**Collections Development Policy**

Research and Cultural Collections

University of Birmingham

2023

Approved by University Executive Board: 24/05/2023

Review date: 24/05/2028

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#### Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

#### Date at which this policy is due for review: May 2028

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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# Relationship to other relevant policies and plans of the organisation:

* 1. The museum’s statement of purpose is:

Research and Cultural Collections (RCC) is a museum made up of historic and contemporary collections - from the arts and sciences - that are housed in many locations across the University of Birmingham campus.

RCC exists to manage the collections by achieving a balance between their use and care, and supporting the University of Birmingham’s commitments to research, teaching and engagement.

Our collections have the potential to change perspectives, outlook and understanding. We have a responsibility to inspire people to tell their own stories through the collections, and are committed to approaching our museum practice with empathy and integrity.

* 1. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
	2. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum’s collection.
	3. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
	4. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
	5. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
	6. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

# History of the collections

From its existence as Mason Science College, and from 1900 as the University of Birmingham, objects have played an integral role in teaching and research. Before the advent of audio visual and digital media, lecturers and professors engaged their students through objects. It is these objects, along with the art collection, that form the original nucleus of the University of Birmingham Research and Cultural Collections.

In the original plans drawn up for the University at its new Edgbaston site in the 1890s, provision was made for at least eight separate museums relating to academic disciplines taught there including Commerce, Applied Chemistry, Metallurgy, Mining, Engineering, Geology and Physiology. The extended collections in Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology, Physics and Astronomy and Department of African Studies and Anthropology contain the majority of the original collections, some of which were built up over decades by purchase, gift or collection. Collections held by other schools gradually disappeared in the 1960s through a lack of awareness of their present or future value.

The collections were consolidated following an initiative taken in 1991 by the Vice-Chancellor Sir Michael Thompson and the Registrar David Holmes. A survey was made of the miscellaneous groups of paintings and works on paper, sculpture, cultural artefacts, and ceremonial objects that were to be found at the University.

Sue Armitage led the survey, working with the photographer Ron Swift, and the unexpected new knowledge they gained galvanised the University into appointing James Hamilton as University Curator to begin the task of cataloguing, organising and assessing these newly identified collections, and any others which might later emerge.

Since the mid-1990s this programme of cataloguing, assessing and redisplay of the collections has continued in line with historical precedent. The original model proposed for departmental museums when the University moved to Edgbaston in 1900 was used as a model for the 1990s. The African and archaeological collections were the first to be given museum-quality display cases in their departments, thus drawing collections and teaching tightly together so that staff and students would be constantly aware of the presence in their departments of historic objects relating to their field.

The University’s art collections grew from the 1960s through the dedication of a small number of determined academics including Professors Janusz Kolbuszewski and Anthony Lewis, Angus Skene and Kenneth Garlick. Together they laid the foundations of the collections with commissions and acquisitions of work by artists including William Gear, Barbara Hepworth and Peter Lanyon. Their example encouraged the University to continue to develop the art collections from the 1990s up to the present day, adding works by commission, purchase or gift by Sonia Lawson, Julian Meredith, Nicholas Pope, John Walker, Hans Schwarz, Peter Randall-Page and Sir Eduardo Paolozzi.

In 2013 Clare Mullett took up the position of University Curator and Head of Research and Cultural Collections. The staffing and student resource grew and the RCC Study Centre was established at 32 Pritchatts Road providing a centralised space for collections to be securely stored and worked on by staff, students and external professionals. The building provides a space for visitors, staff and students to engage with a broad range of the collections. Since the mid- 2010s, a number of new initiatives have benefitted the department. Artists in residence programmes have resulted in gifts to the RCC, there has been a programme of high-quality digitisation of the collections, we have delivered undergraduate object-based learning programmes and created graduate traineeships. The collection continues to be cared for and used in a variety of ways.

# An overview of current collections

Research and Cultural Collections (RCC) is a university museum made up of historic and contemporary collections - from the arts and sciences - that are housed in many locations across the University of Birmingham campus in Edgbaston and the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford upon Avon.

From ancient pottery to contemporary sculpture, via anatomical waxes, pacemakers

and camel blankets, the objects in the collections play an invaluable social, cultural and educational role.

The RCC is organised into several discrete collections that cover a breadth of disciplines reflecting academic work at the University. Due to the broad range subject matter and material culture that make up the RCC, we are well placed to create and support thematic and interdisciplinary displays, projects and courses. We are open to (re) considering the arrangement of the collections, be that how they are displayed, used, or organised in order to be responsive to new ways of collecting and thinking about our audiences and our material culture.

