Angelina Messina Grant Terms and Conditions, Scoring Criteria and Assessment Process

Angelina Messina Grants are awarded annually to help student members and early career researchers (within 10 years of obtaining their last degree) of the Society in their fieldwork, conference attendance, or any other specific activity related to their research which has not been budgeted for. A case must be made as to why funding is required above what is already available.

1. Terms and Conditions

- Only TMS members are eligible for this grant.
- Only one application per member per year.
- All of the sections 1-5 above must be complete to be considered for this grant.
- This grant cannot be awarded for retrospective activities.
- The proposed activity must occur in the calendar year commencing the 1st April following the application deadline in February.
- Grants cannot be made for miscellaneous expenditure.

2. Scoring Criteria and Assessment Process

From 2024, we are trialling an alternative process for the awarding of Angelina Messina grants (AMG's). This is one of our most popular schemes and we receive more applications than we can fund each year. To ensure the fairness with which fundable applications are considered, to reduce the administrative burden and also to increase the diversity of our awardees, we are implementing a new priority lottery scheme for funding.

Projects will initially be assessed using existing criteria to ensure that they meet a high threshold for: fit to scheme, benefit of the funding to the individuals research, career trajectory and The Micropalaeontology Society, individual need and financial planning. Funding will be allocated to projects that meet all these high thresholds via a stratified lottery system: an initial allocation based on the prioritisation scheme weighting (with at least one bursary awarded this way); followed by a general lottery to select remaining awards from all remaining eligible applications. This approach is in line with other funding and/or charitable bodies such as the Palaeontological Association, UK's National Environment Research Council, Swiss National Funding Council, Health Research Council of New Zealand.

This document and approach largely follows the Palaeontological Association's Undergraduate Research Bursary scheme (launched in 2022).

Angelina Messina Grants Process for proposals will be assessed as to whether they meet expected standards for the following criteria:

1. Completeness of the application and adherence to the terms and conditions.
2. Description of the activity for which funding is sought and its relevance for micropaleontology
3. Description of benefit to applicants' scientific career/research project development
4. Explanation of why Angelina Messina Grant funding is required for financial support of the activity
5. Provision of a realistic budget

Projects that do not meet the expected standards for each of these criteria will not be considered further. After the initial sift, at least one bursary will be awarded according to our prioritisation scheme (see 'Details of prioritisation scheme and lottery'). The remaining bursaries will be awarded using an anonymised lottery system that selects from all remaining applications (including those eligible for the prioritisation scheme but not selected). The number of awards that we make each year is dependent on funds available and application value, but we typically make ~5 awards.

2.1 Scoring criteria

1. **Completeness of the application and adherence to the terms and conditions:** This will be assessed on a pass or fail basis. Applications that are deemed to fail any of the stated terms and conditions, e.g., one application per individual per year, non-member or that are incomplete, e.g., do not include an answer to one or more of the scoring criteria will be removed at this point from selection.
2. **Description of the activity for which funding is sought and its relevance for micropaleontology:** This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4= Clear outline of activity for which funds are requested, e.g., includes details of conference name, date, session for submission, and plans for presentation, and highly relevant micropalaeontological activity, e.g., microfossil presentation/training. Relevance to micropalaeontology is clear. 2= Reasonable outline of activity for which funds are requested lacking some minor details only, and relevant micropalaeontological activity. 0= Incomplete answer covering only outline of activity or relevance to micropalaeontology, irrelevant activity, or incomplete answers to both outline of activity and relevance to micropalaeontology. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.
3. **Description of benefit to applicants' research and scientific career:** This section should detail how the proposed funds will benefit the applicants research, career development and longer-term career trajectory, as appropriate. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4= Answer provides strong evidence of relevant activity that directly benefits applicants' research, career development and trajectory. 2= Answer provides some evidence of how the activity will directly benefit the applicants' research, career development and trajectory. 0= Provides little or no detail of how the activity proposed will benefit the applicants' research, personal development, and career plans. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.
4. **Explanation of why Angelina Messina Grant funding is required for financial support of the activity:** A clear outline of current research funding situation (e.g., position, funding source) and why additional funding is being sought, e.g., why your current funding cannot support this work. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4=Clear outline of current funding situation and strong justification for why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. 2= Outline of current funding situation provided with standard justification for why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. 0= Incomplete or no outline of current funding situation and why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.
5. **Provision of a realistic budget:** A detailed breakdown of the total costs to be incurred to enable the activity to proceed AND the specific costs requested are required. For example, you might require £1500 to attend a conference to pay for registration, travel and accommodation but the award will only fund up to £500. You should detail both elements. You must detail both sets of costs so that the feasibility of the request can be assessed. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4 = A fully costed and realistic budget with high potential that applicant can undertake activities on receipt of the grant. 2= A budget is provided but lacks some detail but likelihood that applicant can undertake activity is clear. 0= A poorly conceived budget that lacks detail and/or unlikely that award of grant will enable activity to proceed. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.

2.2 Details of prioritisation scheme and lottery

1. All projects will be entered into a spreadsheet and given a number by the AMG Chair/Organiser.
2. All projects will be assessed individually and scored by members of the AMG panel to ensure their fit to criteria 1-5.
3. These scores will be discussed in a washup meeting between the AMG committee members. Applications that do not pass criterion 1, as well as those that do not meet the minimum score for criteria 2–5 will be removed from the spreadsheet and not be considered further. All remaining applications are considered equally fundable, and funding will be allocated using a stratified lottery system (details below).
4. A member of the AMG committee (usually the Secretary/Chair) will identify applicants who have self-declared their protected characteristics and are eligible for the prioritisation scheme. The prioritisation scheme draws from the 2017 Palaeontological Association Diversity Study and annual HESA data benchmarked against UK Census population data (for a detailed explanation, please see [Palaeontological Association Newsletter](#)). i. Applications that are identified as eligible for the prioritisation scheme will be moved into a separate spreadsheet and ranked according to the order in

the prioritisation scheme: Black applicants, who are especially underrepresented in both palaeontology and the geosciences, receive the highest prioritisation; followed by applicants from Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds; followed by women and non-binary applicants; followed by disabled applicants. To recognise the additional challenges associated with intersectionality, applicants who self-declare as belonging to more than one underrepresented group will be ranked higher accordingly. ii. At least one bursary will be allocated according to this ordering. If the number of applicants with the same relative ranking is higher than the number of bursaries available, a lottery will be used to allocate bursaries between them. This will be achieved by entering the spreadsheet number of each equally ranked project into a random number selector, with numbers being chosen at random until all funding is allocated. iii. Any project that is eligible for funding under the prioritisation scheme but was not selected will be returned to the initial spreadsheet and entered into the general lottery (see details below). iv. Specific information about protected characteristics will be kept confidential and is only visible to the committee member responsible for determining the awards awarded under the prioritization scheme. Other members of the AMG committee will know the names of the people selected under this scheme, but not the details related to specific protected characteristics.

5. All remaining applications, including those not funded through the prioritisation scheme, will be considered for funding under a lottery. i. The spreadsheet number of each project will be entered into a random number selector, with numbers being chosen at random until all funding is allocated.

6. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application. Applicants can be told whether their proposal was scored highly enough to be considered for funding but not selected in the lottery.