



We Dig Fossils Funding Guide for New and Extension Applications

Welcome to GENUS

Your journey towards making a boundless impact starts here.

This grant seeks exceptional researchers who are excited to shape their futures in Palaeoscience. Our new generation of grants is to empower black women and non-binary people who are Leaders of today and the future. When you take your career to the next level, GENUS invests in your future. **This grant will provide resources and time to take your career to the next level.**

Our We Dig Fossils Grant enables you to achieve your greatest research ambitions while collaborating with one of Africa's most inclusive Palaeoscience communities. GENUS supports research with a strong emphasis on the South African fossil record or Early to Middle Stone Age archaeological record. Through our grants, we aim to invest in leaders dedicated to advancing research in one of the many Palaeoscience disciplines while sharing their findings with a wider community to help build a strong knowledge society for all.

To help you navigate the process of applying for a GENUS We Dig Fossil Grant, we put together this Funding Guide complete with useful insights into eligibility, application requirements, and the review process.

Support

The We Dig Fossils Grant is up to R250 000 to be used within two consecutive fiscal years. GENUS supports the We Dig Fossils Grant through the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence in Palaeosciences funding platform and donations.

Eligibility

This grant provides an opportunity to give time and resources to advance the applicant's research productivity. A strong applicant will meet these key elements: a talented leader, principal investigator of a research programme and/or permit holder of a fossil or archaeological site, an excellent research programme, and an active science communication platform.

The We Dig Fossils Grant is open to black women and non-binary people with South African citizenship or permanent residence. The applicant must be an academic, researcher, or curatorial staff with a PhD working full-time in one of our partner institutions (see below).

If you are not associated with one of our partners listed below, but you or your institute/organisation would like to have a joint appointment or an affiliation with GENUS to access our grants, please get in touch with us at info.genus@wits.ac.za for more information.

Important Dates

Open Call for Applications: 01 August

Closing Date: 30 September

Partners

GENUS continues to build strategic partnerships developing a thriving network that enhances palaeoscience research.

The GENUS comprises several key partners aligned to the development of Palaeosciences in South Africa: Nelson Mandela University, University of Cape Town, University of the Free State, University of Pretoria, Rhodes University, University of the Witwatersrand, Albany Museum, Ditsong National Museum of Natural History, Iziko Museums of South Africa and National Museum, Bloemfontein.

Research Themes

1. **Evolutionary Processes** – Studies the timing of evolutionary events, characterising the global geographic distribution of fossil taxa, investigating the nature of functional morphology and critical innovations in morphological evolution.
2. **Cultural and Behavioural Evolution** – Explains key transitions in hominin behaviour and innovation.
3. **Palaeo-environments and Palaeoclimates** – Advances the understanding of earth systems, ecosystems and biodiversity.

Application Guidelines

Grants are awarded for excellent well-structured research projects that demonstrate the prudent use of funds. The application process is highly competitive and must adhere to all the requirements. Applicants may only submit one application per granting cycle.

1. Please consider the following if you are thinking of applying for a GENUS Research Grant:
 - Is my research relevant to palaeoscience?
 - Does my application fit within the research themes of GENUS?
 - Am I affiliated with an academic, research or museum institution partnered with GENUS?
 - Am I fully compliant with all prior GENUS grants received?
2. When an application is **automatically rejected**, if :
 - the application is missing information. All sections of the application must be complete
 - there are deleted sections from the application
 - the application does not adhere to stipulated word limits
 - when tables or pictures are added to the application
 - there are missing documents that are required
 - documents are not in the requested format (i.e. PDF)
 - The application and required documentation are sent in separate emails. The application and required documents must be sent in one email
 - late applications

No further changes or requests are considered once the application and required documents are emailed to us.

Application Sections and Criteria

The application sections and criteria are outlined below. Each section has a word limit, weight in percentage and scores from 4 to 0 (with 4 representing excellent).