Our vision is to explore the history of ideas, research and making at the University of Birmingham to inspire audiences on a local and global stage. We aspire to share our collections and platforms for people to tell their own stories, and are committed to use our expertise to act as connectors for people, places and things.

* 1. African Collection (formerly known as Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts)

The African Collection celebrates the extensive cultural traditions and artistic expression of the people of West Africa and beyond. The collection includes a wide variety of objects and mediums including woodcarving, metalwork and jewellery, pottery, weaving and basketry, textiles and fashion, paintings and works on paper, domestic and votive objects and archival material including photographs. The collection is comprised of 1786 objects.

Objects from the collection have a variety of provenance but the majority were collected in what are now Nigeria and Ghana. The top three most prevalent communities associated with objects are Yorùbá, Hausa and Asante. The collection includes work by artists such as Ben Enwonwu, Justus Akeredolu, Moshood Olusomo Bámigbóyè, Lamidi Fakeye and George Bandele Areogun among many others. The collection also contains an important group of Nigerian modernist paintings by artists associated with the Zaria Arts Society including Yusuf Grillo, Clara Etso Ugbodaga-Ngu and Uche Okeke.

The collection includes two human skulls collected around 1908 on a trade route through Angola known to be used for transporting enslaved people. While these are outside the remits of the Human Tissue Act, we have considered the ethical implications of ownership of these objects and refer to the care of these items in our Human Remains Policy.

The nucleus of the collection was collected between 1943 and 1957 by John Danford, the regional director of the British Council in Nigeria and later Sierra Leone. The strength of this collection lies mainly in the Yoruba material Danford assembled in the early 1950s. This stems from his time advocating for the development of the arts in Nigeria, when he also took an active role as a patron to number of artists. Initially on long-term loan, the Danford Collection was purchased by the University from Danford’s estate in 1975, with the support of the Cadbury Trust, John Cadbury, and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

The collection has been further developed by gifts, bequests and loans from various donors, most significantly Sister Evelyn Bellamy, whose collection of artefacts collected in the Gold Coast/Ghana were donated in 1968 and a collection of artworks and objects from Edward Harland Duckworth, editor of Nigeria magazine in 1972. Other significant acquisitions include the collections of Elnora Ferguson, Marion Johnson and Lalage Bown.

A significant proportion of the collection is on display within a teaching space in the Arts Building.

* 1. Archaeology Collection

The Archaeology Collection contains 1888 artefacts from European, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian cultures. The collection also comprises holdings related to the development of the use of photography within the department. This includes glass plates, slides and prints and photographic equipment that relate to field work and surveys from the earliest years of the department.

It was first established in 1902 on the recommendation of Professor John Hopkinson who purchased the core of the collection whilst on a research trip to Rhodes. The collection grew over the following years as a result of various donations made by alumni, former members of academic staff and private collectors. Other large acquisitions include the Mond Collection in the 1930s comprised of Egyptian material and the Wirth (obsidian and chert lithics originating from various regions in Pakistan), Waterhouse (predominantly prehistoric Greek pottery sherds) and Thorpe collections (the personal collection of a physical geographer) in the 1970s.

Key objects include the ‘Egyptian Anthropoid Wooden Coffin Lid of Ahmose’ mostly likely excavated at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt and an Egyptian Canopic jar likely dating from the New Kingdom (circa 1570-1070 B.C], considered rare as it still contains its original preserved contents.

The majority of the collection is displayed within a teaching space in the heart of the department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology in the Arts Building. The collection has been supplemented by a programme of long-terms loans: from the Ashmolean Museum since the 1950s, and Birmingham Museums Trust since 1988.

* 1. Campus Art Collection (formerly Campus Collection of Fine and Decorative Art)

The Campus Art Collection is made up of 2271 objects including paintings, sculptures, works on paper plus associated photographs, curatorial files and materials. The Campus Art Collection originated with the foundation of the University in 1900, emerging as a growing collection of commissioned and acquired portraits of distinguished University figures in oil, marble and bronze. Over the course of the following century the scope of the collection has evolved considerably from this original remit to include site-specific commissions and modern and contemporary art.

