Learning and access policy

Document type	Policy
Scope (applies to)	Staff and students
Applicability date	31/05/2019
Review / Expiry date	31/05/2021
Approved date	15/07/2019
Approver	Head of Public Engagement
Document owner	Interim Head of Collections
School / unit	Museum Collections Unit
Document status	Published
Information classification	Public
Equality impact assessment	None
Key terms	Library and museum services
Purpose	Museums policy to set out aims for making Museums of the University of St Andrews' activities and collections accessible to all, working to understand our audiences and remove barriers to make participation as easy and enjoyable as possible.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	Final	Approved	Ellen Fenton	June 2019

Museums of the University of St Andrews

Learning & Access Policy
2019 - 2021

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Introduction

Museums of the University St Andrews: Our Mission

- **To develop and care for our collections and to make these accessible to all** – to be a museum that has a central role within a world class University – maximising this position and its collections to enrich the experiences of its audiences - academics, students and the wider community.

- **This mission supports the University strategy and ambition** – aligned to the five core ideas of social responsibility, world-leading, diverse, global and entrepreneurial St Andrews. Demonstrating a determination to move forward with purpose, integrity, and success: *Ever to Excel.*

Museums of the University St Andrews: Our Vision

The University Museums will be a recognised world leader in the use of museum collections to create opportunities for people to engage with ideas and research for wider public benefit.

The University Museums will be recognised as a cultural hub - a place of innovation and experimentation that embodies the spirit of research, a forum for meetings of minds and a space for learning, conversation, provocation and action. This is embodied in its approach to research, teaching, programming and engagement.

Learning & Access Policy Statement

We champion audiences across Museums of the University of St Andrews, ensuring they are a central focus and that the museums service is designed around them.

Using the collections as our starting point, we seek to encourage, enable and inspire enjoyable **learning** in its broadest sense, creating sparks of enthusiasm and understanding that facilitate the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, creativity and actions. We empower diverse audiences so that they come together, exchange ideas, share experiences and thereby build community and a sense of ownership.

We aim to make Museums of the University of St Andrews' activities and collections **accessible** to all, working to understand our audiences and remove barriers to make participation as easy and enjoyable as possible.

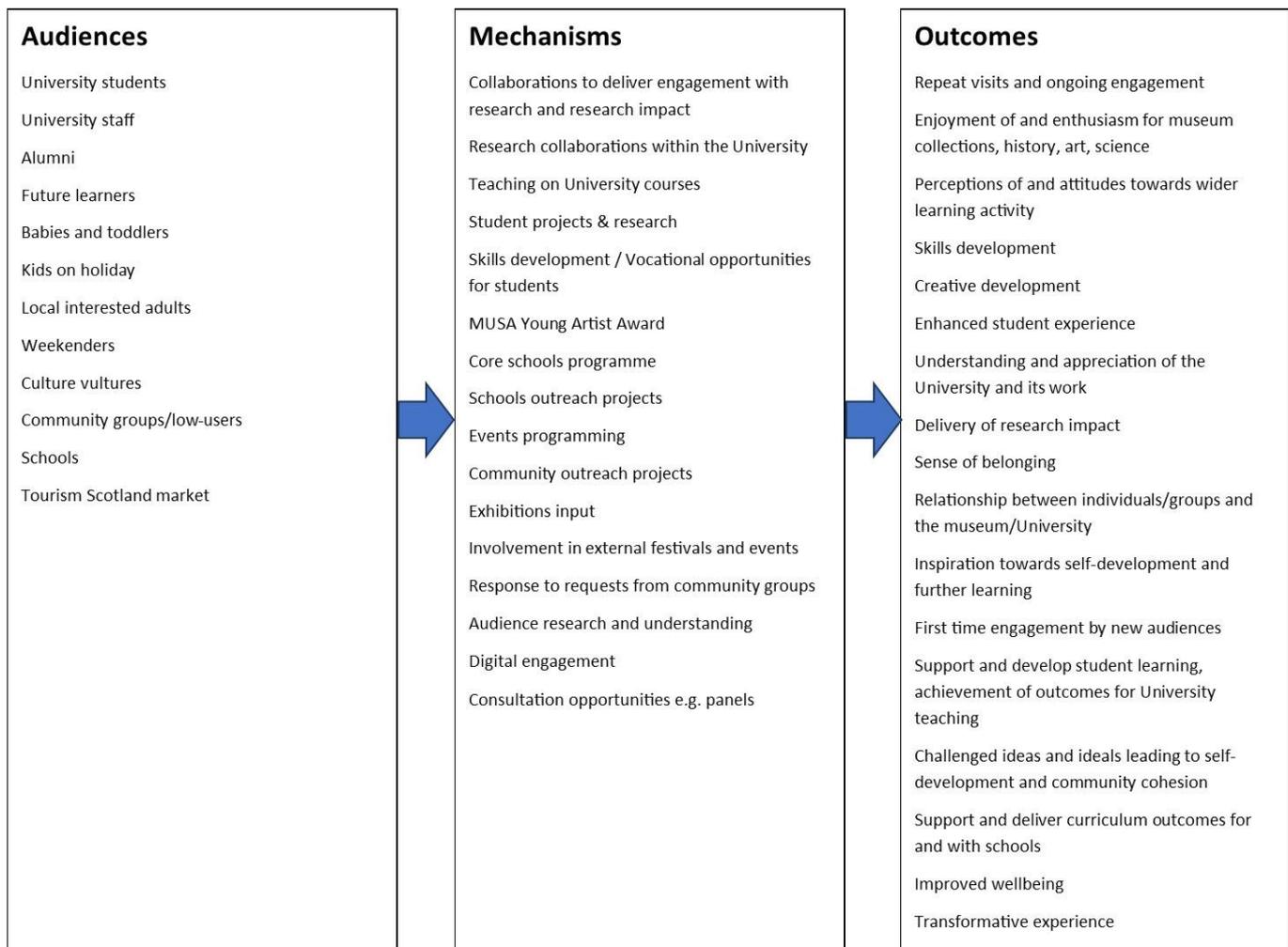**What does** Museums of the University of St Andrews **do to build learning and access?**