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications based on the strategic objectives of GENUS. Funding decisions are informed primarily by the accumulative scoring of two reviewers regarding each assessed application, as per the sections outlined below. Each section is weighted, indicating its strategic importance. Applications are ranked by overall scores and given to the review panel for final assessment. Applicants are advised to consider these outlined criteria when writing their application.

The final funding decisions are based on the scores and funding availability, subject to budget constraints. The decision of the panel review is final, and no negotiations will be considered.

New Application: Sections and Criteria for Scoring

Application Sections	Recommendations	Word limit	Weight	Score
Title of the research project	A short, concise title of the research project.	NA	NA	NA
A short abstract of the research project	Provide a concise project abstract that summarises the overall research undertaken.	350	NA	NA
Rationale and problem statement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The rationale is a set of reasons offered for the research. The problem statement briefly addresses the question - what is the problem that the research will address? The ultimate goal is to transform a generalised problem into a targeted, well-defined problem, one that is resolved through focused research and careful decision-making. A good research problem should have the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it should address a gap in knowledge it should be a significant contribution to the existing body of research it should lead to further study, and the problem should render itself to investigation through the collection of data 	2000	15%	4-0
Proposed research aims, objectives, materials and methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the importance of the research project to your specific field. What is the relationship of your research to the research themes under GENUS? Include a concise statement of your research aims and objectives. Focus on what the research project is intended to achieve (long-term outcomes). Research objects focus on how the aims will be achieved (short-term outcomes). Be realistic. Do you have the necessary resources to achieve the objective? State the material and location of material required to undertake this research. State your research methodology that describes the rationale of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, collect, select, and analyse information applied. Has a pilot study been conducted? If yes, provide a short statement outlining any preliminary or pilot research directly related to this project and a synopsis of the results. 	3000	40%	4-0
Research plan	<p>How do you plan to gather this information? Provide a detailed explanation of the information and work plan needed to answer the research aims. It should also include how data is managed and stored.</p> <p>Like other funding agencies and journals, GENUS believes transparency, openness, and accountability are essential to the scientific process. We expect results/data of projects funded through GENUS to be published in a timely manner.</p> <p>GENUS also aims to promote data sharing in an appropriate manner consistent with our grantees' needs, but with the recognition that different fields of study require different approaches to data sharing. It is recommended that each applicant provide a brief statement of how they intend to make the data resulting from their GENUS fellowship available to others and a timeline of when this will be available.</p>	1000	20%	4-0

	In light of the potential short and long-term impact of Covid, it is essential to have contingency plans for your proposed project. Describe your plans for adjusting this project if needed. Changes could include modified start dates for travel, fieldwork or data collection, alternative data collection strategies, alternative field sites, or alternative methods for recruitment and engagement of participants, as well as any other potential modifications to research activities.			
Representation in palaeosciences	Provide clear plans for human capacity development. The research project should be collaborative, including other researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and postgraduates. Applications should be willing to address equity and diversity in access to research projects, research teams, collections, fieldwork, and supporting postgraduate and postdoctoral fellows as co-authors in publications.	1000	10%	4-0
Outline your expected research outputs	Provide a list of expected research outputs, including authors, title, potential journal and expected month of submission. Expected academic outputs refer to the envisaged outcomes of the research project. Outputs may take the form of publications, presentations, and data sharing.	1000	5%	4-0
Outline your planned science engagement activities	The overarching term science engagement includes all aspects of public engagement with science that builds a knowledge society. Science engagement may take the form of but is not limited to sharing digital information for education, public talks, information boards, creating exhibitions, participating in science competitions, etc. Provide a plan for your activities for the year. Indicate who your target audience is and when you expect to implement it.	1000	5%	4-0
References	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the application, you should cite only the most significant references relevant to your research using author and date (i.e. Nkosi 2021; Ndlovu et al. 2021). Provide a maximum of 25 references to support the research in the application. References should be listed in APA style, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/. 	NA	NA	NA
Budget	<p>Provide a budget to conduct your research. Justify and provide clarity for your budget items. Please note that no overhead is allowed.</p> <p>Suggested budget categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field expenses (food and lodging, per diem) Special analysis costs (Uranium-series, SEM, pollen analysis, etc.) Travel (airfare, local or ground transportation) Fees and other expenses (e.g. museum fees, journal costs) Personnel (justified in the project description and budget) <p>GENUS does not fund the purchase of expensive permanent equipment or vehicles.</p>	NA	5%	4-0
			100%	

