

TWO VACANCIES IN PALAEOONTOLOGY

AT UGENT (BELGIUM):

We are hiring two PhD students (3 years fully-funded) to work on set projects in 'Teratology of microfossils'. The positions are funded by the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) under the collaborative research Grant "Teratology in microfossils as a proxy for understanding mass-extinctions through time".

Contract Type: Fixed Term, Whole-Time

Position start date: no later than 01/09/2021

Duration: 3 years

Stipend: as per UGent scales



JOB DESCRIPTION

Position Summary

Applications are invited for two three-year PhD researcher positions investigating the palaeobiology of teratologic microfossils during respectively Silurian (project 1) and Jurassic (project 2) extinction events. The positions are funded by the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) and form part of a series of new hires by an international consortium, involving researchers at the universities of Ghent, Nottingham, Utrecht and California-Berkeley. The PhD students will be based at UGent. Project two (Jurassic teratologies) will be a joint PhD between the Universities of Utrecht and Ghent.

The project

The successful candidate will undertake analysis of organic walled microfossils (palynomorphs) that display aberrations in morphology and texture associated with mass-extinction events in the fossil record, combined with a study of their modern analogues in experimental and field settings. The interdisciplinary HFSP project aims to test a set of interrelated hypotheses that link palaeobiological malformation to various environmental stressors, and to test their application to the many existing models for biotic crises across time and space. The deep time perspective of the research programme is provided by these two PhD projects, directed by Ghent University and Utrecht University, and focusses on selected Palaeozoic and Mesozoic events.

Key analytical techniques include optical microscopy, SEM, LA-ICPMS, FTIR and Synchrotron-XRF. In addition to research, the successful candidate will have opportunities to undertake training in transferable skills, to gain experience in mentorship, and to participate in fieldwork. The successful candidate will work closely with the PIs and other members of the team.

The successful candidates will join us at a very exciting time, as part of a major expansion of the study of fossil teratology in our labs, funded by [HFSP](#). HFSP Research Grants provide three years of support to international teams of applicants who initiate new collaborations. The team includes Prof. Thijs Vandenbroucke (Ghent University, Belgium), Dr. Barry Lomax (University of Nottingham, UK), Prof. Cindy Looy (University of California, Berkeley, USA) and Dr. Bas van de Schootbrugge (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) and will bring together expertise in geology, palaeontology, biology and chemistry. This includes the currently advertised new PhD project and several postdoctoral researchers. The successful candidate will benefit from the PI's commitment to his/her career development and the joint PI's extensive global network of collaborators. Based at UGent, these PhD projects will be supervised by PI Vandenbroucke. The project on Jurassic teratologies will formally be a joint PhD with Utrecht University and will include PI van de Schootbrugge as a co-supervisor.

The [host lab](#) at UGent focuses on reconstructing environmental conditions and the evolution of life from ancient Palaeozoic times to the current Anthropocene. The group currently includes 8 PhD students and 1 postdoc working on various aspects of micropalaeontology, which will constitute a rich working environment for the successful candidates.

JOB PROFILE

Key Duties and Responsibilities

This title will apply to PhD researchers and will be considered as a period of training as the researcher will have dual goals in terms of the research project and their own career development. The researcher will be mentored by the consortium of PIs. It is expected that a researcher would spend not more than 3 years at the PhD level.

The primary focus of the PhD Researcher will be to conduct the specified programme of research; however, a particular emphasis during this stage should also include:

- to engage in appropriate training and professional development opportunities as required by the PI or University in order to develop research skills and competencies;
- to engage in the dissemination of the results of the research in which they are engaged, as directed by, with the support of and under the supervision of the PIs;
- to become familiar with the publication process;
- to acquire generic and transferable skills (including project management and postgraduate mentoring/supervision);
- to engage in the wider research and scholarly activities of the research group.

Essential Criteria

The successful candidate will provide a cover letter demonstrating evidence that they meet the following essential criteria:

- Excellent scholarly results obtained during an MSc in Geology, Earth Sciences, Biology, Palaeontology, (Geo)Chemistry, or an equivalent degree in related fields pertinent to the research project. MSc degree required at the start of the appointment, but we accept applications by students currently in their final year.
- Good analytical and laboratory skills
- Ability to work as part of a(n international) team combined with an ability to manage tasks independently
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Excellent communication skills, particularly in English
- Strongly motivated and ambitious attitude

HOW TO APPLY

Informal enquiries can be made in confidence to Prof. Thijs Vandembroucke, Department of Geology, UGent. Email: thijs.vandembroucke@ugent.be.

Candidates should apply, in confidence, by submitting a single application document to Thijs.vandembroucke@ugent.be before 5 pm (Belgian Local Time) on Monday, 24th May 2021.

This application should contain the following items, merged into a single .pdf document:

- A cover letter
- Your CV
- The contact details of two referees (actual letters of support are accepted but not required at this stage)
- A copy of your diplomas and the full transcripts of the scores/results you have obtained during your degree(s)
- Students currently in their final year of their MSc are invited also to include a progress statement by their current academic supervisor

Shortlists will be drawn up swiftly and interviews will be scheduled in June 2021 (to be held via videoconferencing).

Ghent University is an equal opportunities employer
(<https://www.ugent.be/prospect/en>)