

## Seed Panel Terms of Reference

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Seed Panel makes decisions within the remit outlined in this document. Its purpose is to advise the Board of Trustees of Sight Research UK (SRUK) on Seed Award funding matters and to ensure that the information used by the SRUK Board of Trustees in any funding decision taken is based on the best available expertise and an independent, fair, and unbiased approach.
- 1.2 The Seed Panel reports to the SRUK Board of Trustees (via the SRUK Grants Team) but is independent of it. No serving Trustee of SRUK may be elected to the Seed Panel as a voting member, but the members of the SRUK Research Subcommittee are allowed to attend meetings ex officio.

### 2. Membership

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| Chair | A researcher in clinical research, basic science research, or translational research in ophthalmology. | <p>Term of office - 3 years (with the possibility of extension for a further 3-year term). The Chair may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least three years has passed since his or her retirement.</p> <p>The Chair of the Seed Panel is appointed by the SRUK Board of Trustees.</p> <p>When the incumbent Chair's term is due to expire, their successor should be identified and should serve for at least</p> |
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|               |  | twelve months on the Seed Panel as Chair elect.   |
| Other members | A minimum of 5 individuals sought nationally and internationally and comprising a mixture of clinical and basic scientists, translational researchers, clinicians, and industry experts. | <p>Term of office – 3 years (with the possibility of extension for a further 3-year term). Seed Panel members may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least three years has passed since their retirement.</p> <p>Seed Panel members are appointed by the SRUK Research Subcommittee, in consultation with the Chair of the Seed Panel.</p>  |
| Vice-Chair    | To be appointed from amongst the Seed Panel members.   | <p>Term of office – 3 years (with the possibility of extension for a further 3-year term). The Vice-Chair may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least three years has passed since his or her retirement.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair of the Seed Panel is appointed by the SRUK Research Subcommittee, in consultation with the Chair of the Seed Panel.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair serves for the duration of their membership of the Seed Panel.</p> |

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| Co-opted members (with voting rights)                     | Additional external members may be co-opted for specific items or meetings to ensure that the Seed Panel has expertise pertinent to all applications under its remit and to ensure the meetings are quorate. |  |
| Ex officio (without voting rights or standing for quorum) | SRUK Chief Executive, SRUK Research Subcommittee members   |  |
| In attendance:  | SRUK Grants Team representative<br><br>Attendance by other non-members (e.g. observers) shall be at the discretion of the Chair of the Seed Panel  |  |

### 3. Confidentiality

- 3.1 Details of research applications and related correspondence are strictly confidential and must be kept secure and not disseminated to, or discussed with, anyone outside the review process.
- 3.2 The comments of Seed Panel members will be treated in confidence by charity staff.
- 3.3 Charity staff will not disclose details of applicants or their applications to those outside the review process.
- 3.4 When the SRUK Grants Team inform applicants of the outcome of their applications, they will provide anonymous versions of Seed Panel members' comments (unless the Seed Panel member has given permission for their name to be shared with their comments), and will summarise the conclusion reached by the SRUK Trustee Board. Information that might

identify the comments of individual Seed Panel members who wish to remain anonymous is redacted.

- 3.5 It is our policy to let Seed Panel members know the outcome of applications they have reviewed after we have communicated decisions to the applicants. Seed Panel members agree to treat all details of applications and their outcomes as confidential.

#### 4. Quorum

- 4.1. A meeting is quorate when at least three members are available to discuss and review each research application. This number includes the Chair and co-opted members but excludes ex-officio members and those in attendance. Therefore, for the avoidance of doubt, no research application may be reviewed, recommended for funding, or rejected by fewer than three members. In these circumstances the meeting will have to be reconvened to ensure that all research applications receive a fair review.