There are a number of site-specific installations of exceptional quality which are unique to the University of Birmingham. The immersive Arts Faculty Mural by Peter Lanyon was completed in 1963. It is a large-scale oil mural made for a site-specific location in the Arts Building foyer and was his last public commission before his death in 1964. Birmingham-born artist John Walker created a mural of 15 canvases directly opposite, which explores the cycle of life and death through a series of motifs emanating from The Blue Cloud, from which the work takes its name. On the completion of the Bramall Music Building in 2014, Peter Randall-Page was commissioned to create a ceramic frieze Theme and Variation which responds to the tension between rules and freedom within improvisation in jazz music. And perhaps the most immediately recognisable large-scale sculptural commission is Faraday by the pioneer of British pop art Eduardo Paolozzi. This colossal cyborg seated figure was installed in 2000 and was the last large-scale sculpture the artist created before he died in 2005.

As well as commissioning, we care for a collection of sculptures, paintings, prints and drawings by well-known British artists including John Bratby, Barbara Hepworth, Sonia Lawson, Jacob Epstein and Eduardo Paolozzi. A work of particular cultural value is ʿAbd al-Wāḥid bin Masʿūd bin Muḥammad bin ʿAnūrī, Moroccan Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth I. Painted in 1600 it is thought to be the earliest representation of a person of Islamic faith painted in England and to have been the inspiration for Shakespeare’s Othello.

The collection has been developed and augmented through a combination of bequests, gifts, commissioning, artist residencies and acquisitions programmes supported by specific University and capital projects alongside project-based funding. We also support a programme of loans in and out of the art collection to bring exciting new works to our campus audiences and share our own collections with the wider world. The collection is on display throughout the campus, in University buildings and the campus parkland.

* 1. Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Collection (formerly Chemistry Collection)

The Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Collection is predominately comprised of samples and teaching equipment from the early years of the Chemistry department.  Some of these relate to high profile research achievements of the department including Sir William Tilden’s synthesis of rubber and Sir Norman Haworth’s synthesis of vitamin C. It is a small collection comprised of 76 objects.

The collection also contains medals and honours received by UoB chemists, for example a replica of the Nobel prize awarded to Sir Norman Haworth and the Longstaff Medal for Chemical Research also awarded to Haworth. The collection also contains Roy Lehrle’s personal archival material relating to the history of the department (particularly the mid-late 20th century).

The majority of collection was gifted by Dr Roy Lehrle in 2006. The rest was transferred from the School of Chemistry around the same period with Lehrle facilitating the transfer. Lehrle took an interest in departmental history and had been caretaker of the material whilst held by the department.

This collection is currently under review, the chemistry collection contains a number of hazardous substances which may need to be disposed of. The majority of the collection is in storage, but key objects have been included in History Through Objects exhibition.

* 1. University Heritage Collection

The University Heritage Collection is made up of 486 objects relating to the institutional history and development of the University of Birmingham, significant figures within this history and specific collections exploring the lived experience of campus life.

It includes objects which relate to the founding of the University including the first ceremonial key created for the Royal opening of the University in 1909. The precursor to the University of Birmingham was Sir Josiah Mason’s Science College, first opened in 1880. The façade of the original building in Edmund Street was decorated with Mason’s crest and carved heraldic shields, which are now installed outside the west entrance to the School of Law. Other architectural features, fixtures and fittings across campus chart the University’s development and form part of this collection.

A collection of materials relating to University House, and its first warden Margery Fry, explore the significant historical moment of the establishment of the first women’s Hall of Residence in Britain. There is material relating to both World Wars, including a cloth embroidered by soldiers convalescing in the Great Hall when it was used as a military hospital, and shrapnel found by students after an air raid in 1940. Other ephemera explore stories of extraordinary achievement and innovation including the small Union Jack taken on the Challenger Space Mission in 1985 which carried a telescope built by the University into earth orbit.

The collection also includes artefacts that relate to the University’s manuscript and archive deposits held by Cadbury Research Library, such as personal effects of Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Avon among others.

The majority of the collection is in storage at the Research and Cultural Collections Study Centre and is available to view on request. The collection has been exhibited in multiple exhibitions and displays and used as part of large-scale research projects including the AHRC funded Voices of War and Peace.

* 1. Medical and Dental Collection (formerly Medical School Collection)

The Medical and Dental Collection is made up of 562 objects and contains objects which reflect the development of research specialisms such as anatomy, ophthalmology and dentistry, as well as objects which represent the development of the Medical School, Birmingham School of Dentistry and medical education.

