



The Hunterian Human Remains Policy

Approved by: Hunterian Strategic Development Board, University of Glasgow

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1. The Mission and Vision of The Hunterian

As an integral part of the University of Glasgow, The Hunterian preserves and develops its collections and expertise for innovation and engagement, to create meaning, value and relevance with academic, museum and civic communities.

The Hunterian aims to be an ethical and accessible museum organisation that engages critically with its historic legacy for the benefit of all of its stakeholders and audiences, in support of the University's effort to positively affect society.

2. Policy Statement

The aim of this Policy is to outline the policy and procedure for the care and management of human remains within the collections of The Hunterian, University of Glasgow. This Policy is to be read and followed in accordance with other Hunterian policies, the latest versions of which are available at <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/about/reportsandpolicies>.

This Policy will be reviewed every five years, or as future guidance standards from the International and UK museums sector emerge and develop.

Other Hunterian policies of specific relevance are:

- Ethics Policy
- Collections Development Policy
- Repatriation Policy

3. Definition of Human Remains

Human remains are the bodies, and parts of bodies, of once living people from the species *Homo sapiens*. They include bones, teeth, skin and other organs, body fluids, slide preparation of human tissue, DNA samples and other biological material. The Human Tissue Act does not include hair and nails as 'human remains', but these are included in The Hunterian definition due to their cultural significance in some societies.

Human remains also include 'artefactual' human remains (also referred to as modified human remains). These are any of the above which have been modified or incorporated into artefacts together with other materials. Examples are cups made from human skulls or wooden clubs inlaid with human teeth.

4. Guiding Principles

The Hunterian is committed to caring for and responding to all enquiries concerning once living people under its care in a timely, fully transparent, and respectful manner, this includes using the given names of any person where known. However, it should be noted that sensitivity to the cultural values of some indigenous societies may preclude full disclosure of data relating to certain items.

5. Standards and Guidelines

The Hunterian care of human remains procedures conform to standards as set out in the following:

- ICOM *Code of Ethics* (2004) (<https://icom.museum/en/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/>)

- Museum Association *Code of Ethics* (2018)
(<https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>)
- Museum Association *Disposal Toolkit* (2014)
(<https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1075416>)
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* (2005)
(<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/GuidanceHumanRemains11Oct.pdf>)
- Museums Galleries Scotland *Guidelines for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections* (2011)
(<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/1089/guidelines-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-scottish-museum-collections.pdf>)
- Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/4/contents>)

6. Background

The Hunterian was founded in 1807 and is the oldest public museum in Scotland. Over this period, a wide range of material of human biological origin has entered the collections, for a wide range of reasons. There are large numbers of human remains within William Hunter's founding bequest to the University of Glasgow, as it was an intrinsically anatomical collection. Human remains have therefore played an important in the creation of knowledge/research and teaching throughout the history of The Hunterian.

The Hunterian recognises that it is a cultural organisation within a university which itself is a product of British and other European colonialism. The Hunterian has a long and complex history of acquisition, and items almost certainly exist in the collection which were acquired by their donors under unethical circumstances during and after the period of European colonial occupation, oppression and violence. The presence of some categories of human remains in the collections reflect this.

7. The Hunterian Collections

For a full list of human remains in The Hunterian's collections see <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/about/reportsandpolicies/>.

There are two distinct anatomical collections of human material at the University of Glasgow. This policy covers the anatomical material formally accessioned as part of the Hunterian collections, principally William Hunter's 18th century material, and various 19th century and early 20th century collections associated with University of Glasgow staff. Later 20th century material, preparations under 100 years old, still in the ownership of the Laboratory of Human Anatomy are covered by the licensing provisions of the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006. Although the older, historic, material is excluded from the provisions of the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006, it is adopted as best practice to manage such material in the same manner as the 'modern' collections.

Enquiries relating to the Anatomy collection should be addressed in the first instance to the Laboratory of Human Anatomy (lifesci-anatomy-facility-enquiries@glasgow.ac.uk).

The majority of human remains in the archaeology collection were excavated in Scotland,

the British Isles, or Western Europe. There are some human remains from archaeological contexts from the ancient Mediterranean and Near East. Human remains from Oceania, Africa, Asia, and the Americas are held within the World Cultures collection.

The human remains in the Zoology collections are mainly osteological. There is very little provenance with many of the specimens which appear to have been assembled for teaching purposes.

8. Collections Development and Acquisition

The Hunterian's Collections Development Policy lays out a strong commitment to due diligence and ethical approach to all new acquisitions. There are very few circumstances where new acquisitions of human remains could be made. The World Cultures and Zoology collections are closed to new acquisitions of human remains.

The Anatomy collection is closed to new acquisitions, with the exception of additional Hunter or Hunter-related European specimens coming to light, or historically significant human remains being transferred from the Anatomy Department.

The Archaeology collection is open to new acquisitions from archaeological excavations in Scotland and the United Kingdom. It is closed to new acquisitions from outside the United Kingdom.

9. Access and Storage

All human remains in The Hunterian will be kept in a dedicated section of the collection store. Where appropriate, and where possible, human remains from the same culture or locality will be kept together. There may be specific instances where this will not be possible. The remains will be stored in discrete and anonymous boxes in these areas.

Access to all human remains is restricted to Hunterian staff only. Access will only be for collections management purposes, including duty of care, research access where approved, preventive conservation assessment, etc.

10. Curation

The human remains in collections continue to require study to determine provenance and history. Researching the collection is the foundation for culturally-sensitive understanding and sharing of knowledge.

In pursuit of this goal, The Hunterian actively encourages all stakeholders to contribute to the meaning, significance and interpretation of human remains, and to contact The Hunterian and collaborate with us to redefine the museum's understanding and care of them.

11. Exhibitions

The Hunterian will only display human remains, or casts or reproductions of human remains, when accompanied by appropriate and relevant contextual information. Where human remains are on display in a gallery or exhibition this will be clearly labelled.

12. Loans

Where the context is appropriate The Hunterian may lend human remains for display elsewhere. Non-British human remains will not be lent.

13. Online Access

The Hunterian is normally committed to providing open digital access to all its collections, including human remains. The Hunterian will continue to publish data relating to all its holdings online. Where human remains are non-European in origin, their origin is unknown, or are of a particularly sensitive nature, no images will be published and access to these images will be restricted. When repatriation is considered, retention or not of image files will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

14. Research and Teaching

Research and teaching using human remains will only be permitted after assessment of the research question and the impact on the long-term preservation of the human remains. See <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/about/reportsandpolicies/> for Research and Sampling Request form.

Teaching or research of human remains of non-British origin will normally only be permitted with the support and consent of the originating community.

15. Repatriation

Human remains are among those items which The Hunterian seeks most keenly to return to their communities and nations of origin. The process of repatriation and deaccession is covered in The Hunterian Collections Development Policy and The Hunterian Repatriation Policy <https://www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian/about/reportsandpolicies/>