

NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND

POLICY DOCUMENT

NMS RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

NMS HONORARY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

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NMS RESEARCH FRAMEWORK (Revised)

1. Research Framework

1.1 Introduction

This policy sets out the framework for research within the National Museums Scotland. This framework is intended to encourage scholarship, provide opportunity and thus, enhance the profile of NMS.

1.2 Importance of research within a museum

Research is fundamental to the activities of the NMS. There are two key interlinked aspects of this:

Firstly, museums, especially national museums such as NMS, have a responsibility to increase knowledge about their collections. In doing so they contribute to increasing and sharing knowledge of our world. NMS is committed to undertaking such academic research on its collections. The outcome of this may be disseminated in an academic context or to the public in general.

Secondly, collections-related research is essential in providing knowledge of their wider context and exciting and interesting experiences for the public. All interpretation for the public, whether through exhibitions, publications or digitally, should be underpinned by the best and most up to date knowledge of the collections. Members of the public should also have the opportunity to share in the creativity and excitement at the cutting edge of research.

1.3 Definition

Within the Museum, research has diverse forms from investigation on the frontiers of knowledge, new assessments of previous knowledge, the in-depth pursuit of collection information or systematic work on a topic for the benefit of an exhibition or publication. Research may be a solo or collaborative activity and it may have partners within or without the Museum.

1.4 Exclusions

This document focuses on collections research carried out by, or facilitated through, the Collections Directorate of NMS, which comprises the Curatorial Departments, Conservation & Analytical Research and Collections Management. Research conducted largely for market research, or otherwise aimed at the improvement of NMS's public service delivery, is not considered here.

2. NMS Strategic Aims

2.1 Corporate Plan

The current corporate plan states:

Strategic Aim 5

To undertake and make available research of international quality, contributing knowledge that creates an understanding of the past and present for the benefit of the future.

Aspiration

NMS research will be widely recognised as being of high quality and making a significant contribution to improving knowledge and understanding, primarily associated with its own collections. Research activities will be integrated with other NMS services, programmes and products and the results will be widely shared. NMS research activity will be prioritised to deepen knowledge and understanding and to be relevant to the needs and interests of key NMS audiences. NMS will undertake research itself and will commission and support research related to the collections with, and by, other organisations, in a structured and systematic way.

2.2 Summary of objectives and supporting processes

These aims, and NMS commitment to them, may be summarised as follows:

2.2.1 Objectives

- To use and develop our collections and our expertise to further knowledge and understanding for the widest public benefit.
- To enhance the quality of public engagement with the Museum

2.2.2 NMS commitment

In support of these NMS will

- Ensure there is encouragement of research, effective internal planning, co-ordination, resourcing and evaluation of research activities and their integration with organisational needs (see 5.0 et seq). This is dependent on the engagement of staff at all levels.
- Seek to facilitate and collaborate with external organisations and individuals (see 6.0 et seq)
- Disseminate the outcomes of research as widely as possible (see 7.0 et seq)

3. Benefits of research programme

A balanced and integrated research programme has many benefits. These include

- Enhancement of NMS profile as a national museum, and thus its contribution to the intellectual life and international reputation of Scotland.
- A robust collections knowledge base which, in turn, helps achieve high quality collection development

- Staff committed to high quality scholarship and its dissemination
- Academic recognition and partnerships at national and international level
- A creative contribution to the organisation's public-facing activities such as exhibitions, education and publication
- External support for NMS programmes

4. Current Priorities for Research

For the current four year span of the Corporate Plan priorities for research will normally be either project-led or in support of core collections activities which support overall objectives..

a) Project-led

- Development of proposals and re-evaluations of collections for the purposes of the Royal Museum masterplan displays. Scholarly understanding of the collections and their contribution to knowledge is an essential underpinning of their potential applications and interpretation for display.
- Collections-based and external research in support of the exhibition programme, temporary and permanent displays, together with associated publications.
- Collection assessment and interpretation for the development of the Museum of Flight
- Undertaking of specific projects to enable web-based access to collections and their interpretation. This is likely to involve further research into the nature of collections for their on-line presentation and involvement with preparation of data for scholarly audiences.

