

# **RGU Art & Heritage Collections**

## **Acquisitions and Disposals (Collections Development) POLICY**

**2013-2018**

Name of governing body: **Robert Gordon University**

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: **08/08/2013**

Date at which this policy is due for review: **31/01/2018**

**Art & Heritage Collections Statement of Purpose** ‘The University Art & Heritage Collections give students, staff and the wider community inspiration, learning and enjoyment by preserving and presenting historic artworks and artefacts which reflect the history and achievements of Robert Gordon University.’

**Acquisitions and Disposals (Collections Development) POLICY**

**1. Existing collections, including the subjects or themes and the periods of time and /or geographic areas to which the collections relate**

The Art collection forms the largest part of the University Collections. The majority of work dates from the 1950s to the present day, but there is also a significant quantity of earlier work. Not all disciplines practised at Gray’s School of Art are equally represented, with a heavy bias towards painting, drawing, printmaking and ceramics. While this has been corrected with regard to current practise in acquiring student work, the historical imbalance remains.

The Architecture collection contains student drawings dating from the 1920s to the 1970s, with more recent student work being retained for the collections from 2007. The Collection also contains a large group of antiquarian books.

The Pharmacy collection contains equipment used in the School of Pharmacy.

The Engineering collection contains School of Engineering equipment that has been retained. Much historic equipment has been disposed of by the School over the years and research is needed to establish the significance of what remains.

What was formerly known as the ‘Museum Collection’ contains material relating to the general history of the University, including now-defunct departments such as the School of Domestic Science and the School of Navigation.

All of the above collections also contain related photographs and ephemera.

**2. Themes and priorities for future acquisitions including collections which will not be subject to further acquisition.**

<b>FACULTY OF DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY</b>	
<b>Architecture</b>	Examples of work produced by former and current members of staff of the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment Examples of work produced by former students of the Scott Sutherland School Examples of work produced by current students the Scott Sutherland School (purchase prize awards only) Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history

<b>Art and Design</b>	Artwork produced by former and current members of staff of Gray's School of Art Artwork produced by former students of Gray's School of Art Artwork produced by current students of Gray's School of Art (normally purchase prize awards) Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history Artwork relating to the wider history of the Robert Gordon University
<b>Computing</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>Engineering</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>FACULTY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b>	
<b>Applied Social Studies</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>Health Sciences</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>Nursing and Midwifery</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>Pharmacy &amp; Life Sciences</b>	Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>ABERDEEN BUSINESS SCHOOL</b>	
<b>Aberdeen Business School</b>	Photographs and ephemera Oral history
<b>HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY</b>	
Artefacts, photographs, ephemera and oral history relating to the wider history of the University, support departments, student association, social events, buildings, estate and peripheral activities will be collected.	
<b>DEFUNCT SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS</b>	
Material relating to defunct departments, such as the School of Navigation, will be collected where it is considered to be of exceptional importance to the history of the University.  In general, however, collecting will concentrate on the currently active schools and departments of the Robert Gordon University.  Official student, school and departmental records and legal documents will not be collected and these will fall under the remit of the University Records department.	

### **3. Limitations on collecting**

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

### **4. Collecting policies of other museums**

The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

- Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums
- University of Aberdeen Historic Collections
- Aberdeenshire Heritage
- Robert Gordon's College (not Accredited)
- Royal Scottish Academy

### **5. Policy review procedure**

**The Acquisition and Disposal Policy** will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

Museum Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

### **6. Acquisitions not covered by the policy**

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

### **7. Acquisition procedures**

a. The museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

b. In particular, the museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

c. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of

Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

e. The museum will not acquire any archaeological material.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 7a, 7b, 7c, or 7e will only be because the museum is either:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded;
- or
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin;
- or
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the guidelines in the “Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums” issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2008.

## **8. Spoliation**

The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

## **9. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the “Guidance for the care of human remains in museums” issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will

mean that the procedures described in 11a-11d, 11g and 11s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

## 10. Management of archives

As the museum holds / intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

Official student, school and departmental records and legal documents will not be collected and these will fall under the remit of the University Records department.

## 11. Disposal and Rationalisation

### Themes and priorities for future disposal and rationalisation

<b>FACULTY OF DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY</b>	
<b>School and Priorities for Collection</b>	<b>Priorities for Disposal</b>
<p><b>Architecture</b> Examples of work produced by former and current members of staff of the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment            Examples of work produced by former students of the Scott Sutherland School            Examples of work produced by current students of the Scott Sutherland School (purchase prize awards only)            Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research            Photographs and ephemera            Oral history</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Badly deteriorated work</li> <li>• Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented work</li> <li>• Work produced by architects and students at other Schools, unless a clear connection with the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and /or RGU can be seen</li> <li>• Unsigned, unlabelled, untitled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented work</li> </ul>
<p><b>Art and Design</b> Artwork produced by former and current members of staff and former and current students of Gray's School of Art (normally purchase prize awards)            Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research            Photographs and ephemera            Oral history            Artwork relating to the wider history of the Robert Gordon University</p>	<p>Badly deteriorated work            Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented work            Work produced by artists and students at other Schools, unless a clear connection with the Gray's School of Art and /or RGU can be seen            Unsigned, unlabelled, untitled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented work            Work considered to be of an insufficient standard of skill or interest. (Decisions as to disposals under this criterion will be identified by a panel of advisors selected for the purpose, see paragraph h below)</p>
<p><b>Computing</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research            Photographs and ephemera</p>	<p>Badly deteriorated items            Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items</p>

Oral history	
<b>Engineering</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items
<b>FACULTY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b>	
<b>Applied Social Studies</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items
<b>Health Sciences</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items
<b>Nursing and Midwifery</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items
<b>Pharmacy &amp; Life Sciences</b> Items of equipment formerly used in teaching or research Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items Dangerous drugs and other dangerous chemicals
<b>ABERDEEN BUSINESS SCHOOL</b>	
<b>Aberdeen Business School</b> Photographs and ephemera Oral history	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items
<b>HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY</b>	
Artefacts, photographs, ephemera and oral history relating to the wider history of the University, support departments, student association, social events, buildings, estates and peripheral activities will be collected.	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items
<b>DEFUNCT SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS</b>	
Material relating to defunct departments, such as the School of Navigation, will be collected where it is considered to be of exceptional importance to the history of the University.  In general, however, collecting will concentrate on the currently active schools and departments of the Robert Gordon University.  Official student, school and departmental records and legal documents will not be collected and these will fall under the remit of the University	Badly deteriorated items Untitled, unsigned, unlabelled and otherwise unidentified and undocumented items Duplicated items

Records department.	
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## 12. Disposal preliminaries

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- c. The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

### **Motivation for disposal and method of disposal**

- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f. In exceptional cases, the disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below in paragraphs 12g-12m and 12s will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
  - o the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the —remaining collection,
  - o the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit),
  - o the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored.

### **The disposal decision-making process**

- g. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

### **Responsibility for disposal decision-making**

h. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or Badly deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

### **Use of proceeds of sale**

i. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from MLA.

j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

### **Disposal by gift or sale**

k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

### **Disposal by exchange**

**n. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the** museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a-12d and 12g-12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p-12s.

p. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

### **Documenting disposal**

s. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

## **13. Reviewing the policy**

Our **Acquisitions and Disposals Policy** will be available on our website [www.rgu.ac.uk/collections](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/collections) and social media as appropriate.

We will review the Collections Management Plan at least every 5 years

The date of the next review is January 2018