



University of
St Andrews

Learning and access policy 2021-23

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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
3.0	General review and updates ahead of Strategic Board meeting		Head of Experience and Engagement, Matthew Sheard	01-2022
2.0	Significantly updated and re-written to reflect new Museums Strategy and new operations, displays, exhibitions, programming approach at the Wardlaw Museum (and in operating context of Covid-19 pandemic)		Learning and Access Curator, Matthew Sheard	2021

1.0	Policy written to reflect interim period while Wardlaw Museum (MUSA) closed and in preparation for re-opening		Head of Public Engagement, Ellen Fenton	2019
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Introduction

Museums of the University St Andrews: Our Vision and Mission

Our vision is to reimagine university museums, through curiosity and conversation.

The Museums' collections are of national and international interest and importance, and consist of around 115,000 artefacts and specimens reflecting more than 600 years of academic enquiry, creativity and innovation. Among them are three Recognised Collections of National Significance: our Heritage, Chemistry, and Scientific Instruments collections.

The Museums' enduring mission is to steward and share these collections, engaging people everywhere with the intellectual and cultural life of St Andrews.

Museum collections are featured in the Wardlaw Museum and the Bell Pettigrew Museum, stored and studied in a dedicated Collections Centre, displayed across the University, lent for exhibition nationally and internationally, and actively featured and shared online.

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.

We work to be innovative and build our understanding of audiences and approaches to learning and access so that the work of the Museums and the research of the University has greater impact.

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 reimagine how we engage, collaborate with, develop and listen to all our audiences, constantly trying new things so that our approach is sector-leading.
- We embed research practices into our programme development so that we understand the effect of our work and set the direction of university museums, and museums in general, nationwide.
- 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.

Supporting the Strategic Plan:

1. Support the University's recovery from the Covid-19 crisis

- Establishing the Museums team as active and collaborative partners in research projects and programmes
- Making active and growing contributions to teaching and learning, including through the co-directorship of the new Museums and Heritage Studies MLitt.

- Supporting student experience beyond academic life, including embedding a student-driven programming approach and establishing an impactful volunteering and skills-building programme
- Putting staff and student wellbeing at the heart of our programming – including launching new programmes based on the five ways to wellbeing, and a new cultural prescription offer
- Maximising our income contribution, including (but not only) through retail and events at the Wardlaw Museum
- Increasing grants and philanthropic support for our work.

2. Ensure the impact of our Museums and the stewardship of our collections reinforces and reflects their national and international importance

- Establishing the Wardlaw Museum as a visitor-focussed museum, informed by a growing and rigorous audience research and knowledge base that informs our decisions about exhibitions, learning programmes, events, and digital engagement, on site and online.
- Inspiring learning in its broadest sense, supporting the University's aspiration to be a beacon for diversity and social responsibility – including reviewing and relaunching Schools programme, with a focus on Widening Participation and Social Responsibility, and developing a new ESOL programme supporting the University's sanctuary status.
- Working collaboratively with the University's cultural units, and other partners, to position Museums and our spaces as a cultural, social and educational hub for St Andrews, empowering diverse audiences to come together, exchange ideas, share experiences, and build community.

3. Tackle institutional legacies and work for a more inclusive and equitable future

- Research and engagement that tackles the legacies of enslavement and empire – including through a major Recollecting Empire programme and exhibition, and PhD research (supported by a fully-funded scholarship) on imperial and colonial contexts for the collections at St Andrews
- Convening conversations on gender and sex(uality) – including through the major exhibition First Women and its associated programming and displays looking at Maud Sulter and female scientists.
- Working to diversify Museums and our staff – including redesigning and relaunching Museum traineeships, and developing future plans for fellowships and skills-development opportunities for people underrepresented in the museums sector workforce
- Developing and diversifying the University's collections and displays - including refocussing collecting and acquisitions, and rehanging the University state rooms
- Engaging with community partners through consultation and co-creation to ensure a variety of voices and perspectives are represented in our public outputs, including those that have previously been absent.
- Developing approaches and policies that actively enable engagement with audiences on low-incomes.

