

Guidance on how to apply for an SSA-funded PhD studentship

Application round 3 November 2025–15 January 2026

The application form is structured in the following way:

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Please read the information below before you apply.

Page one: Eligibility

Name, address, email and phone number
For information only. Please use the address where you currently reside and an email address that will remain active throughout the application process.
Please select if you are applying for a clinical PhD <i>Clinical PhDs are for people who work in a registered profession and who practice in a local authority or public health setting. Registered professions include (but are not limited to) nurses, midwives, pharmacists, doctors and dentists.</i> <i>If you are not sure if your job qualifies, please get in touch using our enquiry form.</i>
For information and application form routing. If you select 'clinical PhD', you will be routed to see questions that relate to clinical PhDs only.
Will you be UK resident for the duration of your studies?
Eligibility Yes = eligible for this funding No = not eligible for this funding
Will you be studying at a UK university?
Eligibility Yes = eligible for this funding No = not eligible for this funding
Do you already have a first, an upper-second (2:1) class, a master's degree in a relevant subject, or equivalent clinical research experience?
Eligibility Yes = eligible for this funding No = not eligible for this funding
Does your research focus on illicit drugs and/or alcohol?
Eligibility Yes = eligible for this funding No = not eligible for this funding
Does your research focus on primary prevention?
Eligibility Yes = not eligible for this funding No = eligible for this funding

Eligibility clarifications**Eligibility**

This box will show up depending on your answers to the above questions. It is for you to explain any relevant details and potentially mitigating factors. Your answer here will be reviewed alongside your answers above when the SSA considers your eligibility for funding under this scheme. If you have previously spoken to the SSA about your eligibility for this scheme, please provide details of that conversation here.

(200 words)

Describe how your PhD meets the eligibility and aims of the Addiction Healthcare Goals flagship research leadership funding programme?**Eligibility**

You should refer to the eligibility criteria detailed and explain how your proposal meets the aims of the Addiction Healthcare Goals flagship research leadership programme.

Use this space to demonstrate how your research relates to the Addiction Healthcare Goals' aims and priorities. You should cover your research focus, innovations, collaborations and your personal commitment to a career in UK addiction science.

This will be reviewed by the SSA and Addiction Healthcare Goals team. Only applications deemed to meet those aims will be eligible for funding.

(500 words)

Have you been employed by, or received funding from, non-pharmaceutical addictive product industries?

Addictive product industries are defined as businesses, people or other legal entities that make money from selling, promoting or lobbying to promote use of non-pharmaceutical, addictive products. This includes, but is not limited to, the alcohol, non-pharmaceutical cannabis, gambling, non-pharmaceutical nicotine (e.g., vaping) and tobacco industries.

If you are not sure what constitutes a conflict of interest or an addictive product industry, please get in touch using our [enquiry form](#).

Eligibility

No = eligible for this funding

Yes = not eligible for this funding

The SSA does not fund people who are employed by, or who receive money from, addictive product industries.

Please declare any potential conflicts of interest

You should declare any and all financial, professional, personal or other interests that relate you. This should include specific conflicts that relate to your proposed area of research as well as conflicts that relate to addictive products and behaviours overall.

If you are not sure what constitutes a potential conflict of interest, please get in touch using our [enquiry form](#).

Eligibility

Specific conflicts of interest are those relating to your research product - for example, if your research focuses on technology in which you hold a financial stake. General conflicts of interest relate to any kind of interest you hold in relation to addictive products and industries.

Your answer will be reviewed by the SSA's conflicts of interest subcommittee once your application has been submitted. The SSA reserves the right not to fund people and projects where it deems the risks from conflicts of interest are too great.

If the SSA later discovers a conflict of interest that has not been declared here, it reserves the right to review and potentially cease funding at that time.

If you have questions about conflicts of interest, you get in touch with the SSA via the [enquiry form](#).

(500 words)

Declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest that relate to your supervisor and supervisory team

You should declare any and all financial, professional, personal or other interests that they hold, and that relate either to your proposed research or to addictive products and behaviours in general.

If you are not sure what constitutes a potential conflict of interest, please get in touch using our [enquiry form](#).

Eligibility

Specific conflicts of interest are those relating to your research product - for example, if your research focuses on technology in which your supervisor holds a financial stake. General conflicts of interest relate to any kind of interest your supervisor may hold in relation to addictive product industries.

Your answer will be reviewed by the SSA's conflicts of interest subcommittee once your application has been submitted. The SSA reserves the right not to fund people and projects where it deems the risks from conflicts of interest are too great.

If the SSA later discovers a conflict of interest that has not been declared here, it reserves the right to review and potentially cease funding at that time.

If you have questions about conflicts of interest, you get in touch with the SSA via the [enquiry form](#).

(500 words)

Page two: About you

Please describe what motivates you to undertake this PhD and why you are best placed to do it.

Assessment

This set of questions should be viewed as one section and replace a formal CV. You should use these to demonstrate that you bring high levels of relevant motivation, skills, and experiences to your proposed PhD.

This could include why you believe the research is necessary and how you identified it as such as well as what you bring to the topic. Please consider personal, professional and intellectual factors.

