



Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann Royal Irish Academy

Call for applications for the Praeger Grants 2022

Deadline: 17:00 p.m., Thursday 14 April 2022

This document outlines:

- What you need to know about the Royal Irish Academy Praeger Grants
- How to make your application
- How we assess and decide on your application
- How we process your application

Applicants are required to read the guidelines for applicants carefully before submitting an application.

Background

The Praeger Grants scheme was established by the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) in 1956, in honour of Robert Lloyd Praeger, 'Ireland's greatest naturalist', for the promotion of field study of Ireland's natural history, notably its geology, flora and fauna. For information about his interests and remarkable career, please see 'Who was Robert Lloyd Praeger?' below.

Since 1958, the RIA, through its Praeger Fund Committee, has used the income of this fund to disburse over 360 grants to natural historians, for small fieldwork projects throughout the island of Ireland.

- The purpose of this grant is to provide support for costs directly connected with Ireland's field natural history
- Grants will be made in the region of €3,000
- The application form is available [here](#).
- All queries can be sent to grants@ria.ie

Criteria and priorities

Proposals must be for natural history field-based research, with a distinct objective and defined outcome to be carried out before the end of April 2023.

Each application will be assessed and scored based on the following criteria (the % of the overall assessment score is indicated for each criterion):

- Merit of proposal, taking into account originality, objective(s), relationship to, and the volume of, existing work by others in the field and relevant experience and expertise of the applicant for the proposed project (please include details of any consultation you envisage with specialists in the area, or any other involvement others may have in the research) (35%)
- Suitability of methodology (20%)
- Feasibility of proposed project (20%)
- Rationale for and value of the proposed work and intended primary outcomes (15%)
- Dissemination of research (plans for publication or other dissemination) (10%)

For consideration for an award of a grant, projects must reach a minimum threshold average assessment score of 60 based on the above criteria. Following assessment of all applications, the Assessors will rank applications meeting the threshold. The number of awards allocated will be dependent on the overall funding available.

Following successful completion of the funded project, Praeger grantees should normally offer any scientific publications arising from the work to the Academy (for Proceedings: Biology and Environment and the Irish Journal of Earth Sciences) or to the Irish Naturalists' Journal; Irish Birds; or the Irish Biogeographical Society Bulletin as appropriate. The grant holder is required to send a copy of any such publication to the RIA and to acknowledge RIA funding.

Who can apply:

- The grant is open to applicants intending to carry out research on Ireland's field natural history
- Applicants may be professional researchers but the project they propose must be separate from their professional or employment commitments.
- Applications from those who are not professionally engaged in field natural history are welcome
- There is no requirement for an applicant to be a university graduate, however applicants must demonstrate that their research is likely to constitute a significant and scholarly contribution to the area of study
- The core of the field-based research must take place on the island of Ireland

Costs and activities which are eligible

- Funding for additional elements of the overall project may be sought elsewhere
- The only expenses payable are the costs directly related to the field research being carried out, up to a maximum of €3,000

Costs and activities which are ineligible

- The purchase of large items of equipment (over the value of €500) are not considered eligible costs
- Purchase of computers, cameras and optical equipment that are not directly relevant to the research
- Grants cannot be made in support of undergraduate or postgraduate student programmes, for second-level education projects or for any part of the applicants' professional work
- An application cannot be accepted if the applicant has a report outstanding on a previous RIA grant
- Funding for media-based dissemination costs

What is required to make an application?

- A completed application [form](#)

How applications are processed and assessed

Applications that are deemed eligible from a procedural perspective will be passed on for assessment to the Praeger Fund committee of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA).

If the committee deems your application ineligible, you will receive a letter informing you that your application will not be assessed.

Eligible applications will then be assessed by the committee based on the criteria and guidelines within this document. Recommendations will be made to the RIA for ratification based on the budget and the applications received. You will then receive a letter of decision. If your application has been successful, we will include information about what you should do next. If you have not been successful you may contact the RIA for feedback on your application.

Application Information - Guidelines for completing and submitting the application form.

How to apply

Applicants must complete the online application form by **17:00 on Thursday 14 April 2022**

Section one: Applicant details

- **All** correspondence will be sent to the named individual at the address specified on the form
- Relevant achievements: this space should be used to detail any relevant experience or achievements that demonstrate to the panel your ability to conduct the research you are proposing
- List any other professional qualifications and distinctions

Section two: Research Proposal

- outline the research proposal
- clearly specify the context, and research objectives of the proposed study
- describe the methodology to be used and proposed timescale of the project
- identify the anticipated outcomes of the research
- describe and explain the proposed dissemination plans for the research (articles, presentations, education events, workshops etc.)

Applicants are advised that failure to provide adequate detail on the research proposal may seriously weaken their application. The proposal must:

- provide an account of their research which does not rely on highly specialised prior knowledge of the specific project subject area on the part of assessors
- identify the primary outcomes of the research
- show value for money

Points to note:

In assessing value for money, the assessor will consider the intended outcome relative to the amount requested. However, it is appreciated that some modes of research are more expensive than others and proposals will not be discriminated against on these grounds.

Previous RIA Grants/Awards

Please give details of any research grants you have received from the Academy.

Please note: only one Praeger Grant may be held, or applied for, at any one time, and an application cannot be accepted if the applicant has a report outstanding on a previous RIA grant.

References

Please provide the names and contact details of a referee who is happy to support your proposal.