b) General

- Research in support of rigorous selection for acquisition.
- Continuing collections-based research to improve knowledge and understanding at the highest international academic levels
- Collections documentation and cataloguing in support of full understanding and appreciation
- Extension of mutually beneficial collaborative teaching and supervisory relationships with higher level education
- Establishment of the research programme for the Scottish Material Culture Research Centre

5. Internal Organisation

- 5.1** NMS is committed to encouraging research, improving internal planning, co-ordination, resourcing and evaluation of research activities and their integration with organisational needs. This is dependent on the engagement of staff at all levels within the Directorate. NMS intends to provide the opportunity for information-sharing, creativity and recognition of results. (2.2.2.) refers.

NMS has over 100 staff within the Collections Directorate, the majority of whom are concerned with extending and increasing the knowledge of the

collections, their scope and contents, their condition, and their subject matter. This offers the NMS a resource of enormous intellectual potential in which the key unit is the Department. The Heads of Department have a pivotal role in recognising and encouraging individual scholarship and fostering a climate of opportunity.

5.2 Purposes of research at NMS

While not entirely free of overlap, four broad purposes can be recognised, each having different initiating stimuli and different needs. These are:

- To advance knowledge and understanding in the subject areas to which the museum's collections relate. This is not necessarily wholly centred on NMS collections nor carried out exclusively by NMS staff. For example, much field work by the Department of Natural Sciences and the Department of Archaeology falls into this category.
- To document the collections. This involves both identifying items in or being acquired for the collections and understanding their context. While much of this is fundamental core activity, there may also be particular target outputs (e.g. exhibitions, publications or electronic catalogues) that feed into a museum-wide programme for disseminating information about the collections.
- To produce information for public programmes, such as exhibitions and any associated publications, education projects, and web-based outputs. Such programmes generally have to be delivered to a strict deadline which may constrain research time.
- To preserve and conserve the collections through increasing scientific understanding of the causes of their degradation. This involves the identification of degradation mechanisms, interpreting physical condition, and understanding the causes of decay or loss of information in collections. Knowledge of degradation allows better understanding of original form, technology and the history of artefacts. In addition collaboration between the subject specialist curator and conservator can provide valuable insights.

5.3 Strategic direction of research

5.3.1 A Research Advisory Group will facilitate, encourage, monitor, and promote the research activities of the Museum and their integration with organisational need. Its remit will be:

- To develop NMS research strategy and programmes in terms of identifying broad themes, major projects, important partnerships and significant impact.
- To assist with developing external partnerships and applications for research funding
- To monitor general research progress on a regular basis
- To advise on the effective dissemination of research through a variety of means

5.3.2 Its membership will normally be:

- Director- chair
- Two Trustees
- Director of Collections,
- All Heads of Department, Collections Directorate (7)
- Director of Public Programmes,
- Director of Marketing and Development

It will meet at least twice a year timed to assist the Corporate Planning process.

The Board of Trustees will be kept fully informed through the normal reporting process. General research progress and significant outcomes will be reported to the Board as part of the Director's quarterly performance report.

5.3.3 External advice and feedback will be sought from Trustees and representatives of external organisations in order to maximise opportunities, seek partnerships and enhance the value of NMS contribution to knowledge. This consultative process will be encouraged by a programme of regular events such as research fora and seminars.

5.4 Executive Direction of research

5.4.1 The Director of Collections has responsibility for developing and monitoring overall research activity for the Directorate in line with the strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan. The Director of Collections will work with the Heads of Department to ensure the quality of the programme, the commitment of staff, and thus, its contribution to the enhancement of NMS profile.

5.4.2 Heads of Department have a pivotal role to play in developing the potential of their staff and assessing their ideas and output in their contribution to the research programme. The creativity of staff is essential to produce high quality results.

5.4.3 Heads of Department will be responsible for contributing their departmental plans to the development of overall strategy and developing and monitoring the Departmental programmes of research activity; Heads of section will support this process by assessing and promoting proposals from their staff

5.4.4 The Director of Collections, the Director of Public Programmes and the Director of Marketing and Development will ensure the integration of the programme with external funding requirements and public programmes at the planning stage.

