University of St Andrews
Museum Collections Unit
Access Policy

1. Mission Statement

‘The historic collections of the University of St Andrews are a vital part of the heritage of Scotland’s oldest university. The Museum Collections Unit exists to manage and preserve the collections in its care and to make these collections available to the academic, scholarly and general public, by study, publication and exhibition’

Additionally, the Unit’s aim is:-

To ensure that different audiences share, learn from and enjoy the heritage of the University of St Andrews

2. Our definition of access

The Museum Collections Unit recognises there are barriers to access at all levels of the museum service. However we believe that all people have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the collections of the University of St Andrews.
We define access as something that is made possible when physical / environmental, sensory, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, financial, and technological barriers are removed or reduced.

3. Our commitment to accessibility

The Museum Collections Unit aims to provide the widest possible access to its museums, collections and services to enable audiences from all sections of the community to enjoy use of the collections.

Our policy has been written in line with the University’s main access policy and its commitment to wider participation (www.st-andrews.ac.uk/services/admissions/admissionspolicy.shtml).
Our policy is to build accessibility into everything we do to develop and improve the service. Our commitment is long term and our policy is to make continuous improvements as our resources permit.

Our commitment to accessibility extends to our staff, students, and volunteers as well as visitors.

We are committed to ongoing training in access issues for staff, students and volunteers.

To eliminate barriers and ensure equality of access we will consider the following forms of accessibility:

**Physical** – to enable people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of the museum service. To take into account the needs of the elderly and of people caring for young people.

**Sensory** – to enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy the University’s collections.

**Intellectual** – We recognise that people have different learning styles and we will provide interpretation in a range of learning styles. We also aim to ensure people with learning difficulties can engage with and enjoy the University’s collections.

**Cultural** – to consider the needs of people for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of Scottish and British history and culture may be limited. Wherever possible, the Museum Collections Unit will seek to represent the interests, life experiences and culture of the whole community in exhibitions.

**Attitudinal** – to ensure the museum environment and museum staff are welcoming to visitors from all communities. We will also aim to ensure people of St Andrews and East Fife feel the museum collections are of significance to them.
Financial – the Museum Collections Unit is committed to the University’s policy of free access for all to all exhibition / display venues. Any retail services provided by the Unit will stock goods which take account of the range of incomes of all visitors.

Technological – to use ICT and new media to enable greater access to collections.

4. Buildings

We aim to provide equal access wherever possible to our buildings and facilities for all visitors. It must be appreciated that for listed buildings (when appropriate) some physical adaptions are impossible to undertake. Nevertheless we are constantly working towards improving the facilities available to visitors with disabilities and will actively try to make our collections accessible even when our buildings are not.

5. Access to Collections

Museum Collections Unit staff are committed to increasing public access to the collections and information and to increasing knowledge and understanding of the shared heritage of the University of St Andrews.

We will provide varied means of access to the collections, including displays, handling sessions, publications and events.

We are committed to offering a range of opening hours to suit different audiences at publicly accessible display venues.

To increase access for bona fide researchers to the collections not on display we offer accommodation for object viewing, web-based resources and access to staff.

We will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities. We will ensure that the presentation and labelling of displays respects a diversity of backgrounds.
We will develop our handling collections and loans.

6. Access to Learning

The Museum Collections Unit is committed to the MLA’s Inspiring Learning for All initiative and its ambition to place learning at the heart of our museum service.

We will provide learning opportunities for different audiences and levels of ability and tailor our programme to the needs of specific groups.

We will provide education programmes for all publicly accessible temporary and permanent displays to interpret the collections for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities.

We will identify and develop partnerships with a range of other educational and community organisations to ensure that our activities continue to cater for the widest possible audiences.

7. Access to visitor services

Our front of house staff will assist and welcome all visitors. They will be available in the galleries to help visitors to learn from, have access to, and enjoy the collections.

We will consider the comfort of our visitors by providing, where possible, accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, access for pushchairs, seating in galleries and on-site wheelchairs.

We aim to provide appropriate signage and navigatory tools to suit a range of audiences, including a range of sensory formats and languages.

All visitor services staff will receive adequate training in customer care.
8. Access to communication

We will promote the activities and events of the Museum Collections Unit using accessible means of communication.

We will provide publicity material on request in alternative formats for a range of needs and languages.

We provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us.

We will aim actively to develop audiences for University Collections.

We will evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they meet the provision of this policy and we will consult users and non-users on all significant new developments.

9. Reviewing the policy

Information on access will be available on our website and from the Museum Collections Office.

We will review the access policy at least every 5 years to ensure it is in line with national guidelines and standards.

Each publicly accessible exhibition venue will develop its own site-specific access action plan, outlining specific needs and projects, in line with this policy.