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**Policy for the care and use of Human Remains**

## POLICY FOR THE CARE AND USE OF HUMAN REMAINS

19 October 2017

**Purpose**

This policy sets out our intention to support the use of human remains for teaching, research and display in ways that take account of the interests of different groups of people. It sets out the ways in which we will make decisions about the management and use of human remains in the Museum collection.

**Policy statement**

We recognise the value of human remains in museums for learning about past people. We acknowledge that human remains were once parts of living people and that many people feel a personal connection with particular human remains, whether through genealogical descent, location or personal belief. We will care for the human remains in our collection in a respectful manner, accepting that what constitutes respect varies from culture to culture. We will consult with appropriate groups of people when making decisions about particular human remains.

**Who we are**

The Manchester Museum is one of the cultural assets of The University of Manchester. It is the largest university museum in the UK and has an enormous collection of approximately 4.25 million objects, from both natural sciences and humanities disciplines. The collections were formally Designated by the UK government as being of international importance in 1994.

**What we do**

We work to achieve the ambitions of the University in the areas of research, higher learning and social responsibility. All of our work fits within two broad strands which are:

* Promoting understanding between cultures

and

* Developing a sustainable world.

We use our collection for enjoyment and inspiration, working with people to stimulate debate and reflection about the past, present and future of the earth and its inhabitants.

**Definition of human remains**

For the purposes of this policy, human remains are defined as including human skeletons, bones and teeth, ashes, soft tissue including internal organs and skin, nails, blood, hair, embryos and slide preparations of human tissue. Human remains also include any of these types of material that have been modified in some way by human skill.

**Human remains in the Museum collection**

Human remains are found in the following collection areas: Anthropology, Archaeology, Egyptology, Earth Sciences and Zoology.

**Policy background, licensing and guidance**

Human remains are not owned in the same way as other objects in museum collections, except those that have been altered in some way by the actions of people (see DCMS 2005). We endorse *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS 2005) and acknowledge the *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* published by The Church of England and English Heritage (CoE/EH 2005), in particular paragraph 26:

“...*human remains should be treated with respect and reverence: a society that cares for the dead demonstrates that it values life*.”

Human remains that would require licensing under the terms of the Human Tissue Act 2004 would be licensed as a satellite site of The University of Manchester.

**Documentation**

Human remains in the Museum collection have been documented on a searchable collections management system. This can be searched from the Museum’s website ([www.museum.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk)). This includes the following information:

* Number of remains: usually individual items, but may consist of groups of remains
* Physical nature: for example whether skeletal, slide preparation, etc., completeness and physical condition
* Date: estimated date or period of death
* Provenance: where the remains originated from and cultural affiliation if known
* Status within collection: whether fully accessioned, and if so the accession number(s). For material on loan, the lender, period of loan and purpose of loan

Research undertaken on human remains in our collection is recorded by the Curator/ Curatorial Assistant in the searchable collections management system in the Events section. This information includes:

* Project name
* Research objectives
* Research methodology
* Dates of research
* Research results
* Outputs (publications and data holdings)

Once results from a project are in the public realm, the Curator will write a short summary of the project, its aims, results and outcomes, based on the application and on results produced. This will be entered as a Narrative on the searchable collections management system (KE Emu), which will be publicly available via the Museum’s website, recording the history of use and promoting an understanding of how the Museum’s collection serves to further knowledge and understanding.

**Consultation and decision making**

We acknowledge the interests of genealogical descendents and cultural communities as defined in DCMS 2005, of the scientific, academic and archaeological communities, and of the interests of our audiences and stakeholders. Genealogical descendants are defined by DCMS 2005 (page 9 and section 3.3.2) as people who can trace direct genealogical descent to human remains; cultural communities are defined as groups who identify themselves as a community and would normally be expected to have a shared geographical location, shared cultural or spiritual and religious beliefs and shared language, or to share some of these facets. We also recognise the interests of contemporary adherents of ancient faiths, and local communities from where human remains originated, as recognised in CoE/EH 2005 (paragraphs 18, 77 and 85-89). Our audiences include visitors, people using our website and new media, staff and students of The University of Manchester (including Museum staff), local people and the international research community. These groups and members of them will be considered as ‘appropriate communities’ and ‘interested parties’ for the purposes of consultation on human remains, on a case-by-case basis.

We follow the advice from the Museum Association’s *Code of Ethics*:

“*Respect the interests of originating communities with regard to elements of their cultural heritage present or represented in the museum. Involve originating communities, wherever practical, in decisions about how the museum stores, researches, presents or otherwise uses collections and information about them.*”

(Museums Association *Code of Ethics* 2008, 7.5)

Where there is genealogical descent or continuing cultural affiliation to particular human remains, we will consult with appropriate communities on activities involving those remains. In all other cases, irrespective of biological ancestry, widespread consultation will take place on acquisition, retention and display. We will respond positively to all requests for consultation over human remains.