- We seek to understand and champion the needs of our audiences across everything we do.
- We ignite sparks of enthusiasm and understanding by providing participatory opportunities.
- We bring collections and learning to life by engaging directly with the public in a variety of contexts.
- We try to anticipate, understand and proactively respond to the needs of our audiences.
- We democratise the museum experience.
- We empower our audiences to contribute to the museum and the community.
- We build a community, creating links with our audiences.

<u>**Aims**</u> (*strategic themes*)

1. To ensure that **tangible public benefit** is at the centre of the work carried out by Museums of the University of St Andrews **embedding learning** in all we do and **making a real difference** to our communities (*All strategic themes*)
2. To create **inclusive museum spaces**, ensuring that engagement with collections and research is **open to all**, regardless of background, ability or financial situation. (*A world class museum and collections; building a cultural and social hub; investing in a sustainable future*)
3. To act as **a conduit between our audiences, collections and ideas** – enabling people of different experiences and perspectives to build **meaningful relationships** while **sharing, discussing, debating and challenging ideas** (*Embedding a research culture; advancing the learning museum; building a cultural and social hub*)
4. To play a leading role in **research impact, teaching and student development** at the University of St Andrews, positioning ourselves at the cutting edge of practice in these areas (*Embedding a research culture; advancing the learning museum*)
5. To be **innovative and experimental** in our use of collections **to inspire and support learning**, making it enjoyable, creative and fun, lighting sparks of understanding (*A world class museum and collections; embedding a research culture; advancing the learning museum*)

<u>**Objectives**</u> (primary aims to which they contribute)

*   To work with colleagues across the museums service in the planning and delivery of projects, **advocating for audiences** and **embedding, employing and modelling best practice** in principles of learning and access (1)
*   To embed the use of **audience research and evaluation** in project planning and delivery (1, 2)
*   To assess **barriers to engagement** and work to **reduce their impact**, removing them entirely where possible (2)
*   To understand the needs of the **community** in which we are based and provide **inclusive experiences** that seek to fulfil them (2)
*   To **grow and sustain our audiences** (2)
*   To review, develop, plan and deliver **events programmes** that meet the needs of our key target audiences, using collections as the primary focus (3)
*   To review **schools programming** and develop and deliver an annual programme based on the curriculum and the needs of schools and the wider University (3)
*   To develop projects and programmes that **allow ideas to be shared, debated and discussed** (3)
*   To identify areas where St Andrews University Museums can be of benefit to **student development** and create opportunities that meet those needs, contributing to the overall University experience (4)
*   To **work with colleagues across the University** to develop programmes and projects that **support their research** and **achieve its impact** on audiences (4)
*   To **develop relationships** with **academic Schools and departments**, contributing to **teaching** and working with colleagues across the University to develop new approaches to learning (4, 5)
*   To trial **new approaches to engagement**, using our findings to inform and develop museum practice more widely (5)