4. Respond to the climate emergency, and build sustainability into everything we do

- Develop our practice so that exhibitions and programmes promote behaviour change and action
- Find new relevance for the Bell Pettigrew Museum, connected with research on biodiversity and ecosystems – starting with quick wins to improve the visitor experience, and expand opening hours

5. Create greater reach and deeper impact by curating a blended museum experience combining on site programmes with online engagement

- Establishing our digital voice, and its relationship to our onsite activity and programmes – including investment in training and digital skills for all Museums staff and a digital accessibility programme
- Developing digital approaches as collaborative tools for participation and engagement
- Exploring ways that digital tools can enable participation without erecting barriers, being mindful of digital exclusion and accessibility.
- Developing ways to enhance the in-person experience using digital tools

Audiences

University students
University staff
Alumni
Future learners
Babies and toddlers
Kids on holiday
Local interested adults
Weekenders
Culture vultuers
Community groups/low-users
Schools
Tourism Scotland market
Essence segment
Stimulation segment
Affirmation segment
Expression segment



Mechanisms

Collaborations to deliver engagement with research and research impact
Research collaborations with the University
Teaching on University courses
Student projects and research
Dual-delivery online and in-person
Skills-builder volunteer programme and paid internship opportunities
University of St Andrews Creativity Awards
Curious? Schools projects
Events and exhibition programmes
Involvement in external events and festivals
Audience research and understanding
Consultation panels
Community engagement
Experimental approaches



Outputs

Enhanced student experience
Repeat visits and ongoing engagement, both online and in-person
Behaviour change
Improved wellbeing
Enjoyment and enthusiasm of museums, collections and University research
Enhanced appreciation for impact of University research
Skills development
Creative development
Increased applications to University, especially among Widening Participation groups
First-time engagement by new audiences
Influence on wider museums sector
Support and development of student learning, achievement of outcomes for University teaching.
Income generation to support work
Transformative experiences
Support and delivery of curriculum outcomes for schools
Self-development and community cohesion through challenge of ideas
Greater protection of our planet

Strategic Context

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

Internal:

- Museums of the University of St Andrews Strategic Plan
- University of St Andrews Strategic Plan
- Collections Policies and Exhibitions Policy and Procedures
- Strategic Board, Academic Advisory Panel and Student Advisory Panel
- Merging of Libraries and Museums
- Cultural Partners Group, working with the Byre Theatre and the Music Centre, the Library and Special Collections, St Andrews Botanic Gardens, Public Engagement with Research, Residential and Business Services and the Sports Centre
- Wellbeing and Engagement Group, Wellbeing Champions Network and Mental Health Taskforce
- Student Experience Committee and Saints Plus

External:

- Curriculum for Excellence and its continued impact on nurseries and schools (ages 3-18).
- Scottish and UK museum strategies and priorities
- 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
- Scottish Government Covid guidelines

Access Statement

The University Museums are 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 tackle 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 and audiences with neurodiverse conditions 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 and ensure that 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 the Wardlaw Museum.

- **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 and will work with representative community groups to break down social barriers.
- **Financial** – the Museums of the University of St Andrews are committed to the University’s policy of free access for all to museum venues and exhibitions. Where events have an admission price we will develop approaches that ensure these are not exclusionary to audiences on low-incomes. The museum shop will stock goods of varying price to take account of the range of income of visitors.
- **Geographical** – we recognise that some users may find it difficult to travel to St Andrews. We will make use of digital communications technology to make information on collections available and to engage audiences in conversations. We will, where possible, embrace dual-delivery to overcome geographical barriers.
- **Digital** – as digital approaches play an increasing part in enabling engagement, we are mindful that some audiences and individuals are excluded from this sphere. We embrace dual-delivery to ensure that in-person experiences are always possible and actively explore ways to make digital engagement as accessible as it can be.

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