(250 words)

What skills will you bring to this PhD?
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Assessment

This set of questions should be viewed as one section and replace a formal CV. You should use these to demonstrate that you bring high levels of relevant motivation, skills, and experiences to your proposed PhD.

This could include academic achievements, qualifications and training courses as well as skills you have developed through professional and personal experiences.

(250 words)

What experiences will you bring to this PhD?

Assessment

This set of questions should be viewed as one section and replace a formal CV. You should use these to demonstrate that you bring high levels of relevant motivation, skills, and experiences to your proposed PhD.

This could include your work and academic history, positions of responsibility, commitments such as reviewing, committee work and voluntary positions.
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(250 words)

Additional information

Assessment

This set of questions should be viewed as one section and replace a formal CV. You should use these to demonstrate that you bring high levels of relevant motivation, skills, and experiences to your proposed PhD.

Use this section to add anything not covered in the above sections, as well as to provide context such as career breaks, secondments or voluntary work.

(500 words)

Please enter your ORCID

Assessment

If you do not already have an ORCID, please see guidance on how to create one.
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Page three: Project plan

Title of your proposed PhD
Information only This is the title we will use in correspondence throughout your application. It should relate closely to your project plan.
Lay summary (in plain English) of your proposed PhD
Assessment This should be written so that people who are unfamiliar with your subject area and research methods can understand your project. Prepare this section as if you were speaking to someone with no prior knowledge of addiction. You should avoid technical or specialist terminology, instead using short sentences and simple language. Provide examples or comparisons where they help explain complex ideas. For your research to have an impact you must be able to communicate complex ideas so that they resonate outside of research or specialist settings. This section will assess your ability to do this. <div>(500 words)</div>
PhD project plan (information box)
The project plan should be no longer than 2,000 words (excluding references). There is no word limit or preferred citation style for references. All should contain a DOI where available. All information should be contained within the document; reviewers will not click on hyperlinks included within the text. The project plan should cover the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• background (brief summary of the relevant literature)• a statement of testable hypotheses (or equivalent)• the study design or structure• research methods and instruments• a data analysis plan, including your current proficiency with those methods• training and career development activities planned for your PhD (please include estimated costs)• expected scientific outcomes• methods of dissemination• expected impact on policy and practice

Please upload your PhD project plan here (max. 2,000 words excluding references)

Assessment

This is the most important element of your application and will be read thoroughly by the assessment panel, the funders, and by the experts asked to review your application. You should ensure that this document is thoroughly reviewed with your supervisors before you upload it to your application.

Your project plan should contain all the items listed above. It will also be assessed on the following

- How suitable the plan is for a three-year PhD? Is it feasible to complete the work in that time as well as being sufficiently ambitious?
- Are the research methods, data sources and any statistical methods appropriate to test the hypothesis?
- Are the risks in this project understood and managed appropriately?
- What is the likely impact of the research?

(document upload)

Upload your projected PhD timeline as a Gantt chart, including any tasks, dependencies between tasks, and the timeline for completing them

Assessment

This will provide supporting detail in relation to your project plan and will be assessed alongside that document. You should ensure that all elements of your project plan are covered by your timeline document. This is where you can demonstrate the ambition of your research alongside the feasibility of the project plan. You should also use this document to explain how you would deal with any anticipated delays (e.g., ethical approval or data collection).

(document upload)

Please describe how your PhD will contribute towards your career goals

The SSA and Addiction Healthcare Goals are both committed to developing careers in addiction science research leadership. You should use this space to outline your career goals and how the PhD will help you to achieve those goals. Explain what you plan to do next and the impact that your career will have on the sector.

(350 words)

What input have you received so far from people with lived/living experience of addiction, and/or what contributions do you plan to incorporate throughout your PhD?

Assessment

Both elements of this should be covered in your answer. Input received so far and further input planned throughout the fellowship. If you have not received input from people with lived experience then you should use this space to explain the reasons or rationale for this.

Through your fellowship, the SSA can support you in how best to incorporate the views of people with lived experience of addiction into your research. If you have questions, you get in touch with the SSA via the [enquiry form](#).

(500 words)

Date you intend to start your PhD
Information only This should represent a date that the university has approved in principle. If you have already started your PhD, you can select a date in the past.
Date you expect to complete your PhD
Information only This should be three years after the start date unless you are planning to undertake a part-time PhD.
Are you planning to complete your PhD on a full- or part-time basis?
Information only
If part-time, please indicate the percentage basis
Information only The percentage entered here should match the length of time indicated by the start and end dates. For example, a 100% PhD would take three years, a 50% PhD would take six years.

Page four: Funding

Clinical PhDs only:

What percentage of your PhD time will be reserved for clinical work?

Information only

The SSA will pay full clinical salaries where applicants maintain 20% clinical work alongside their PhD. If a higher percentage of clinical work is proposed, then supplementary information must be provided about how this will be funded.

Clinical PhDs only:

Please provide any relevant details about your clinical work, including variations, support you will receive, other payments, and expected time commitments.

Information only

Use this space to provide supplementary information about your clinical work and any details about that work that are relevant to your PhD application.