5.4.5 At Departmental level, the process of devising and monitoring research strategy will normally be focussed on a bi-annual presentation and audit of research achieved, in progress, and projected. This report will be presented to and considered by the Research Strategy Group. The Group will consider the balance and quality of work overall against available resources and assist in developing priorities.

5.5 Monitoring of research performance

Monitoring of research performance is needed for several reasons

- A national museum is to a significant extent judged by the quality of its research output.
- Staff time is NMS' most important and expensive asset
- To assist forward planning of research and its resourcing
- An integrated approach is essential for maximum public benefit and effective use of resources
- To maximise profile of achievement to appropriate audience, possible collaborators and stakeholders
- Performance monitoring in this area is a vital part of the staff appraisal process

The promotion of research activity is fundamental to the life of a national museum. It is also important that realistic goals be agreed, both corporately and individually, and that these be reflected in the process of staff appraisals. Long-term commitment of staff time will be both necessary and worthwhile but will be regularly assessed in the context of other opportunities and priorities.

6. External research relationships;

NMS seeks to facilitate and collaborate in the work of external organisations and individuals (2.2.2 refers)

6.1.1 NMS seeks to make its collections and its expertise available to others for research purposes which do not compromise the condition of the collections. This activity may be constrained by the resources of staff and accommodation available.

6.1.2 NMS seeks to widen its expertise, increase its knowledge bases and maximise opportunities for dissemination through the use of Honorary Research Associates to contribute to its research programme. (See Appendix 1)

6.1.3 Honorary Research Associates will be individuals of scholarly standing appointed by application to the Director, for specific research project(s) and for an agreed term, subject to review. (See Appendix 1)

6.2 External collaboration

6.2.1 As Scotland's national museum, NMS aspires to ensuring that its work is of suitable standard to achieve and sustain recognition and eligibility for external funding. Where possible it will also collaborate with other museums and institutions towards this aim.

6.2.2 Teaching activities

Staff in the Collections Directorate are asked from time to time to participate in the delivery of academic teaching and supervision. This is an important part of the relationship between NMS and the academic community. However, any academic teaching which is on more than an ad hoc basis needs to be agreed with the Director of Collection with a clear agreement of the expectations of all concerned. NMS may require re-imburement for the cost of staff time.

6.2.3 Research Students and Collaborators

NMS may enter into collaborations on projects which can be addressed at graduate or higher level by a contracted individual working on the NMS collection and sometimes also making use of external University facilities. This may be funded by an external grant, an internship or by NMS directly. Such arrangements can offer opportunities to address issues in greater depth and/or to support on-going programmes. A written agreement between the academic institution and NMS will be put in place in such cases in order to set out each partner's responsibilities and objectives. Provision of NMS facilities will be agreed within the constraints of existing resources.

7. Dissemination

7.1 NMS policy is to facilitate the dissemination of research by a wide range of channels to appropriate audiences within practical resource constraints. (2.2.2 refers)

7.2 Dissemination may take different or various forms, for example: an exhibition, an exhibition publication, an article in a refereed journal, a collection catalogue, a book, conference paper, lecture, media appearance or on-line exhibition.

7.3 An important channel for scholarly research contributing new knowledge will be publication via peer review, the recognised route to academic acceptance.

7.4 Within NMS, the Publications Committee, chaired by the Director of Collections, facilitates the publications of titles that originate from the collections and staff scholarship. It can, through the provision of limited subsidy, make possible the publication of titles which are otherwise not viable under a strict commercial approach.

7.5 Where suitable, scholarly research will be communicated in forms designed for the benefit of a wider audience.

7.6 Where external organisations, such as commercial and media, benefit significantly from NMS research and expertise, the principle is that NMS should normally be rewarded at the usual commercial rates, and subject to contractual arrangements.

7.7 Any research work undertaken by staff in the course of their employment is legally the copyright of their employer, NMS. Any proposed arrangement for commercial or other non-academic dissemination between staff and external organisations must be agreed by the Director of Collections. NMS will ensure that any commercial use is based on an agreed price and paid for in accordance with agreed terms.

7.8 NMS recognises that much academic information is circulated freely as part of the normal research process. It is essential that the origins of such work are clearly attributed in publication, i.e. NMS must be credited whenever possible.

