CHASE studentship competition 2020 - Q&A from applicant webinars

Could you confirm that EU citizens will remain eligible to apply next year despite Brexit?

Yes, EU citizens will still be eligible. CHASE will offer funding both to Home and International students, but international awards are limited to 30% of the total. EU citizens may count as Home or International depending on whether they have a) settled status, b) pre-settled status (meeting residency requirement) or c) indefinite leave to remain or enter. Full details of this are available in Annex One of ‘Changes to EU and International Eligibility for UKRI funded studentships from Academic Year 2021/22 onwards’

I know that the number of studentships for international students is "limited". I don't know how limited but many people tell me it's very hard to get the studentship and it's a bit discouraging

CHASE will award up to 56 studentships to start in October 2021. Up to 30% of these awards will be made to international candidates. We don’t know how the change in UKRI eligibility rules will affect the application numbers, but in previous years there have been roughly 8 applications for every award made.

Will you be honouring the UKRI guidelines that British nationals whose normal place of residence is the EU be treated as home students up to 2028

CHASE will be following the UKRI guidance on eligibility, see the link above.

In case EU citizens are still eligible to apply, is the international tuition funded or just the UK rate?

CHASE institutions will cover the full international fees for any international candidates receiving a CHASE studentship.

I'm currently a PhD student but am I eligible to apply the studentship?

Current students at CHASE institutions are eligible to apply if they have more than half of their registration remaining.

Is there a prohibition on keeping up a full-time job?

CHASE offers studentships for part-time and full-time study. It would not be possible to combine either commitment with an additional full-time job.
Do international students need have resided in the UK for three years to be eligible?

No, there is no residency requirement for international students to be eligible for a studentship award.

I’ve already been offered a place at the dept and University I applied for, and I’ve seen in the CHASE application that one of the requirements is two reference letters. Can these be the same ones that submitted to the PhD programme?

The references for your CHASE funding application can be the same as those for your application for a place of study; we would however ask that referees submit their reference text via the CHASE application system.

How thorough does the timescale have to be in your proposal? Does it need to be structured to explain exactly what you will be doing year by year on a monthly basis?

The timescale is just one aspect of the research proposal that needs to be accommodated within a limited word count. Usually an overview of each year of the project is sufficient.

What role does relevant past work experience, and anticipated future career path, play in the success of an application?

What are the chances of funding if the applicant does not hold a Masters degree?

The application is assessed on ‘preparedness for research’, which can include relevant work experience alongside academic achievements. If you don’t have a Masters degree, your application may still be competitive if you can demonstrate relevant work experience in a related field.

I’m interested in applying for a joint-supervised PhD between two CHASE institutions (SOAS and Goldsmiths) but I haven’t found much information on how exactly this works in terms of the funding application, how the funding would be allocated and whether or not this would count against me when applying.

If you think your project would be best served by a team of supervisors across two institutions, you will still need to choose one of these as the home institution for your project, and apply through that institution. Funding goes to the home institution, and the supervisor at the other institution would be appointed as an
external supervisor. Because of this, the best approach is to discuss this with your potential supervisors, and if they are happy with the proposed arrangement, it could be included in the research proposal (demonstrating fit with the research environment) and the supervisor statement.

**Does CHASE prefer applications to have a practice-based element, or to be interdisciplinary? How important is the fit between our research and our supervisors?**

CHASE supports projects across the remit of AHRC subject areas. While we support practice-based projects, there is no requirement to have a practice-based element; similarly, while we support interdisciplinary projects, we also support excellent research that is within existing disciplines.

**Just wondering what the breakdown of awards is between subjects?**

Awards are available to all subject areas; larger subject areas will tend to attract more awards, but no application should be disadvantaged because of its subject.

**What makes a good thesis title?**

The thesis title isn’t very important – something short and descriptive is useful when the project is being discussed, but other elements of the research proposal carry much more weight in the assessment. And it will probably change once the project is underway!

**I’m interested in applying with an interdisciplinary social-legal project, but my methodology is more on the law side than on the humanities side. Will that be a problem?**

Law is one of the subject areas that is jointly covered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council. You should discuss with your proposed supervisor which council your proposed project would be eligible for.

**How common is it for A&H students to arrive at PhD study through the MPhil/PhD route?**

Most doctoral researchers will initially be registered for an MPhil degree, and then be confirmed for the full doctorate through a process called ‘upgrade’ or ‘confirmation’ depending on institution.

**It’d be helpful to know roughly what the success rate is - e.g. what’s the over subscription rate?**
In previous competitions, the success rate has been roughly 1 in 8. However, the changes to the eligibility rules may mean that we receive more applications this year.

I am doing an Integrative Phd at Essex; the first year is MA. The next year will be my first year of my PhD. I wonder if I would be able to apply for the funding next year?

Yes, you would be eligible to apply next year.

I’m an international student, and have already been offered a place at the uni and department I applied for. How many studentships will be available for international students like myself, and in which ways/against which criteria are our applications measured or compared to UK students?

Applications from international students can make up to 30% of the total awards this year, and will be assessed alongside applications from UK students.

I'm a first-year history PhD student, and my work is driven by both academia and activism. Do you think it helps to stress the present-day, real-world relevance of what your work is trying to do in addition to the contribution it will make to the field and the literature in the research proposal?

If your project has ‘real-world’ impact outside the academy, you can certainly draw attention to this in your proposal, alongside its contribution to its academic field.

On widening participation - The guidance says that the widening participation statement 'gives context on aspects of the candidate’s preparedness'. Could you speak a bit more about this? Perhaps I'm misinterpreting but is this about demonstrating how the barriers you have faced prepares you for research?

The widening participation statement is intended to allow candidates who have been disadvantaged in various ways to make this known to the assessors, so that their preparedness can be understood in this context. So the statement might show the barriers you have faced, and the extent to which these have impacted on your academic and professional experience.

One piece of advice I've heard is that we should review what skills we're lacking & what training we might subsequently need. The example which is often given is learning a new language, but in humanities, do you have any thoughts on what other skills are more commonly required?
Some projects require subject-specific methodological skills, e.g. Project management skills are an important

**Given the current situation (pandemic), to what extent do our proposals need to reflect the fact that our research might be altered/we might not be able to go on fieldwork, visit archives, etc. for example?**

Your proposal should be for a project that can be realistically completed in the funded period. The current restrictions should be taken into account in the project design; it is unlikely that these will be completely lifted by the start of your project.

**If I applied to 2 Chase affiliated universities, can I submit 2 applications or should I only choose 1 university?**

Ideally you would choose the one university institution that best fits your project. If you submitted more than one application, and were shortlisted by more than one institution, you would be asked to choose one application to go forward.

**Is the full funding for the three years or just one?**

Studentships are offered to fund the PhD to completion (up to the end of a fourth year full-time)

**For mature students who have been away from academia for a while (15+ years), are professional references acceptable rather than academic ones?**

Yes, professional references are acceptable, but please make sure that the referee understands that they are being asked for.

**In the application - should we state if we are interested in doing a placement year. And if so - where?**

It is not necessary to say if you are interested in undertaking a placement.

**Is there extra funding available for those with disabilities?**

Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSA) are provided by UKRI to help with additional expenditure for the costs of study-related requirements that may be incurred as a result of disability, a mental health problem or a specific learning difficulty that means additional support is needed to undertake a UKRI funded Studentship. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items of specialist equipment, extra travel costs and general expenses.
So - what are the criteria of a good research proposal?

Please see the Guidance for Applicants for details of what criteria research proposals are assessed against.

How long is the proposal?

The main section of the research proposal is up to 10,000 characters (including spaces).