Artefacts in the Medical Collection relating to the history of anatomy and pathology are of particular significance and include a rare group of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century anatomical wax models. These pieces were made by the eminent German model maker Friedrich Ziegler and relate to the history of embryology.

Numerous paintings and sculptures displayed in the Medical School portray the college's history. These include portraits of distinguished physicians who played key roles in the development of the teaching and practice of medicine in Birmingham and the region. Of particular significance are historic portraits of nineteenth-century Birmingham physicians which were transferred from Queen’s College in 2000. Two key objects depict, respectively, the school’s founder, William Sands Cox, and a bust of Professor Dame Hilda Lloyd, the first female President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Dentistry is an important but much overlooked aspect of healthcare that has huge cultural, social and personal implications. The Dental Collection explores the rich history of the Dental Hospital, which was the first dental hospital in the UK and the first to award dental degrees in 1909 through the Birmingham School of Dentistry. The collection comprises a variety of objects including historic dental tools, ephemera and objects relating to the history of dentistry teaching and research.

The majority of the collection is in storage, except a selection of artworks and portraits on display in the Medical School and key objects that have been included in *A History Through Objects* exhibition.

* 1. Physics Collection (formerly Historic Physics Collection)

The Physics Collection demonstrates the history of ground-breaking technologies developed at the University of Birmingham and the related evolution of the teaching of physics during the last 120 years. The collection is comprised of 1073 objects.

Some of the most significant holdings relate to developments in the mid-20th century and wartime. This includes objects related to the cavity magnetron. This formed the basis of radar: it was one of the most significant technological developments during WW2, arguably changing the course of the war. Cavity magnetrons later formed the heart of microwave ovens. One of the world’s first proton synchrotron accelerators was developed at the University during the 1950s and 60s, which is represented through objects and archival materials.

The earliest years of the department are reflected, for example objects related to John Henry Poynting’s measurement of the gravitational constant in 1893 and objects related to Sir Oliver Lodge, the University’s first Principal and a physicist involved in the development of early radio.

One of the most significant objects in the collection is the Riefler Master Clock. When the Physics laboratory was set up by Poynting in 1908, these were the most precise clocks available, with a claimed precision of 0.05 seconds per day. This has been maintained as a working clock since 1908 with significant conservation work undertaken in 2016. Few Rieflers remain in existence, and very few with the provenance and track record of the Birmingham clock.

The majority of the collection has been transferred from UoB academics within the department to the collection or actively collected by the emeritus academic advisor for the collection, Dr Robert Whitworth (years active 1990s – 2023).

A significant proportion of the collection is on display in a centrally used display space in the School of Physics and Astronomy with the majority of the collection stored in the Physics undercroft. A number of key objects are on display as part of History through Objects exhibition.

* 1. Silver and Plate Collection

This ceremonial collection comprises 1002 silver and plate objects commissioned for and presented to various departments or schools within the University during the twentieth century.

Principal among it are two ceremonial maces. The Arts and Crafts University Mace which was made in 1900 by Philip Webb, and the Centenary Mace made by Claire Davies as commissioned by the Birmingham Assay Office for the University in 2000. The maces are carried at every graduation ceremony.

Other objects include bowls, goblets, salvers and candlesticks commissioned over many years by different University departments including the Senior Common Room, the Guild of Graduates, Chancellor’s Hall Association, University House, the Holdsworth Club (Law), the Medical School, the School of Dentistry, the Department of Chemical Engineering, St Francis Hall and the Munrow Sports Centre.

The majority of the collection is in storage but it is used at congregation dinners and other special occasions. A selection of the Silver and Plate Collection is on permanent display at Winterbourne House and Garden.

# Themes and priorities for future collecting

The following strategic aims for the development of the collections set an overarching framework for priorities for future collecting rather than focusing on the development of any one specific collection:

* To develop creative and responsive modes of contemporary collecting including proactive engagement with academic colleagues and responding to our users
* To more fully represent the history of collaboration within the institution, reflecting how innovation is achieved through the efforts of many individuals with a variety of skills, backgrounds and associated stories
* To increase representation of underrepresented groups within all collections and better reflect diverse stories on campus; with a particular focus on objects which explore stories of global majority communities, disability, LGBTQ+ and women
* To collect material that represents historical and contemporary research strengths, including their development, application and impact on society
* To enrich all collections through the collecting of time-based media including oral histories, photography and film, with the understanding that a storage and management environment will need to support.
* To collect material that helps to tell the story of the University of Birmingham and understand its history, communities and collections more fully
* To enhance the campus environment for the wellbeing of staff, students and visitors

# Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

* 1. The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well-managed collection.
	2. The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
	3. RCC is currently in the pilot phase of a full Collections Review, which will assess the entire collection again set criteria. This includes collections management issues (packing, storage, condition) as well as curatorial issues (significance, use and the collecting priorities as outlined in Section 4 of this policy). This will inform a process of collections rationalisation, as well as identifying other areas of improvement for collections management.

