

SGSSS Academic Placements

Placement Information

Placement Title	Future Skills for Digital Health & Care: A Policy-Relevant Analysis of Education Provision in Scotland <i>What are we teaching, what's missing — and what needs to change?</i>
Project Host	Dr Sanna Rimpiläinen – Head of Research and Skills
Host team (research centre/research team or professional services team)	The Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI) University of Strathclyde
Full time/part time	Full time or part time
In person/remote/hybrid	Hybrid
Duration	3 months (full time) or 6 months (part time)
Eligibility	This placement is open to all ESRC funded PhD students whose funding began after October 2024. Eligible students should seek funding permission directly from their funder as required.
To apply	Please contact Jennifer Thomas (Skills and Project Manager) to apply for this placement jennifer.thomas@dhi-scotland.com

Placement Details

About the host

The Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI) is one of Scotland's four national Innovation Centres and sits at the intersection of research, policy and real-world change. A collaboration between the University of Strathclyde and Glasgow School of Art, and funded by the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government, we work across academia, industry and public services to help digital innovation in health and social care deliver meaningful impact.

Our work spans service innovation, technology, design, skills and business models, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and co-design. We bring together diverse partners — from universities and colleges to NHS services, policymakers and industry — to tackle complex, system-level challenges where no single discipline has the answer.

A core part of DHI's 10-year strategy focuses on developing a future skills pipeline for digital health and care. This includes understanding how education, training and professional pathways can better equip the workforce for rapid technological change. Our Research and Skills team leads this work, combining analytical research with policy engagement and practical action.

For a PhD student, DHI offers a friendly, interdisciplinary environment where academic skills are valued, curiosity is encouraged, and research is closely connected to decisions being made right now about Scotland's digital health and care future.

Project Description:

How well is Scotland's education system really preparing people for the digital future of health and care?

Background

In 2021, DHI carried out a national review of higher and further education courses linked to digital health and care — and the results were striking. Only a tiny proportion of courses engaged explicitly with digital health, and truly interdisciplinary provision was rare. Since then, both education and digital technologies have moved on at pace.

This placement invites a PhD student to take the lead on updating and interrogating that picture — asking what has changed, where innovation is emerging, and where gaps persist. Rather than simply cataloguing courses, the focus is on making sense of the landscape: how digital capability is framed, which disciplines are connecting (or not), and what this means for workforce readiness.

The project will produce at least one substantial output (for example, a co-authored policy report, briefing paper or academic article outline), shaped around the student's interests and strengths. There is clear scope for the student to bring their own analytical lens, disciplinary perspective and ideas to the work.

Placement Plan

The placement will follow a multi-stage approach with flexibility to tailor methods and outputs in discussion with the PhD student.

Stage 1: Project set up and scoping: The placement will begin with induction, review of the 2021 baseline study, and agreement of scope, criteria and analytical approach. The PhD student will take lead responsibility for planning the work programme and refining data capture tools.

Stage 2: Desk based review and content analysis: The student will undertake a systematic review of publicly available course information from Scottish universities and colleges, using structured content and thematic analysis to assess how digital health and care is embedded across relevant disciplines.

Stage 3: Comparative analysis: Findings will be compared with the 2021 baseline to identify trends, shifts in emphasis, emerging provision and persistent gaps, using both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Stage 4: Stakeholder validation (optional): Where time allows, light touch engagement with educators or policy stakeholders may be used to contextualise and validate findings.

Stage 5: Synthesis and reporting: The placement will conclude with synthesis of insights into a final report and presentation, with scope for policy briefings and potential co-authored outputs aligned with the student’s doctoral interests.

While the core objectives are defined, the methodological approach, analytical framework and depth of exploration will be shaped collaboratively with the PhD student, allowing them to bring their disciplinary perspective and research interests into the project.

This opportunity offers the following benefits for the student:

This placement would suit PhD students in social policy, sociology, public administration, innovation studies, digital society, education research or related fields, particularly those interested in workforce transformation, skills systems or technology-enabled public services.

The PhD student will:

- Gain first-hand experience of applying doctoral research skills in a national policy and innovation context
- Develop expertise in skills ecosystems, workforce transformation and digital health education
- Build an evidence base relevant to academic, policy or third-sector career pathways
- Expand their professional network across universities, policymakers and national agencies

Have the opportunity to co-author outputs with senior researchers and contribute to high-visibility sector discussions.

Experience and Skills Required:

Essential skills	Desirable skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills • Critical thinking and analytical skills • Content/thematic analysis • Written communication • Self-management and initiative • Attention to detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement • Policy analysis • Presentation skills • Digital health and care awareness • Knowledge of Scottish HE/FE landscape • Adaptability and problem solving

Further information

SGSSS coordinate the promotion of this placement only and would expect placement administration to be completed by the placement students' funder and HEI. Please contact the host Jennifer Thomas jennifer.thomas@dhi-scotland.com directly with any queries or to apply for this placement