PhD students also participated in our Student Seminar Series, where they are given an opportunity to present their research to fellow students in a collaborative and relaxed environment. In August, Gabi launched the series by presenting his work on Graduate Attributes, inviting the rest of the group to feedback on the conceptual framework he has developed for use across Higher Education. In October, the Student Seminar Series was held in Stirling with Kane discussing his findings that look at the role of social networking sites in career management. Kane’s findings provided for interesting discussions involving his SDS sponsor, Keith Falconer, and the PhD students.

A key strength of the SDS PhD programme is its strong links with policy and practice. The programme aims not only to support innovative research on skills and learning, but to feed this research back into an applied setting and ensure real-world impact.

Terry Dillon is Senior Programme Manager at SDS and Gabi Lipan’s sponsor. He says: “The research and thinking that Gabi is doing on Graduate Attributes for his PhD will generate important insights for SDS when considering elements of the Work-based learning system – but also the skills and education system more broadly.

Working with SDS teams and sharing findings periodically throughout the PhD, Gabi’s research is benefiting from policy relevant insight which, in turn, is helping to produce an insightful and relevant resource for the organisation and beyond.”

David Coyne, Rachael Murphy’s SDS sponsor and Director of the Centre for Work-based Learning says: “Rachael’s PhD examines work readiness, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. She has developed a framework which describes a set of components of work readiness, providing a basis for more qualitative research.

The insights generated will help with the development and implementation of programmes of employability support and will allow a systematic basis for design and evaluation. As such, the research will be a valuable resource for policymakers and practitioners.”

Policy Impact and Relevance

As well as informal seminars throughout the year facilitated by students’ SDS sponsors, a formal Knowledge Exchange event is held to communicate PhD students’ research findings to senior staff.

In January 2019, the first Knowledge Exchange event was hosted with recent PhD graduate John Mowbray as speaker. During an interactive presentation, John informed colleagues of his main research findings and policy implications.

Sandra Cheyne, CMS Policy and Professional Practice Manager, attended the event and said: “The Knowledge Exchange Event was an effective way of disseminating PhD research to the business. John’s research offers important insights into how networking can be effectively utilised, providing us with a robust evidence base. The world is constantly changing, with knowledge and research being vitally important in order to continually improve and evolve our service offer.”

Working with his SDS Sponsor (Keith Falconer) John launched his Policy Briefing Paper at the event – a resource aimed at distilling PhD findings into a policy focussed format. This is a document that all SDS sponsored PhD students will be asked to complete in the final stages of their research.
Highlights of the Past Year

Student Progress

- **3** New Students Welcomed
- **4** Masters Degrees Awarded
- **2** Students Completed and Awarded Doctorate
- **8** Presentations at Academic Events

Where students are working

- Skills Development Scotland
- University College London
- Scottish Government
- Heriot-Watt University
- National Health Service
- University of Strathclyde

Conferences attended

- AGCAS Conference in Edinburgh
- Advance Higher Education Conference in Birmingham
- Association for Information Science & Technology 2018 in Vancouver
- ISIC 2018 in Krakow
- International Society for Quality of Life Studies Conference in Hong Kong

PhD Students Internships completed

- Skills Development Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Edinburgh Business School

Highlights to Look Forward to

Student Seminar Series

The Seminar Series aims to bring SDS PhD students and colleagues together to share research and promote networking. The series continues, with our next event being held in April where Gaile Siusyte will be sharing what she has found around the support of those who influence young people’s career development.

Knowledge Exchange

The Knowledge Exchange Event Series was launched in January with a presentation from John Mowbray. We aim to continue delivering these sessions with our students and senior SDS colleagues as more students complete their research.

Policy Briefing

Students who are near to completion of their PhD research will brief SDS on the policy implications of their work, meaning their findings can directly affect the direction of Scotland’s skills policy.

