

The HKIE Geotechnical Paper Award

A Note on the scheme

1. Objective

To encourage quality geotechnical publications targeted at practicing engineers in Hong Kong, through recognising authors for high quality writing, keeping such papers as examples for potential writers to appreciate, and making known an assessment framework for reference as the standard of good practice.

2. The Award

- (a) To be held once every two years.
- (b) Papers to be nominated by their authors, upon an open invitation for participation
- (c) All papers published within the past five years from the date named in the open invitation may take part
- (d) 'published' in the sense of this note means published in Hong Kong by anyone or published outside Hong Kong by personnel based in Hong Kong.
- (e) The winner will be announced in an open ceremony to be decided by the GDC of the year, and publicized in Hong Kong Engineer and the HKIE Geotechnical Division website
- (f) The winner will be presented with a trophy, to be kept until the following award exercise; there will not be a financial token
- (g) The HKIE GD website will upkeep a page to list winners of the award, and keep for downloading copies of the award-winning papers and the citation by the assessment boards on each of them.
- (h) The HKIE GD website will also describe the award objective and assessment arrangements
- (i) Except for the winner, all contending papers will remain anonymous
- (j) No winner will be named if no suitable paper can be selected by the Assessment Panel.
- (k) Subject to the five-year rule, contending papers not selected as the winner in one award exercise can be nominated for subsequent exercises again, when, e.g., aspects such as impact on the industry may become clearer with the time passed
- (l) Papers authored by a panel member may take part in an award exercise but the particular member will be excused from the assessment board for the exercise

3. Assessment Framework

- (a) Contending papers will be assessed on the combined merit of potential impact and quality of writing
- (b) What gives a paper impact depends on the nature of the paper, for which a system of four types will be adopted for assessment of papers, as follows.
 - (i) Project case papers are those that describe unique, novel or revealing aspects of one or a limited number of practical cases. For impact, papers of this genre should describe special aspects or factual information that could change future practice, preferably with insights for advancing technology
 - (ii) Review papers are those that look at information available for resolving some issues. For impact, papers of this genre should provide well supported or argued insights in the subject of the review, or a guided reader of a subject rarely covered, or a balanced insightful history of engineering practice to instil a sense of continuity of the profession

- (iii) Study papers report studies that could be experimental, observational or theoretical, and their combinations, for resolving some issues that hinder geotechnical practice. For impact, papers of this genre should provide clear definition of the problem and reasoned description of the study methodology and approach, to the extent of permitting the study to be repeated, and insights arising from the study
- (iv) Entreating papers are those that advance new ideas, technology or practice. For impact, papers of this genre should clearly describe the merits and limitations of the new thing, and reasons and circumstance favouring them, with leads for follow-up readings
- (c) Quality of writing will be judged with in mind practitioners as readers, in addition to the rigour with which a paper is written. The following questions could provide some guidance in respect of rigour:
 - (i) Is the content meaningful – are important terms defined; are the key arguments logically set out and discussed; are adequate references provided?
 - (ii) Is the content trustworthy – are the facts accurate and complete; is the account of action comprehensive and clear; are propositions in the paper well argued; are the recommendations well supported; are insights put forward in the paper well based and suitably worded?
- (d) The framework is for guidance, and could be refined or expanded when necessary

4. Assessment of Contending Papers

- (a) Contending papers will be assessed by an assessment board, to be formed for each award exercise
- (b) An assessment board panel will be established by the HKIE Geotechnical Division, to provide members for the formation of assessment boards.

5. Membership of the Assessment Board Panel

- (a) Tenure of six years subject to renewals
- (b) Eminent members of the profession with an interest in and a track record of quality technical writing
- (c) Who are also with good knowledge of the local geotechnical industry
- (d) Contact details and simple summary of areas of specialty of members are to be maintained by a coordinator appointed from among the panel members, to facilitate selection and invitation of members to boards

6. Formation of New Panels

- (a) Serving members are reappointed to the new panel with few exceptions
- (b) The coordinator invites serving members for suggestions of new members
- (c) The existing panel draws up membership for the new panel
- (d) The proposed membership is presented to GDC for endorsement
- (e) Members of the new Panel selects the coordinator,
 - (i) The outgoing coordinator manages the new panel until a new coordinator is appointed
 - (ii) Selection is initiated by an invitation to all members, who can suggest himself or other panel members to the chairman of the Geotechnical Division Committee (GDC)
 - (iii) If more than one name is received, GDC Chairman discusses with the members suggested for consensus among them on who to take on the role

- (iv) If a consensus cannot be reached among the members suggested, GDC Chairman would invite panel members for views to him, to assist his decision in consultation with the Deputy Chairman of GDC
- (v) Chairman tables his nominator of the coordinator to GDC for endorsement

7. Membership of Assessment Boards

- (a) Chairman of GDC to chair the assessment board of that year
- (b) Deputy Chairman of GDC to be an ex-officio member
- (c) Coordinator of the assessment board panel to be the secretary of the board, to assist the board chairman
- (d) Four other members to be selected from the panel based on the nature and subject of the contending papers

8. Operation of Assessment Boards

- (a) Secretary of the board to select members for Chairman's consideration
- (b) Proposed board membership to be tabled in a GDC, for GDC members' information and views
- (c) All members of the board prepares reviews of all the contending papers based on a template, without any explicit indications on their preferred paper for the award
- (d) The Board meets to discuss the papers with reference to the reviews, to select a winner
- (e) The Secretariat summarises the key reasons for selecting the paper for the award, for members' agreement; this would form the basis of the citation on the paper to accompany the award
- (f) GDC may request an oral report on the proceedings of the award selection, to be made in one of the GDC meetings after the award of the year had been announced. Such a report will be mentioned in the minutes but not the content

9. Formation of Assessment Boards

- (a) There is no limit to the number of boards a panel member may serve during his tenure
- (b) Where possible, each contending paper has one board member who is familiar with its subject or sector
- (c) Where possible, members should not be closely linked to authors of contending papers, e.g., not of the same workplace
- (d) Exceptions in respect of b) & c) are to be highlighted in the report to GDC for endorsement of the board membership

10. On getting papers to compete for the Award

- (a) Invitations are posted on the Geotechnical Division website, in the pink page of Hong Kong Engineer and by letter to the universities, geotechnical engineering practices, geotechnical contractors and engineering offices
- (b) Senior members of the profession may encourage authors of good quality papers to take part in the award competition