

Progressive Palaeontology

Progressive Palaeontology (ProgPal) is a very successful postgraduate conference ran by students for students. In light of this, we have formalised the process by which future applications are to be assessed. The assessment process and criteria were put together by the 2018 Organising Committees, based on guidelines devised by the 2017-2016 ProgPal Committee and in consultation with the Palaeontological Association Council.

Aims

The aims of this document are:

- to improve the transparency of the process by which bids to host the next ProgPal conference are assessed;
- to mitigate possible biases, perceived or real, in the decision-making process.

Application

Applications to host **ProgPal 2019** are due at the **ProgPal 2018 Annual Dinner** (evening of the **8th June**). The winning committee will be notified by the end of July 2018, with formal announcements on Social Media and in the PalAss Newsletter.

The Manchester 2018 ProgPal bid is presented below (as an example of an application), although there is no specific structure for this. Applications should be kept to a maximum of two sides of A4 in length in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial font or equivalent), with margins of at least 2 cm. Please note that all applicants wishing to host the conference must be postgraduate students at the time of their application and when the proposed conference is to be held.

ProgPal is an accessible UK-based conference for early career researchers, especially for those with limited or no funding. Although applications to host ProgPal from institutions outside the UK have been considered previously, the PalAss Council have decided that the conference should continue to be UK-based. Other conferences with very similar remits (for early career researchers in palaeontology) occur regularly elsewhere in Europe, such as the International Meeting of Early-stage Researchers in Palaeontology (IMERP). As a UK-based conference, ProgPal is not in competition with but is complementary to these other meetings. Applications to host ProgPal from overseas institutions will therefore not be considered. Delegates from overseas institutions are, however, strongly encouraged to present their work at ProgPal, and travel grants are available to help facilitate this.

Assessment

Largely based on the criteria devised by the 2016-2017 Organising Committees, the process for assessing applications are detailed as follows:

- **Essential**
 - Committee of suitable size, with the time and experience to run the conference.

- Suitable venue available for presentations and posters.
- Suitable and feasible field-trip location and plan.
- **High priority**
 - Transport links/accessibility of conference venue.
 - Accommodation available at reasonable costs.
 - Suitable icebreaker venue.
 - Suitable dinner venue.
 - Potential funding options (funds should not be secured prior to application).
- **Desirable**
 - New initiatives that would enhance the student experience of ProgPal.

Each criterion will be scored either 0 (inadequate or no evidence), 1 (little evidence), 2 (meets criteria) or 3 (outstanding). Institutions that have not hosted ProgPal in previous years will be given an advantage in the decision-making process:

- 3 additional points will be given to applications from institutions that have never previously hosted ProgPal.
- 1 additional point will be given to applications from institutions that have hosted ProgPal in the past, but not within the previous three years.
- No additional points will be given to applications from institutions that have hosted ProgPal within the previous three years.

This is intended to encourage applications from a wide range of potential host institutions. This will be given the weighting of an 'Essential' criterion. The application with the highest score will be recommended to host the conference.

In the event of a tiebreak, the application with the higher score for 'Essential' criteria will be recommended to host the conference. If applications remain tied, 'High priority' criteria will be used in this way. In the event that multiple applications score equally across all three categories and a decision cannot be reached, the PalAss Council will be called upon to provide the casting vote. This overall process ensures that the current ProgPal organising committee retains the majority of the decision making and responsibility for selecting the next hosts, and in a transparent way.

Decision

A decision, based on the above criteria, should be reached by the current organising committee by the end of July and presented to the PalAss Council. In the event of the host committee being unable to reach a decision, the PalAss Council will cast the deciding vote, although this is anticipated to be a very rare occurrence. All applicants will be made aware of the decision prior to the conference in the current year; this will allow the successful applicants time to prepare any words they might like to say at the ProgPal conference. All applicants will be asked to keep the outcome of the application process confidential until the a formal announcement is made in the PalAss Newsletter. For the sake of continuity, the PalAss Executive Officer will act as the point of contact for any objections or queries that may arise following the announcement of the next ProgPal hosts. Each application will be returned with feedback following the conference. Unsuccessful bids are likely to need some improvement and/or updating, but could be used as the basis for a repeat bid in the future.

Progressive Palaeontology 2018



The University of Manchester



The University of Manchester
Manchester Museum

Committee:

Chair: Elspeth Wallace

Robert Brocklehurst, Emma Randle, Virginia Harvey, Dan Sykes, Callum Mclean and Leah Callender-Crowe

We have extensive experience organising events. Elspeth is part of the organisational committee for the School of Earth and Environmental Postgraduate Research Conference and has experience organising field trips through GEMSoc. Dan has been part of and has headed the organisational committee for the ToScA conference. The rest of the team have excellent organisational skills including arranging and managing museum trips and field work.

