Guidance Note for Academic and Non-Academic* References in Support of Studentship Applications

*Non-academic references may be acceptable from applicants who have been out of higher education for 5 years or more and applicants with relevant industrial or professional experience.

**FOR APPLICANTS:** All applicants for PhD studentships at the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science are required to submit contact details of two referees. These references are a key component of the application and greatly assist the Scottish Graduate School in assessing student applications. The Scottish Graduate School will contact referees on behalf of the applicants.

**FOR REFEREES:** Once you have completed the reference please return it no later than **17 February 2016** to:

studentships@socsciscotland.ac.uk

References should follow the style and content guidance below.

**Style guide**

- The reference must be in either Word Document or PDF format.
- The reference must display the letter-head of the referee’s organisation.
- The reference must clearly state the name and position of the referee.
- The reference must contain, as a subject line, the name of the student that the reference concerns (e.g. John Smith), the academic discipline (e.g. Human Geography), and the host institution (e.g. University of Glasgow).
- The reference must be received from a professional email account. References from personal email accounts (e.g. hotmail, gmail) will **not** be accepted under normal circumstances. If you do not have access to a professional letter head or email account (for example because you have left the employment of the institution through which you know the candidate) please make this clear in your letter.
- References should not exceed 2 sides of A4; however there is no word limit within that.

**Content guide**

References might include any or all of the points below:

- Statement of how long, and in what capacity, you have known the applicant.
- An assessment of the applicant’s academic potential, with specific reference to the proposed research project.
• An assessment of the applicant’s previous training, qualifications, and experience that is of relevance to the proposed research project.
• If appropriate, comment on the potential impact of the research and its significance to the academic discipline/s concerned.
• An assessment of the applicant’s ability to complete successfully the programme of study within the prescribed period.
• **For non-academic references:**
  • An assessment of the applicant’s professional performance compared to peers at the same career stage.
  • An assessment, if relevant, of the applicant’s organisational and time management skills, and any project management or research experience.
  • Comment on the applicant’s capacity for innovation and original thought.
• **For academic references:**
  • If the applicant has not completed his/her current degree programme, indicate the expected result.
  • An assessment of the applicant’s ranking compared to other students on the same course or compared to other students you have taught (e.g. 5th in a class of 80; in the top 5% of students).