

## CHASE DTP Complaints and Appeals Procedure

### Scope of this procedure

1. The CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) is a collaborative project with the following members:

Birkbeck, University of London	University of East Anglia
The Courtauld Institute of Art	University of Essex
Goldsmiths, University of London	University of Kent
The Open University*	University of Sussex
SOAS University of London	

\*The Open University does not award CHASE studentships from 2019 onwards.

2. It disburses AHRC and institutional funds through the award of doctoral studentships, and through needs-based training and development for award holders and other PGR students at member institutions
3. CHASE is committed to operating a fair, efficient and transparent review and selection process for the funding that it offers on a competitive basis, including
  - i) doctoral studentships,
  - ii) any extensions to studentship funding,
  - iii) additional support funding for current students, and
  - iv) awards from the Cohort Development Fund.

#### For candidates for the CHASE DTP studentship competition:

4. If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your application for a studentship has been handled, this procedure provides guidance on how to raise a complaint and/or appeal a funding decision. It only applies to those whose applications were submitted by one of the member institutions to the CHASE DTP for consortium-level review. If you were not nominated to the DTP-level review process, any appeal or complaint relating to the handling of your application must be directed to the institution through which you applied for funding.
5. Separate procedures exist for appeals or complaints relating to admissions decisions. Please see the graduate admissions complaints and appeals procedures available on the institutional websites of the member institutions.

#### For current studentship award holders:

6. If you are a current award-holder, and are dissatisfied with: (a) the way in which your application for additional DTP funding has been handled by the CHASE DTP, (b) any service offered by the DTP, (c) the actions or behaviour of a member of DTP staff, or (d) supervisory arrangements for your Collaborative Doctoral Award project, this procedure provides guidance on how to raise a complaint and/or appeal a funding decision.
7. This procedure does not cover the following: supervision (except for Collaborative Doctoral Awards, see above); institutional resources; the consideration of interruptions to study and upgrades; academic progression. These and any other issue not directly relating to services or the award of funding by CHASE DTP should be addressed to the home institution.

### Definitions

8. This procedure applies to i) candidates for the CHASE DTP studentship competition, and ii) current CHASE DTP award-holders ('Applicant').

9. An appeal is a formal request for reconsideration of a decision on a funding application or the wording/ terms/ conditions of an offer ('Appeal').
10. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:
  - i) Procedural irregularity, where an Applicant believes that the DTP has not adhered to its published guidance for awarding DTP funding;
  - ii) Extenuating circumstances, which, for good reason, were not included in the original application, and which could have been material to the decision-making process. Applicants will need to provide details giving the reasons as to why this information was not disclosed at the time of application;
  - iii) Bias or perception of bias in the decision-making process. Applicants will need to provide specific examples with supporting documentation to evidence this.
11. A complaint, for the purposes of this process, constitutes an expression of dissatisfaction by the Applicant regarding any service offered by the DTP, or regarding the actions or behaviour of a member of DTP staff ('Complaint').
12. There is no right of appeal or complaint over matters of academic judgement.

### **General Principles**

13. Information about a Complaint or Appeal will only be shared with other parties where disclosure is necessary in order to ensure a fair investigation (e.g. the Applicant's identity will normally be disclosed to a person or body who is the subject of the complaint or whose decision is being appealed).
14. All parties involved in a Complaint or Appeal are required to act reasonably, fairly and courteously towards each other and to respect the DTP's procedures.
15. Anyone involved in a Complaint or Appeal may act through a representative who should normally be a member of one of the universities in the CHASE consortium, or a family member, or trade union officer.
16. Time limits should normally be met by all parties. Time limits may be extended by the relevant decision-maker where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure a fair outcome.
17. Complaints and Appeals that are anonymous or made by third parties will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons to do so.
18. The DTP may decline to consider a Complaint or Appeal where the matters in dispute are currently being considered or have been decided by an external body, such as a court or tribunal.
19. If the CHASE DTP Director is conflicted, or is otherwise unable to determine the matter, an appropriate substitute will be appointed who will usually be a senior academic at one of the universities in the DTP consortium. The person determining the Complaint or Appeal shall not have any conflict of interest in the matter.
20. The DTP may decline to consider the Complaint or Appeal if it is trivial or repeats a Complaint or Appeal that has already been made.
21. For all other Complaints or Appeals, the DTP may take any steps that are considered necessary to investigate, including calling on any person to provide specialist assistance. The DTP will usually send details of the matter to anyone who is a subject of the Complaint, or the original decision-maker(s) (for Appeals of funding decisions).
22. You may withdraw your Complaint or Appeal at any time; the DTP may however decide to continue the investigation if it is appropriate and fair to do so.

## Procedure

### Level 1: Informal resolution

23. Before raising a Complaint or Appeal, you should contact the DTP Manager ([robert.witts@chase.ac.uk](mailto:robert.witts@chase.ac.uk)) and/or Director ([k.lacey@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:k.lacey@sussex.ac.uk)) to explore concerns and, if possible, resolve the matter informally.

### Level 2: Formal consideration by the CHASE Management Board

24. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Level 1, you may submit a Complaint or Appeal for formal investigation to the CHASE DTP Manager ([robert.witts@chase.ac.uk](mailto:robert.witts@chase.ac.uk)). Your formal complaint should describe:
- the nature of your complaint or problem
  - any steps already taken to resolve it and the response you received
  - why you remain dissatisfied
  - the remedy you are seeking.
25. The CHASE DTP Manager will normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and refer it to the CHASE Director or Deputy Director. You should expect a response within fifteen working days, or a statement of the timescale for a full response. Please be aware that investigation of complaints may involve multiple parties, and so may take some time. Any delay will be explained and you will be kept informed of progress.
26. Care will be taken to ensure that anyone who is the subject of a complaint, or has been involved in a complaint at an earlier stage, is not involved in investigating it.

### Level 3: Formal consideration by an independent person

27. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Level 2, you may submit your Complaint or Appeal to the CHASE DTP Manager ([robert.witts@chase.ac.uk](mailto:robert.witts@chase.ac.uk)) for investigation by a senior member of staff at a CHASE institution. This person will be appointed in consultation with the CHASE Strategy Board. You should include:
- your original complaint to the CHASE Management Board
  - a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied
28. Requests to review the outcomes of Level 2 investigations will be considered in terms of whether any of these conditions are met:
- there were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint, or
  - fresh evidence can be presented which was not or could not reasonably have been made available to the investigator at Level 2, or
  - the finding of the investigation was against the weight of the evidence.
29. The CHASE DTP Manager will normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days, and provide a schedule for further responses. You will be kept informed of progress.
30. You will be notified of the outcome of the investigation of the complaint at Level 3 in writing.
31. In the decision letter, the DTP will set out the decision on the Complaint or Appeal, the reasons for the decision and any recommendations.
32. The DTP will also notify the outcome to anyone who is a subject of the Complaint (for funding complaints) or the original decision-maker(s) (for funding Appeals) and anyone in the member institutions that need to be made aware of it.

Version & date	Changes
1, June 2020	