Since human remains can be the subject of contention where there may be no consensus we will reach a final decision based on ethical judgment, professional best practice, cultural views on what constitutes respectful treatment, measurable benefits to the Museum and its audiences and the needs of different communities.

The Museum is accountable for the proper care and management of its collection to The University of Manchester’s Board of Governors. Following any consultation we will make a recommendation, for example about repatriation or transfer. The final decision will lie with the Board of Governors.

**Acquiring human remains**

We will acquire human remains with reference to the Museum’s *Acquisition and Disposal Policy* and *Guidelines for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives to The Manchester Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester*. Decisions about acquisition will be based on consultation with appropriate communities and the value that acquisitions would bring to the Museum and its stakeholders.

**Deaccession and repatriation**

We will be proactive in discussing the possible repatriation of relevant human remains with contemporary indigenous originating communities. We will enter into consultation with appropriate claimants, named individuals and next of kin. We commit ourselves to consideration of and consultation on all other requests which fall outside these definitions. Claims for repatriation will be determined on a case-by-case basis following consultation with appropriate communities.

Requests for deaccession and repatriation of human remains should be submitted in writing to the Director. The Director will consult with the Head of Collections and the appropriate Curator. Consultation will be on a case-by-case basis, acknowledging the interests of our various stakeholders and appropriate communities. We will then make a recommendation to the Board of Governors of The University of Manchester, who will consider the request.

**Exhibition and display**

Where human remains form part of an exhibition they will be displayed in a culturally appropriate, sensitive and informative manner. Casts of human remains will be displayed and interpreted in ways that would be appropriate for human remains. We will adapt older displays to fit in with these principles.The lead Curator for an exhibitionwill be responsible for consulting with appropriate communities when developing exhibitions that may contain human remains. The content, interpretation and marketing of exhibitions containing human remains will be approved by the Museum Exhibition Planning Group. Human remains will be accompanied by explanatory and contextual interpretation. Human remains will only be referred to by a proper name where the proper name of a particular individual is known or the name of a cultural or historical group, or archaeological site is to be used, for example Worsley Man.

**Images**

Images of human remains in the Museum and on digital media (including the Museum website, smart phone applications, Youtube, Flickr) will be accompanied by appropriate information and interpretation.

We will consult with contemporary indigenous originating communities regarding requests for access to images of human remains from those communities.

Requests for the use of images of human remains, or filming human remains within the Museum, should be made through the Filming and Photography Request Form and submitted to the relevant Curator for consideration. The Curator will be responsible for consulting with the Head of Collections for requests relating to sensitive human remains, who will consult with the Director if necessary.

**Research and Sampling requests**

Requests to undertake research on human remains should be directed to the relevant Curator. Research requests will be granted on the basis of the benefits that would result from the research. Requests for scientific sampling and analysis of human remains should be made using the ‘Application for Sampling and Analysis of Human Remains form 2012’ ([www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/reportspolicies/](http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/reportspolicies/)) and returned to the relevant Curator. The Curator and a Conservator will comment on the proposal. The Curator will be reponsible for consulting with relevant contemporary indigenous originating communities as part of the approval process and we may consult with external academics if necessary. Sampling requests will be considered for approval by the Head of Collections and the Director. Samples of human remains provided to researchers will be treated as a fixed term loan, with a formal loan agreement in place before the actual loan is made. All samples must be returned to the Museum by a date specified in the loan agreement. If they are to be converted into a form that the Museum is unable to care for, an alternative repository must be agreed as part of the research application process. A complete record of the material analysed, the outcomes of any analysis and any research outputs such as publications, must be returned to the Museum.

**Storage**

Human remains will be stored in ways that take account of the physical nature of those remains. Remains from contemporary indigenous originating communities will be stored in ways that take account of cultural practices of those communities as far as is practically possible. We will aim to store human remains in a respectful manner, consulting with appropriate groups where necessary. Human remains will be kept apart from other parts of the collection.

**Physical access**

Requests for physical access to human remains should be directed to the relevant Curator. Culturally specific access can be arranged where required. Requests for physical access will be granted on the basis of the appropriateness of the request, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of human remains. Visitors and researchers will be expected to treat human remains in a respectful manner. Handling training can be provided for visitors and researchers if necessary. Visitors will be expected to follow all instructions relating to handling and use.

**Incoming loans**

All incoming loans of human remains for display will be treated in the same way as human remains from our own collection. Incoming loans will be arranged and organised by the relevant Curator, in consultation with a Conservator. All incoming loans of human remains for research must have prior approval from the Head of Collections.

**Outgoing loans**

Borrowers should make a formal request using the Loan Request Form (http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/reportspolicies/). Loans will be considered for approval by the relevant Curator with advice from a Conservator, the Head of Collections and the Director, working with the Registrar. The Curator will be responsible for consulting with contemporary indigenous originating communities with regard to loan requests of human remains from those communities, following guidance from the Head of Collections and the Director.