Audiences	Mechanisms	Outcomes
University students	Collaborations to deliver engagement with research and research impact	Repeat visits and ongoing engagement
University staff	Research collaborations within the University	Enjoyment of and enthusiasm for museum collections, history, art, science
Alumni	Teaching on University courses	Perceptions of and attitudes towards wider learning activity
Future learners	Student projects & research	Skills development
Babies and toddlers	Skills development / Vocational opportunities for students	Creative development
Kids on holiday	MUSA Young Artist Award	Enhanced student experience
Local interested adults	Core schools programme	Understanding and appreciation of the University and its work
Weekenders	Schools outreach projects	Delivery of research impact
Culture vultures	Events programming	Sense of belonging
Community groups/low-users	Community outreach projects	Relationship between individuals/groups and the museum/University
Schools	Exhibitions input	Inspiration towards self-development and further learning
Tourism Scotland market	Involvement in external festivals and events	First time engagement by new audiences
	Response to requests from community groups	Support and develop student learning, achievement of outcomes for University teaching
	Audience research and understanding	Challenged ideas and ideals leading to self-development and community cohesion
	Digital engagement	Support and deliver curriculum outcomes for and with schools
	Consultation opportunities e.g. panels	Improved wellbeing
		Transformative experience

Strategic Context

The policy is influenced by significant external and internal developments that will affect the Museums Unit:

Internal:
- Museums Unit Strategic Vision and Museums of the University of St Andrews Business Plan
- University of St Andrews Strategic Plan 2018-2023.
- Collections Policies and Exhibitions Policy and Procedures
- Governance Board (tbc), Academic Advisory Panel and Student Advisory Panel
- Cultural Partners Group, working with the Byre Theatre and the Music Centre, the Library and Special collections, St Andrews Botanic Gardens, Public Engagement, RBS, the Sports Centre

External:
- Curriculum for Excellence and its continued impact on nurseries and schools (ages 3-18).
- Scottish and UK museum strategies and priorities, including *Realising the Vision: Delivering Public Value through Scotland's Museums and Galleries 2015-2019*
- Opportunities for partnership and collaboration within and beyond the museum sector, e.g. through participation in high-profile festivals and with Fife's Creative Learning Network
- Available funding streams, including Museums Galleries Scotland and the Recognition Scheme
- The UK and Scottish Government's policies and funding for arts and culture
- Local tourism priorities, impact of Visit Scotland campaigns

Access Statement

The Museums Unit is committed to increasing public access to the collections. Access to collections will be balanced with appropriate care and management of the collections. To eliminate barriers and provide the widest possible access to all potential users, we will consider the following forms of accessibility in all our activities:

- **Physical** – equal access wherever possible will be provided to museum buildings, facilities and services for all visitors. Visitors with physical disabilities, the elderly and those with young children will be specifically considered.
- **Sensory** – to enable visitors with additional support needs, including impaired vision or hearing to access the museums/collections.
- **Intellectual** – we recognise that people have different learning styles, different knowledge and experience. Our Interpretation methods will be designed to suit a range of learning styles and abilities ensuring visitors with learning difficulties have opportunities to engage with the museums/collections.
- **Cultural** – routes of access will be provided for visitors who do not have English as a first language or whose knowledge of Scottish/British heritage is limited. Consideration will be given to use of languages other than English, e.g. in our customer service and interpretation of long-term displays at MUSA.
- **Social and attitudinal** – the museum environment and staff will be welcoming to all visitors. We aim to ensure people of St Andrews and 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 museum venues, exhibitions, events. The museum shop will stock goods of varying price to take account of the range of income of visitors.
- **Geographical and technological** – we recognise that some users may find it difficult to travel to St Andrews. We will make use of IT and digital communications technology to make information on collections available e.g. via our website. We will continue to develop outreach services.

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