Venues:

We propose to hold **Progressive Palaeontology 2018** jointly between the **University of Manchester** and **Manchester Metropolitan University**. We have an active and collaborative palaeontology group here in Manchester which is split between the two universities. The conference talks and poster sessions will be held at the University of Manchester (UoM) and the workshops will be hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) just down the road. Refreshments will be provided in the same venue as the poster and presentation sessions.

The **ice breaker**, after the panel and outreach events will be in the **University of Manchester Museum** — close to where the panel discussion will be held. The **conference dinner** will be held at **Swadesh** — an excellent **Indian restaurant** in the heart of Manchester, with a 3 course meal costing around £13 (ideal for students on a budget). Swadesh caters for all dietary requirements including vegetarian/vegan, gluten free etc.

Workshops:

Before the conference, we propose two workshops each accommodating 45 people and lasting 2 hours. The first will be an interactive workshop introducing **3D visualisation** and **photogrammetry** with **Dr. Charlotte Brassey** (MMU), with Dan Sykes (UoM) assisting. The second workshop will introduce the concepts of **biomechanical modelling** with practical demonstrations (X-Box kinect), led by **Dr. Bill Sellers** (UoM).

New Initiatives:

Following the workshops we would like to introduce some **new initiatives** to **Progressive Palaeontology**. First we propose to hold a panel discussion entitled "**Careers in Palaeontology**". The panel will consist of three junior academics (PhD, Post-Doc, Fellow), lecturers and researchers and professionals outside academia including a science editor (publishing) and a museum curator. Each panel member would describe their current role and their career path in palaeontology, followed by an open floor discussion.

We would also like to hold an outreach event in the **Manchester Museum** showcasing the research undertaken by our delegates in the form of "**Ask a Palaeontologist**".

Field trip:

A one-day field trip to the **Peak District** will occur after the conference. Minibuses will be hired to transport delegates to **Mam Tor**, which gives fantastic views of Dark and White Peaks, where we will briefly discuss the glacial history of the area. We will then descent via the Broken Road to **Castleton**, stopping at points of interest along the way. Lunch will last two hours allowing delegates to explore the beautiful village and pubs, or the Blue John Caverns. After lunch we will walk back to the minibuses via **Winnat's Pass** - a limestone gorge interpreted as an inter-reef channel, **Cow Low Nick** which contains Carboniferous Goniatites and **Windy Knoll** where William Boyd Dawkins collected many Pleistocene mammals for the Manchester Museum.

Transport & Accommodation:

Manchester is a thriving and vibrant city in Northwest England. Its easily accessible by train, bus and has plane with links to most major European cities.

The Manchester University campuses are located a ~20-25 minute walk from Manchester **Piccadilly Train Station** and are only 5 minutes from each other. The **Victoria Coach Station** is a 5 minute walk from Piccadilly Gardens (central local bus station), which has excellent transportation links to the Universities and the whole of South Manchester.

Manchester boasts many and varied accommodation options including hostels and budget hotels in the city centre and the south of the city (e.g. Fallowfield, Withington). For example, the YHA Youth Hostel in Castelfield is ~ £12/night.

Funding:

Potential funding options include the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, Manchester Geological Association, the UoM Alumni Association, Oxford and Cambridge University Press, SIRC Scientific Press and Henry Moseley X-Ray Imaging Facility.

Timing:

It is important to this committee that ProgPal 2018 is held at a time of year that is accessible to all, including undergraduate and masters students. For the past few years the conference has been held over exam periods which has meant these groups have been unable to attend. We propose to move the conference closer to the Easter holiday period in order to avoid this.

Day 1

10:00 - Workshops
12:00 - Lunch
13:00 - Outreach
17:00 - Panel
18:30 - Ice Breaker

Day 2

9:00 - Welcome & Plenary
10:30 - Coffee & Posters
11:00 - Presentations
12:30 - Lunch
13:30 - Presentations
15:00 - Coffee & Posters
16:00 - Presentations
17:00 - Closing remarks
18:30 - Conference Dinner & Auction

Day 3

10:00 - Coach departs
11:00 - Arrive at Mam Tor
13:00 - Lunch in Castleton
15:00 - Winnats Pass and surrounding area
17:00 - Coach Departs

We have the full support of the School of Earth and Environmental Science at the University of Manchester and the School of Science and the Environment at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Thank you for your consideration of Manchester to host Progressive Palaeontology 2018