Working with the University Museums

The University Museums aim to reimagine what a museum can be through curiosity and conversation. Around 75% of what we do is collaborative, working with researchers and students to bring innovation to life and to impact society.

The University has two museums:

- The Wardlaw Museum is located on The Scores and is home to the Albany Gallery, where we hold major exhibitions exploring research, and the Research Studio, a smaller space for experimental approaches and the further exploration of academic research. It also has four thematic galleries delving into the University’s collections, a Learning Loft and a viewing terrace.
- The Bell Pettigrew Museum of Natural History, located in the Bute Building.

Museums also manage other display spaces around the University, including the boards in the cloisters of St Salvator’s Quad.

Why should I work with you?
Exhibitions and programmes are an excellent way to engage the public with research, but we also aim to achieve measurable and meaningful impact. We set objectives for all our projects, setting out what we want to achieve, and carefully evaluate them to demonstrate the extent to which we’ve achieved them and how.

Museums are particularly interested in achieving behavioural and attitudinal change in visitors and are experimenting in the best ways of doing this.

What are the options for working with you?

- A major exhibition, held in the Albany Gallery of the Wardlaw Museum. These are our biggest and most involved options and take around two years to prepare. Each is heavily marketed and evaluated, with a full programme of events forming a key part of the project.
- A Research Studio display, which is much less involved, is a lighter commitment and involves creating a small display or conceiving of an experimental approach. Programming around these is much lighter.
- A small display elsewhere in the University.
- An event or events programme.
- Something digital.
- If you just want to hire a space you can do this by emailing museumenqueries@st-andrews.ac.uk. Each School, Professional Service Unit and Student Society is allowed one free use of the Learning Loft every year.

If you have an idea for something that’s not included above we’d love to hear it. We aim to reimagine what a museum can be, so if you’ve got something out of the ordinary then let us know.

What does working with you involve?
Projects with University Museums are collaborative. You bring your subject expertise and we bring our knowledge in creating exciting programmes.

What this looks like depends on the project. For exhibitions in the Albany Gallery you’ll work with a team bringing a range of expertise to the table. The team will manage the project and its evaluation.
to a high standard. You’ll meet regularly and will need to set aside time to bring the project to fruition.

For Research Studio displays you’ll do most the work yourself, with support from University Museums.

What does it cost?
Exhibitions in the Albany Gallery typically cost £50,000 to £60,000 each, although they can cost more. Museums will fund around two-thirds of this, but you will also be expected to contribute from any existing budget you have or through fundraising and grant applications.

Displays elsewhere, including in the Research Studio, typically cost £500 to £1000 and you will usually be expected to fund this in its entirety.

How do I get involved?
The first stage is to complete a Note of Interest, which will be considered by our Programmes and Exhibitions Committee. Once you’ve submitted this you’ll hear from us within two to five weeks.

If we think your project might make a good exhibition in the Albany Gallery we’ll ask you to submit a second stage Exhibition Proposal, which we’ll support you in developing.

Unfortunately we can’t take forward every proposal we receive. If we decline your proposal we’ll tell you why.

You can find then Note of Interest here: https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/assets/university/museums/documents/Note%20of%20interest%20form.pdf

When should I submit my Note of Interest?
The earlier the better. We typically plan the Albany Gallery programme two to three years in advance. However, other spaces are more flexible, so if you’ve something that’s short notice submit a Note of Interest anyway.

I want to write you into a grant application.
You must speak to us before you include University Museums in any grant applications. We will not commit to supporting any projects that have not been approved by our Programmes and Exhibitions Committee.

I have an idea, but it’s not very well developed.
Send us a Note of Interest. If you have an interesting kernel of an idea we’d love to hear it, even if you’re not sure where it could go. We’ve got a good sense of what might work, so if it’s got potential, we’ll work with you to develop it into something fantastic.

Have you any top tips for preparing a Note of Interest?
Think about your objectives – what do you want to achieve by doing this? Why do you want to do it?

And consider your audience - who do you want to reach? And why? Go beyond “general public”.

However, don’t worry too much if you’re not sure about these. If we take the project forward we’ll do a lot of work together to refine the answers to these questions.

I have questions or want to find out more.
Drop an email to Matt Sheard, Head of Experience and Engagement, on mjs42@st-andrews.ac.uk.