FAQs for Providing Referee details as part of a College of Social Sciences PhD Funding Opportunity application

You are required to provide the details of two referees during the application process.

What is the purpose of references?

We ask for references as this is an opportunity for an academic or work colleague known to you to provide the assessors and selection panel with an overview of you as an individual, as well as how you perform academically (or within your workplace). In addition, a reference is a good way for assessor to try to gauge if you are ready to undertake a PhD.

What is CoSS asking within the reference template, which will be sent to my referees?

Referees will be asked to answer the following question:

"Please provide an assessment of the applicant's preparedness to undertake and complete a PhD and to flourish as a result of PhD funding, bearing in mind their academic work and other life experiences."

How many references do I need?

All CoSS PhD funding opportunities require 2 references. You must enter the name and email addresses of 2 referees – the Portal will not allow you to submit your application with less, or more, than 2 referees details.

Who can provide my references?

Where possible your references should include an academic familiar with your work (from within the last 5 years). Both references can be from academics but you may include a work reference, especially if you have been out of academia for more than 5 years.

I am applying to more than one PhD funding opportunity, what do I need to do regarding my references?

If you are applying to more than one PhD funding opportunity you must request two references for each application, regardless if they are the same referees. The reason for this is that the Scholarships Application Portal attaches a completed reference to the application associated with the request. Although this might seem awkward for your referee(s), the reference completion process is very straight forward (see next question for details).

What happens when I enter my referees' details and click 'send email' as part of my application via the Scholarships Application Portal?

Once you submit your two referees' details (full name and email address) and click 'send email' online via the Scholarships Application Portal, the system will send them an email invite asking that they complete and upload a reference template (Microsoft Word document provided). They then need to follow the link detailed within the email to create a Scholarships Application Portal account (this takes a few minutes), at which point they can then complete and upload the reference template provided. Once completed and submitted online by your referee, the reference will be attached to your application automatically. You will be able to see when your references have been returned via your application on the Scholarships Application Portal. Please note, you will not be able to read your returned references, you will just be able to see when they have been returned.

When should I request my references?

As you can request your references before you submit your full application (please see question below), we encourage you to submit both of your referees' details and click 'send email' as soon as possible to allow them as much time as possible to respond. If you only request your references a day or so before (or on) the deadline, this may not be enough time for your referees to respond, whereas if you do this a few weeks before the deadline you are giving yourself a higher chance that your references will be returned on time, allowing your application to be considered.

I am concerned one or both of my referees might not respond to my reference request; what should I do?

As a reference request will be issued to your referees via the Scholarships Application Portal as soon as you submit their details and click 'send email' online, it is imperative that you have sought their permission before you send them a reference request. Not only is this polite, it will reduce the possibility of your application being incomplete and thus unable to progress.

If you have sought permission from your referees and you are still worried one or both may not complete the reference template on time or may forget etc., you can manage your reference requests yourself via your application within the Scholarships Application Portal. The system will allow you to change who your referees are (by withdrawing your reference request and deleting it, before submitting a new reference request). **Please note**, you can only manage your reference requests if you HAVE NOT fully submitted your application. Once you fully submit your application, you will no longer have the permissions to make changes to your referees details.

As the application system will allow you to prepare the rest of your application, i.e. you can save your application and return as many times as you like without fully submitting it, it is possible to manage your references and have your application ready for submission well before the application deadline.