Section three: Costings

Applicants should prepare accurate costings for the proposed research expenses. Funding is offered competitively, and proposals on the margin for award may have a greater chance of success if they are modestly costed. Costs should be clearly itemised and justified in terms of research.

Receipts must be kept for all expenditure. Applicants are reminded that remuneration should be calculated on the basis of "out of pocket" expenses only. Vouched expenditure is the only form under which expenses will be refunded. Subsistence rates set down by the department of Public Expenditure and Reform can be used as a guideline but only expenditure that is vouched can be reimbursed. Please remember that expenses should be kept within reasonable bounds and are subject to specific Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regulations.

If the RIA is being asked to support only a proportion of the total costs, please list all the expenses connected with the research, as assessors will gauge the costs with reference to the scale of the whole project. Please indicate which costs are being sought from the Academy.

Applicants should clarify why they need additional Academy funding. During the assessment period applicants must keep the Academy informed of the outcomes of any other applications for funding. Failure to do so may jeopardise the application's prospects of success.

Subsistence Rates:

Eligible expenses, which must be receipted include food, accommodation and local daily travel and cannot exceed the daily totals within the guidelines provided by the department of Public Expenditure and Reform: For a full list of subsistence allowances abroad please see <https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2017/07.pdf> The Academy does not pay per diem rates and will only cover expenses that are vouched by receipt.

No payments can be made for salary costs or for replacement teaching. Failure to present costed budgets may invalidate your application.

Declaration

Please note that submitting the application form constitutes confirmation that the information provided is complete and accurate, and acceptance of all terms, conditions and notices contained in the *Guidelines for Applicants*. Subsequent discovery of any deliberate falsehood will automatically render the application null and void. If an award has been made, the RIA may require a full refund.

Payment of an award may be withheld if there is an overdue report on any other grant awarded by the Academy to the applicant, pending submission of the relevant final report.

A list of [successful projects](#) from 2020 onwards is published on the Academy website.

Who was Robert Lloyd Praeger?

Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865–1953), was a quintessential naturalist, having a very keen interest in natural history in its broadest sense throughout the Irish landscape and abroad. Not only a naturalist, but an author and librarian, he was born in Holywood, Co. Down to Willem Praeger, of Dutch descent and Maria Patterson from Belfast. Robert and his siblings spent their childhood exploring the glens, woods, and streams of the surrounding countryside. His naturalist grandfather Robert Patterson enthralled the children on Saturday afternoon rambles, pointing out insects, birds and all aspects of the natural world.

'It was from the beginning a way of flowers and stones and beasts. When I was old enough to toddle, my father had to put a garden fence around a garden patch in front of the house, because I picked all the blossoms; and I knew harebells and belemnites and flint-flakes before I was five. That obsession remained with me throughout my life' (Praeger (1937)¹).

Avoiding natural sciences at university, because there was no fieldwork, he studied arts and engineering at QCB and was awarded a BA (1885) and a B.Eng. (1886). While at university he became a keen member of the BNFC, winning prizes for collections of ferns, flowering plants, fossils, and fungi and regarding the club as a 'second university' to learn field botany, zoology, and geology, forming many warm friendships.

As a civil engineer, Praeger worked on the construction of Belfast's Alexander Dock. Examining the resultant exposed postglacial sediments, he linked the layers of fossil shells in the clays to changes in sea level and climate, leading to his first publication (1886) on quaternary geology, characterised by his thoroughness and attention to detail.

1. Praeger, R. Ll., *The way that I went* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., 1937).

Declining a stable engineering position in 1888 as it provided little free time, he survived on contracts, with more time for field natural history. As secretary of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club, his organisational skills excelled, controlling groups of wandering naturalists in the field with a whistle. He was invited to catalogue the 60,000 specimen natural history collection of his friend Canon John Grainger before its donation to Belfast city. He was elected MRJA in 1891 for his contributions to natural history and in 1892, he founded and co-edited the *Irish Naturalist* with his friend George Carpenter.

Having moved to Dublin in 1893 to take up a post in the National Library of Ireland, he spent all his free time in the field and was soon made secretary of the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club. He set up the tri-annual Irish Field Club Union conference, bringing together large numbers of naturalists from Ireland and Britain. He began surveying Ireland for its vascular plant distribution. Dividing the country into forty, he meticulously surveyed mountains, rivers, bogs, and seashores for plant species. Over five years he personally surveyed thirty-three divisions in 200 twelve-hour days of fieldwork. The results were published in one of his most important works, *Irish Topographical Botany* (1901). Five thousand specimens from the survey are in the National Botanic Gardens Herbarium, Glasnevin, Dublin.

His skills in organising large multi-disciplinary groups led to the successful Lambay Island Survey (1905), where twenty naturalists studied the island's geology, botany, and zoology and the Clare Island Survey (1909-11), where 100 fieldworkers' research included archaeology, folklore, meteorology, as well as terrestrial and marine flora and fauna, publishing 67 papers. Much later, this was the model for the Royal Irish Academy's multi-volume *New Survey of Clare Island* (1999-2020).

Robert Lloyd Praeger's legacy stems from a mind that encompassed a huge breadth of interest in the field sciences combined with meticulous organisational skills that formed the foundation of modern Irish natural history and its sciences.

When he died aged 87 in 1953, he bequeathed his estate to the RIA, a fund having previously been set up by his friends to honour his eightieth birthday (1945). The fund, known as the Robert Lloyd Praeger Fund for the Study of Field Natural History, continues to support fieldwork in Irish natural science.

For further details of his life, please see the [Dictionary of Irish Biography](#).