#### 5. Attendance and Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1. All members of the Seed Panel shall sign the Conflicts of Interest Declaration annually throughout their term and disclose any and all connections and associations with relevant research and academic institutions prior to being appointed as a member. Throughout their term, members shall update the SRUK Grants Team in a timely manner of any change to such connections and associations during the year.
- 5.2. All members of the Seed Panel are expected to declare any additional (or potential) conflicts of interest relevant to Seed Award applications they are being asked to review.
- 5.3. Any voting member with conflicted interests will need to absent themselves for the part of the meeting during which deliberations are made concerning that member's own application, or an application from an institution with which that member is associated either directly or indirectly. Where the Chair is conflicted, the Vice-Chair will lead deliberations of that application and if the Chair is an applicant on any application in that round, they will need to absent themselves from the whole meeting. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are conflicted, the SRUK Research Subcommittee will appoint another member of the Seed Panel to lead deliberations for that meeting.
- 5.4 A conflicted voting member will recuse themselves from discussion of and voting on a conflicted application:

- If the voting member works or has worked at the same institution as the applicant or co-applicant(s) in the last year they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
- If the voting member has collaborated/published with the principal applicant and/or co-applicant(s) in the last 3 years they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
- If the voting member is an applicant on that application they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
- If the Seed Panel Chair is an applicant in that grant round (they must be excluded from the whole review process that year and Vice-Chair take over).

5.5 Where there is any uncertainty related to a potential conflict of interest, the Seed Panel Chair (or Vice-Chair should the Chair be conflicted) will decide on the course of action to be taken, which will be minuted.

## 6. Meetings

6.1. The Seed Panel shall usually meet once a year.

6.2. The Seed Panel shall be administered by the SRUK Grants Team in collaboration with the SRUK Chief Executive and on the advice of the SRUK Research Subcommittee.

6.3. Once approved by the Chair, minutes of each meeting shall be kept and circulated to all members and to the SRUK Board of Trustees.

## 7. Decision making

7.1. Funding decisions are the ultimate responsibility of the SRUK Board of Trustees which acts considering the recommendations of the Seed Panel.

7.2 Each application is discussed by the Seed Panel at its annual meeting, is individually scored by each member, and the aggregated scoring is considered by the Seed Panel as a whole. This final deliberation agrees the order in which the applications will be recommended to the SRUK Board of Trustees who will decide which applications will be awarded a grant. It is expected that all Seed Panel decisions are reached by consensus, with the Chair having authority to resolve conflicting opinions to reach a decision.

7.3 SRUK does not usually approve requests for costed extensions to or additional funding for an existing grant. In the exceptional circumstances that this may be required, the SRUK Grants Team will consult with the Seed Panel and SRUK Research Subcommittee to assess the validity of the request before submitting it to the SRUK Board of Trustees.

7.4 No-cost extensions to existing grants are administered by the SRUK Grants Team in consultation with the SRUK Chief Executive. Any exceptionally delayed projects will be considered in consultation with the SRUK Research Subcommittee.

## 8. Authority

8.1. The Seed Panel is authorised by the SRUK Board of Trustees to undertake any activity within its Terms of Reference but budgetary decisions rest with the SRUK Board of Trustees.

## 9. Lines of Reporting

9.1. The Seed Panel reports its deliberations to the SRUK Board of Trustees via the SRUK Grants Team.

9.2. The Seed Panel shall bring to the SRUK Board of Trustees, normally via the SRUK Grants Team, specific attention to any significant matters under consideration by the Seed Panel and any urgent/critical matters that may affect the operation and/or reputation of SRUK.

## 10. Responsibilities

10.1. Within the overall strategy of SRUK, the Seed Panel is responsible for all recommendations to the SRUK Board of Trustees relating to applications for Seed Award funding.

10.2. The Seed Panel shall:

- a. Assess and recommend applications for funding.
- b. Via the SRUK Grants Team, make recommendations to the SRUK Research Subcommittee regarding changes to overall grant making policy, or the processes and procedures used to assess applications for funding.

- c. Delegate the responsibility for implementing any decisions made by the Seed Panel to the SRUK Board of Trustees.

11. The SRUK Board of Trustees retained responsibilities

11.1. The SRUK Board of Trustees shall retain responsibility for:

- a. Setting the charity's overall strategy in relation to research funding.
- b. Setting the charity's overall research funding budget.