New PhD topics awarded:

Three new PhD topics have been agreed with the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Napier. These will focus on entrepreneurialism in work, the behaviours of young people in relation to careers, and the impact of work-based learning environments on skills and economic performance.
An in-depth look at Lyndsey’s PhD Journey

Lyndsey is in the final year of her PhD and is completing her studies on a part time basis, as she now works full time as an Assistant Statistician with the Scottish Government. Lyndsey’s research investigates innovation and best practice in skills development in the workplace in Scotland from an information science perspective, drawing comparisons from both across the UK and internationally. She examines the development of innovative work behaviour through processes of workplace learning, a specific relationship identified within the literature and important to explore in practice. In addition, Lyndsey examines the specific determinants of successful learning of innovative work behaviour as well as how successful workplace learning (as relevant to the development of innovative work behaviour) can be identified within organisations. The aim of the research is to construct a framework that explains the development of innovative work behaviour through workplace learning processes and the factors that influence this relationship.

Lyndsey has collected data in the form of three case studies of organisations in Scotland, England and Finland in order to examine the factors that influence innovative work behaviour across multiple, differing contexts. The data collection within the case studies comprised interviews, focus groups and surveys to explore the contextual factors that can support innovative work behaviour at the individual and group levels.

Lyndsey’s PhD addresses the following research questions:

- How do contextual factors support innovative work behaviour for application at individual and collective levels in the workplace?
- How do information literacy and information behaviours support successful workplace learning as related to the development of innovative work behaviour?
- What are the determinants of successful workplace learning in relation to learning to innovate?
- How can successful workplace learning be identified in relation to learning to innovate?
- Which factors support the development of innovation, or influence the proportion of innovative enterprises at national level in European countries?

Empirical Research and Methods

Lyndsey addresses her research questions in three stages using a multi-method approach. These are:

**Stage 1:**
Statistical analysis of the Community Innovation Survey and other Eurostat training and innovation data, to explore the factors that influence innovation across Europe.

**Stage 2:**
Data collection from case studies of organisations to explore the factors that influence the development of innovative work behaviour. Additionally, data collection explores how successful workplace learning can be identified taking account of its highly contextual nature. The case studies comprise interviews and focus groups with leadership staff, managerial staff and non-managerial employees. A quantitative online survey is also part of case study data collection. Case study organisations include:

1. A Scottish University
2. A Finnish University
3. An NHS Trust in England

**Stage 3:**
Interviews/focus groups with staff from skills support agencies to explore practicalities and constraints of the framework developed from stages (1) and (2) of the doctoral work. The aim of this stage is to explore the relevance of the doctoral work to SDS policy.

Dissemination Activities

Since starting her PhD, Lyndsey has taken part in a wide and impressive range of dissemination activities and has produced a number of journal publications, conference presentations and PhD Posters which can be accessed via the publications and presentations page on her website.

Preliminary Findings/ Policy Impact

Lyndsey’s research highlights the importance of information literacy and information behaviours in learning to innovate and identifies the following key factors in pursuing best practice for supporting employees in learning to innovate:

- The importance of information literacy in a digital age, (i.e. the ability to locate relevant information, evaluate it appropriately and use it effectively).
- The need for more interactive information sources (i.e. involving people rather than paper) which enable processes of questioning and reflection to occur.
- Allowing communication to stimulate conversations, information exchange and knowledge sharing.

Additionally, Lyndsey’s research highlights multiple contextual factors that emerged from all three case studies she carried out (e.g. organisational culture and leadership). However, when compared together, other factors emerged in some of the case studies but not others, highlighting the difference in context in terms of workplace learning and innovation practices.

Lyndsey’s research will result in the creation of a robust model that helps to explain the role of workplace learning in the development of innovative work behaviour from an information science perspective. It will identify specific determinants of successful workplace learning across multiple workplace contexts and identify good practice for workplaces to facilitate workplace learning and foster innovation, with particular relevance for the university and health sector.

The research will help to inform skills policy that supports employee-led workplace innovation and enhances the development of innovative work behaviour from employees, drawing on examples of successful innovation and best practice within and beyond Scotland.

Further Information

**PhD blog:** lyndseyjenkins.org

**University web page:** napier.ac.uk/people/lyndsey-middleton

**Twitter:** @Middleton_Ly

**Email:** L.Middleton@napier.ac.uk
## Students, Topics, & Sponsors

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## Notes

- [Note 1](#)
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- [Note 3](#)
For more information about our PhD programme or if you would like information about any of the students’ area of research please feel free to email us.

PhD@sds.co.uk