(300 words)

Provide information about your proposed stipend (/salary for clinical PhDs), tuition fees and research costs

Please give full stipend/salary costs for each year of your PhD (including detail on increments), with a breakdown of the following:

- Basic salary (grade and amount)
- National Insurance (NI) and superannuation/pension scheme contributions
- London weighting if appropriate

Information only

The SSA bases its stipend and tuition fee payments on UKRI levels.

For clinical applicants this will be based on your clinical salary. Please provide details about which band point (or similar) and salary structure your employer uses.

(500 words)

Page five: Supervisory team

Academic host institution and department
Information only
Please confirm that you have discussed your application with the relevant research finance officer at your host institution
Requirement You must have your PhD agreed in principle within your host institution.
Describe the reasons for selecting this institution and the benefits it will bring to your proposed PhD
Information and assessment You should be based within a UK university for the duration of your fellowship. The university and department should be appropriate for your research. Use this space to demonstrate a good fit between you planned study and your host institution. This may be in terms of area or methodological specialism or access to facilities that are crucial for your fellowship. It may also relate to the locality and the ability to study specific needs or a local population. <div>(300 words)</div>
Primary PhD supervisor
Information only This should be your primary supervisor for the duration of your PhD
Supervisor's correspondence address
Information only Please provide an address where the SSA can contact your supervisor, this will usually be a work address.
Supervisor's email address
Information only Please provide an email address where the SSA can contact your supervisor, this should be a work email address, and the domain should match the research institution where they are based. After you submit your form, the SSA will send a copy of your supervisor's support letter to them using the email address provided here.
Previous success of supervisor
Assessment The previous success and experience of your supervisor are important. You should demonstrate that they have sufficient experience in successfully supervising researchers as well as appropriate subject or methodological experience to provide effective leadership for your PhD. <div>(200 words)</div>

Please provide details of any additional members of your supervisory team, including their name, affiliation, and the expertise they will contribute

Information and assessment

As above, you should demonstrate that your team has the subject matter and methodological expertise to support you throughout your fellowship. The details included in this section should align with the needs arising from your project plan.

(200 words)

Please upload a letter from your academic supervisor at the university

Please ensure it contains statements confirming:

- your suitability for the PhD
- that your proposed research aligns with their research group's interests and expertise
- that they would be willing to supervise your PhD if your application is successful
- that the university would be willing to host your PhD if your application is successful

Assessment

As indicated above, please note that after you submit your application, the support letter will be sent to your supervisor so they can confirm its contents. Your supervisor should include all the elements listed above. It is essential that they confirm the university is willing to host your PhD.

Have you applied for / been granted funding by any other source for your PhD?

Information only

Please give details about other applications or funding or enter 'none' if not applicable.

(300 words)

Page six: Reference

Name
<p>Information only</p> <p>After you submit your application, we will contact your referee asking them for a support statement, so please make sure the contact details you provide are correct and that the person named here knows to expect an email at that time.</p> <p>This section is for information only, however, the person named should be in a position to provide an insightful reference. They should know your work, your ability to study at a PhD level, and should work in a position of sufficient authority so that they are able to recommend you for the PhD. This will usually be a previous employer, supervisor or mentor and not a colleague, supervisee or employee.</p> <p>The reference should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the proposed research plan• the applicant's work to date• the applicant's potential for contributing to addiction science
Job title/position
<p>Information only</p> <p>Please state your referee's current job title and workplace or institution in which they are based. If they are retired, this should be their most recent position and workplace or institution.</p>
Address
<p>Information only</p> <p>Please provide an address where the SSA can contact your referee, this will usually be a work address.</p>
Email address
<p>Information only</p> <p>Please provide an email address where the SSA can contact your supervisor, this should be a work email address, and the domain should match the research institution where they are based.</p>

Page seven: Declarations

Please describe whether and how you have used AI in preparing this application. If you have not used AI, please enter N/A.

Information

You must declare the extent to which you have used AI to prepare this application. If you have used no AI, state “No AI used in preparing this application”

Some use of AI is permitted. The majority and substance of the work should, however, be yours. Please note that presenting work that is not your own without proper attribution constitutes plagiarism and could result in your application being rejected.

(200 words)

Signature

Information only

As above, this constitutes a declaration that the application is your own work and that all elements that are not your own have been suitably attributed; that all answers have been truthfully answered and that you have not knowingly misled or withheld important information at any point in the application form.

Diversity monitoring re-direct

When you submit this form, you will be re-directed to a diversity monitoring form. This information is collected to monitor how diverse the field of applicants is and whether the recruitment process is fair.

The diversity monitoring form is a mandatory part of the application process. However, you have a right not to disclose sensitive personal information and can do this via selecting ‘Prefer not to say’ for any of the answers.

Data collected on the diversity monitoring form are kept securely and are separate from the funding decision-making process.

Information for you

The information you provide on the diversity monitoring form will be held separately from your application form and will not be shared with reviewers. The data privacy notice for this funding scheme can be found [here](#).

We use diversity monitoring data to identify potential funding inequalities so that those inequalities can be addressed by future targeted funding schemes.