7.9 NMS recognises the requirement of many academic journals of copyright assignment as a condition of publication

Jane Carmichael
Director of Collections
November 2004

Honorary Research Associates

1 Introduction

NMS seeks to widen its expertise, increase its knowledge bases and maximise opportunities for dissemination through the use of Honorary Research Associates to contribute to its research programme (NMS Research Framework para 6.1.3).

2 Definition of Honorary Research Associates

2.1 Honorary Research Associates are recognised experts in their field who can actively contribute either on an individual basis, or in collaboration with staff, to the NMS Research Programme.

2.2 Sustained and significant collection-based research at NMS must be a prerequisite of their work. The expected outcome will usually be a significant contribution to NMS programmes through publication or other means of benefit to the public

2.3 Honorary Research Associates are a separate category from NMS volunteers. They are expected to make a significant intellectual contribution to research and the work of departments and are therefore given a privileged degree of access to collections. They are not expected to participate in the routine work of the Department. They are nonetheless subject to the same general regulations as paid staff.

3. Exclusions

The term Honorary Research Associate does not extend to individuals undertaking NMS commissioned research for financial reward nor to interns, student scholars or similar placements or volunteers.

4 Terms and conditions

4.1 Honorary Research Associates are appointed after application to the Director.

In the first instance, Heads of Department should discuss with potential applicants possible programmes of work to inform their application.

Application should then be made by letter addressed to the Director of Collections for assessment and recommendation to the Director.

4.2 The application must indicate clearly what contribution the Associate will make and what the expectations are of both parties.

4.3 If the application is accepted, it will be the basis of a written agreement between both parties to cover the term of the appointment.

4.4 The agreement may be terminated by either party giving one month's notice if its terms have not been met. The twice yearly reviews (see 4.11) with the

relevant Head of Department provide the opportunity for both parties to consider their position.

- 4.5 The period for a Research Associate will normally be three years, but may be extended after review for a further three years. A further extension may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.6 Because of NMS resource constraints, the maximum number of Honorary Research Associates will usually be 20 at any one time. However, the appointment of any Research Associate is dependent on suitable facilities being available after the needs of NMS staff have been met.
- 4.7 Honorary Research Associates are unpaid but given access to such NMS facilities as necessary for their work. They are expected to be accommodated within existing facilities for study and not given dedicated office space.
- 4.8 Honorary Research Associates must make clear their association with NMS as appropriate for the benefit of both parties. The form 'Honorary Research Associate, National Museums Scotland' should appear alongside the individual's name in publication.
- 4.9 Agreements about output from the work of Honorary Research Associates, especially web or conventional publications, will be part of the initial agreement between NMS and the Associate. Any exceptions to this agreement need to be notified by the Associate and tested for any conflict of interest.
- 4.10 NMS is normally the owner of the intellectual property rights in the output of Honorary Research Associates; exceptions to this principle (eg publication involving third parties) require all parties to reach agreement on a suitable contractual arrangement. All arrangements will be agreed in writing. However, Paras 7.8 and 7.9 of Research Framework also apply as NMS recognises that much academic information is circulated freely as part of the research process.
- 4.11 Responsibility for overall monitoring of Honorary Research Associates lies with Heads of Department. Progress should be reviewed at least twice a year and reported by the Head of Department as part of the process of monitoring research activity generally.
- 4.12 Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that Honorary Research Associates are fully informed and observe relevant NMS regulations and provided with a suitable working environment including access to the library, equipment, network, postage and business telephone as appropriate. These facilities may be used only in support of the work of the Research Associate for the benefit of NMS. Any abuse of them will lead to their withdrawal and possible termination of the appointment.

5 Eligibility

- 5.1 The following will be considered eligible:
 - Well-established scholars with an understanding of collections-based research in museums and a willingness to contribute to the research programme of NMS.

- Former senior members of staff with an established record of scholarship.

6 Implementation

- 6.1** These terms supersede all previous arrangements. NMS will therefore terminate all known current associateships while, at the same time, inviting application under these new terms and conditions. It will also consider the overall balance of activity with a view to new appointments being made.

Jane Carmichael
Director of Collections
November 2004