APPENDIX IV: Assessment Board advice to applicants

Following the 2017 assessment process, the Council sought feedback from the Assessment Board with the aim of assisting future applicants to the Employment Based Programme. This Appendix provides a summary of the feedback provided.

Where applications lost marks:

- The application focused on a description of the research area, rather than state a clear research question and how the applicant proposed to answer it. A clear explanation of the key research question or questions is necessary, rather than simply including as much information as possible on the topic.

- The application made little or no reference to the existing research context, and how the proposal related to what has been done already in the area. In some cases, applications made reference to the existing research context but neglected to mention key findings or research.

- The application took a casual approach to required skill sets. For example, proposing to complete a PhD in Spanish Literature without having the required expertise in the language. Strong applications demonstrated the applicant already had the required skills and at an appropriate level needed to advance through their degree. Poorer applications proposed using the degree as a vehicle to acquire the appropriate skills.

- The applicant provided a poor career training and development plan.

Where applications scored highly:

- The application provided a strong research question and clear aims for the proposal.

- The application showed methodological rigor, with clear techniques and methods, demonstrating a well-thought out approach.

- The application provided a clear statement as to how the research proposal advances beyond the state of the art.

- The application provided a strong personal statement, demonstrating both why the applicant wanted to do the proposed degree, and why the proposed degree was the best choice for the applicant. Excellent personal statements 'showed rather than told' about their motivation or interest, going beyond stating 'I am very passionate about this research'.

- In the case of second applications to the scheme, the application provided a detailed and useful answer to the question on how the research proposal has been modified (if relevant) since the first application.

  The application (and associated Supervisor form) supplied specific rather than generic details as to how the chosen host institution and the Supervisor are suitable 'fits' with the applicant and research proposed.