Required documents for new application

All applicants must provide the below documents in PDF to GENUS (info.genus@wits.ac.za).

<input type="checkbox"/> Completed application
<input type="checkbox"/> Up-to-date <i>Curriculum Vitae</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Certified copy of a South Africa identification/permanent residency

Extension Application: Sections and Criteria for Scoring

Extensions are given to GENUS-funded researchers to carry over funds from the previous year. An Extension Application must be complete to be considered. If the extension application is approved, the funds will be carried over for no longer than one fiscal year. Please note that GENUS has the right to request all unspent funds from previous years to be returned to GENUS.

Application Sections	Recommendations	Word limit	Weight	Score
Title of the research project	A short, concise title of the research project.	NA	NA	NA
A short abstract of the research project	The project abstract should be a summary of the overall research.	350	5%	4-0
The motivation for the extension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specify your research progress to date. 2. Explain why the research was not completed within the GENUS maximum funding period. 3. Provide a work plan for one year, indicating activities for completion, the start and completion date of each activity, and details of manuscripts to be drafted and submission timelines. 4. Has the focus of the project changed? And if so, specify 5. In light of the potential short and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to have contingency plans for your proposed project. 	NA	40%	4-0
Publications	List of publications that stem from your research (state if your publication is <i>in the press</i> , <i>in review</i> , or <i>in submission</i>). Only include publications from the last two years.		15%	
Conferences	List of conferences that stem from your research (state if you gave a presentation, poster, or attendance only). Only include conferences from the last two years.		10%	
Science Communication	<p>List of science communication engagement to the public outside the academic space.</p> <p>Include any education outreach and science communication you have done for your Dept/School/Institution (provide details).</p> <p>Include any science communication you have done for the GENUS/Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences (provide details).</p>		10%	
Grant Spent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide detailed cash flow of funds spent. 2. Provide the original amount of the total grant from the GENUS. 3. Provide total leftover over funds. Briefly explain why funds were not spent within the fiscal year. 4. Provide details on how the leftover funds will be spent. 		20%	
			100%	

Required documents for extension

All applicants must provide the below documents in PDF to GENUS (info.genus@wits.ac.za).

<input type="checkbox"/> Completed application
<input type="checkbox"/> Up-to-date <i>Curriculum Vitae</i>

Review Process

All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive review process. The assessment of applications is based on the quality of the application and the financial and environmental feasibility.

All applications submitted to GENUS are screened for compliance stipulated in this Funding Guide and the requirements indicated in the application form. Applications that fail to meet the criteria outlined are automatically rejected.

The GENUS review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a two-tiered review process. Firstly the application is sent to two reviewers to score. The reviewers are selected from local or international researchers with research knowledge or insight into the relevant theme and research conducted. Secondly, the applications and review scores are reviewed by a Review Panel comprising the Executive Committee and co-opted individuals for a final decision.

Feedback

Once the review processes have been completed and the funding recommendations have been approved, the applicants will be notified, in writing, of the outcome. The processing of a grant application is approximately three months from submission to the outcome letter.

Successful Applicant Requirements

GENUS does not award funds to individuals. The funds are given to your host institution and processed through your host Department/School.

1. If your application is successful, the grant will not be released until the GENUS grants office has received copies of your signed contract.
2. The successful applicant must submit an Annual Progress Report for each grant year.

Contact

For enquiries regarding applications, applicants are encouraged to contact the GENUS offices at info.genus@wits.ac.za.