The pilot phase of the review is schedule to be completed in 2023, with the full review taking up to five years. The pilot phase report will highlight any required changes to the methodology, and will include timescales for the full review, as well as a framework for ethical disposal.

# Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

* 1. The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

We will conduct due diligence to verify the ownership of any item prior to purchase or loan, and that the current holder is legitimately able to transfer title or to lend. We will apply the same strict criteria to gifts and bequests. We will reject any item for purchase, loan or donation if there is any suspicion that it was wrongfully taken during a time of conflict, stolen, illicitly exported or illicitly traded, unless explicitly allowed by treaties or other agreements, or where the museum is co-operating with attempts to establish the identity of the rightful owner(s) of an item.

# Collecting policies of other museums

* 1. The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
	2. Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s) that cover a range of national, ethnographic, university and local museums:

* Barber Institute of Fine Arts
* Birmingham Museums Trust
* British Dental Association Museum
* Cadbury Research Library
* Lapworth Museum of Geology
* Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge
* Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford
* Science Museum Group
* Winterbourne House and Garden
* Wellcome Collection

# Archival holdings

The Research and Cultural Collections includes archival holdings across its collections, but mainly related to the Campus Art Collection, African Collection and University Heritage Collection.

The purpose of photograph, manuscript, film and audio collections is to contribute to the interpretation and understanding of the wider object collections, the intellectual and political frameworks in which the collections have developed, and the documentation of social and cultural phenomena in keeping with the RCC’s scope and areas of interest.

# Acquisition

* 1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Potential acquisitions are considered by the Collections Development Group (comprising of Head of Research and Cultural Collections, Curator (Objects), Curator (Art) and Collections Manager) through a due diligence reporting mechanism and through consultation with relevant parties, including but not limited to academic colleagues, colleagues from External Relations, colleagues from Estates and colleagues from other museums.

Offers exceeding the value of £250k, that are deemed to cause a reputational risk, or that will impact significantly on the commitment or resource of another department are reviewed at CDG with recommendations and escalated initially by the Head of RCC to the Director of Public and Cultural Engagement, with final authorisation from the Director of External Relations, representing University Executive Board.

Consideration will be given to all objects offered and priority will focus on those areas outlined in section 4 of this document.

* 1. The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country’s laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph ‘country of origin’ includes the United Kingdom).
	2. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

# Human remains

* 1. As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005.

# Biological and geological material

* 1. The museum will not acquire any biological or geological material in its own right, however may be acquired if biological or geological material forms an integral part of a piece of art or artefacts from another category.

# Archaeological material

* 1. The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.
	2. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

# Exceptions

* 1. Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin

acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases, the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

# Spoliation

* 1. The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

# The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

* 1. The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
	2. The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the ‘[Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-museums)

# Disposal procedures

* 1. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.
	2. The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
	3. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
	4. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort – destruction.
	5. The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum’s collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.
	6. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
	7. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
	8. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA’s Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association’s Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
	9. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
	10. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.
	11. The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
	12. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal.

# 17. Disposal by exchange

* 1. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
		1. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
		2. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
		3. If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA’s Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association’s Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
		4. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum’s collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

# 18. Disposal by destruction

* 1. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
	2. It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
	3. Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation’s research policy.
	4. Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
	5. The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible (e.g. the destruction of controlled substances), a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

# 19. Hazardous Materials

* 1. When acquiring objects, the Collections Manager will conduct a full condition report and hazard assessment. For any potentially hazardous objects which we do want to collect, we will risk assess and implement mitigations to manage hazards. This includes, but is not limited to, items potentially containing: asbestos, radioactive material, chemicals, controlled drugs, firearms and explosives and biological hazards.
	2. We will only accept or acquire an item if we feel we can provide adequate, continuing long-term care for the item and public access to it, without compromising standards of care and access relating to the existing collections.
	3. Items within the collections identified as containing hazardous materials that pose a significant health and safety risk will be reviewed by a professional conservator before being ethically/professionally disposed of.

**Ends**