CHASE SELECTION PANELS – TERMS OF REFERENCE 2019

1. Panel constitution and remit

- CHASE will run four annual Selection Panels. Each will consist of a Chair (who will be a member of the CHASE management board) and one academic representative of each of the eight CHASE institutions. If any institution decides not to send a representative to a given panel in a given year it must inform the CHASE academic and administrative leads at least six weeks in advance of the panel meeting and no other representative from another institution should be found. Each panel requires a minimum of five panel members (not including the Chair) in order to be quorate. The panel will be supported administratively on the day of its meeting by one of the CHASE administrative leads, and before and after the meeting by the CHASE Manager and staff at Sussex (as lead institution).

- The panel meetings will be attended by an external observer, whose role is to observe the selection and ranking of candidates for studentship funding, and by the CHASE Manager, who can advise the Chair as necessary to ensure consistent procedures across the panels. The CHASE Director will also observe some panel meetings each year.

- The rotation of the position of Chair will be determined as per the Consortium Agreement, and the precise composition of the four panels will be determined by the Management Board on an annual basis. Institutions will propose representatives in consultation with the Academic Lead (Sussex) so as to ensure an appropriate balance of experience and expertise.

- The primary purpose of each selection panel is to discuss and grade all properly-completed CHASE applications put forward by the constituent member institutions. Each panel will be given in advance an indication of the number of funded CHASE studentships available across that panel's subject areas. Formally, the panels will make recommendations, which can either be accepted or revised by the Management Board. In practice, the Management Board will only seek to revise panel recommendations where issues of quality or process are apparent. Further details on the role of the Management Board in relation to the Selection Panels are given below.

2. Role of Panel Chair and Academic Members

- The role of the Panel Chair is solely to organise the discussions of the panel so as to ensure a timely, fair and transparent review process. Thus the Panel Chair(s) should not themselves express views on the quality or ranking of any applications. This is to avoid any perception that one institution has two representatives on the panel. The CHASE Director will convene a meeting with the Panel Chairs each year, in advance of the selection meetings, in order to establish a common understanding of the processes outlined below.
• The role of the academic panel members is (in advance of the meeting) to review and grade the applications received and (at the meeting) to discuss, rank and provide an agreed recommendation to the Management Board. For the purposes of the panel, panel members do not ‘represent’ a particular subject area or institution but are expected to use their experience and expertise impartially to assess the quality of all applications received. While individual CHASE institutions may have ranked their applications when deciding which to submit to the competition, these institutional rankings will play no part in the CHASE selection process.

• In advance of the meeting, panel members will be sent a login to view applications electronically via the FluidReview system. The dates for this will be set annually but, for 2019, panel members should expect to receive paperwork on 4 March.

• Panel members will be asked to review the applications and complete the FluidReview grading form for each one, completing this no later than 5pm on 13 March. The CHASE team will compile an aggregate score-sheet for each panel, which gives a single numeric score for each application based on the overall grades awarded by all panel members. This will be circulated in advance of the panel meeting. Panel members should bring their own copies of applications to the meeting.

3. The panel meeting

• At the panel meeting, the Chair will commence proceedings by facilitating introductions, briefing the panel as to the expected number of studentships to be allocated, providing an overview of the aggregated scores, and setting out the modus operandi for the meeting.

• The precise operation of each panel meeting cannot be specified in advance as much will depend on the quality and subject spread of the applications, and the degree of variance among the grades allocated before the meeting. Panel chairs may recommend working from the bottom of the gradings – i.e. ruling out those applications which were graded low by all panel members, before moving on to discuss the more highly-graded applications in more detail. Equally, panel chairs may recommend working through the highest ranked applications in detail first, and then passing more swiftly over applications below the cut-off point for BGP2 funding. The final decision on how to proceed in the meeting should be agreed in advance by the panel, rather than being imposed by the Chair. As a general rule, however, all applications must be discussed, even if very briefly. The Chair should also, as a general rule, summarise the decision on each application for the benefit of the notetaker.

• The panel must re-score all applications under consideration, in order to supply a differentiated ranking to the Management Board. It should avoid joint scores (where a number of applications share the same position) where possible. The panel should seek to agree the new scores by discussion of the collated gradings supplied prior to the meeting. Panel members should absent themselves from the room during discussions of candidates for which they are named as supervisor. Voting on closely-graded candidates should only take place as a last resort if panels are deadlocked. It is recognised, however, that on occasion a voting round may be the most effective means to move the meeting forward. In this case, the Chair does not vote but collates the votes of the panel members. Generally, panel members should abstain from voting rounds which contain candidates affiliated to their own institutions.
• The External Observer observes discussion of each application, and in particular how the opinion of the panel is translated into a panel score. The EO may be consulted at subsequent panel meetings on application of the grading scale.

• After the panel meeting, the administrative lead will provide the CHASE Director and the CHASE Manager with a full list of all applications and their panel scores. In addition, the Panel Chair will draft a brief report on the meeting to accompany the recommendations, providing a single line of commentary on each application, and setting out any concerns over the process, flagging any points to note in relation to particular recommendations and providing an overall assurance of the quality of all recommended applications. The Chair should discuss the proposed contents of this report with panel members before the end of the meeting and this report should also be circulated to all academic panel members once drafted.

4. The role of the External Observer in the selection process

• The External Observer (EO) is appointed by the CHASE Management Board to observe the selection and ranking of candidates for studentship funding. They attend the meetings of the four CHASE selection panels to observe discussion of each application, and in particular how the opinion of the panel is translated into a panel score. The EO may be consulted at subsequent panel meetings on application of the grading scale.

• The EO will report to the Management Board either in person or in writing, to provide
  o commentary on the setting of score ranges in each panel
  o a recommendation for any adjustment of scores
  o commentary on the process used by each panel to assign scores to applications
  o a note of any advice given to any panel meetings

• The EO is not responsible for the decision-making processes of the Board, or the allocation of awards

5. The role of the Management Board in the selection process

• The Management Board will receive a consolidated list of applications with final scores for each, ranked by score. These scores have the status of recommendations to the Management Board, and are considered alongside commentary in the panel chairs’ reports to decide upon a final ranked list of all applications.

• Members of the Management Board will review a sample of the applications from across all four panels to ensure consistency in the application of the grading scale. The Board will also receive the report and recommendations from the External Observer to further ensure consistency.

• The Board will receive and discuss the panel reports to identify any additional considerations from the panel meetings. The Board is able to adjust scores if appropriate. Where necessary, the Board may refer to applications and adjust scores to establish a clear ranking.

• After the Management Board meeting, CHASE institutions will be given a list which clearly identifies which of their candidates will be offered CHASE funding. Institutions will be expected to fund 33% of each studentship. All candidates will be informed of the outcome by 12 April, and offer-holders will be asked to respond by 26 April.