



HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

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Summary

The Old Anatomy Museum TCD holds significant numbers of human remains including archaeological and non-archaeological categories.

This policy addresses Human Remains which include osteological material, soft tissue body parts, teeth, hair and nails. This document outlines the policy of the Old Anatomy Museum of TCD on human remains in respect of its **legal obligations**, **ethical concerns** and **research commitments**.

Legislative Basis

Human remains in the Old Anatomy Museum TCD are governed by Irish and European legislation, and global commitments including UNESCO treaties. Ethical and curatorial standards are also set internationally through museum organisations including ICOM.

The Old Anatomy Museum recognises that Human Remains are not just scientific objects or data, and will be treated with the utmost care and respect.

1. The majority of the human remains in the collections of The Old Anatomy Museum are considered non archaeological under the terms of the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014.



2. Though not yet implemented, the Human Tissue Bill has been discussed and its proposals will be followed until an Act is in place.
3. Ireland is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN, 2007) which includes the right to access/request to repatriate human remains through fair and transparent means (Article 12, 2).
4. The Old Anatomy Museum TCD aligns its policy with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics 2013 which contains specific criteria on the storage, display, research and retention of human remains in conjunction with The 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005 (hereafter referred to as 'DCMS guidance').

Ethical Concerns

Management of human remains

STORAGE

- Human remains in the Old Anatomy Museum collections will be stored in secure storage areas and in appropriate conditions, following DCMS guidelines where possible, taking into account the age and infrastructure of the building.
- Human remains will be stored in designated areas with restricted and monitored access. Cameras have been installed at all doors in the museum along with a monitored alarm system.
- Human remains will be housed in stores areas not accessed by the public.

CONSERVATION

- Human remains will only be handled by Old Anatomy Museum staff and designated staff, students or volunteers who have had appropriate training to avoid damage and to make sure remains are handled with care and respect.
- Conservation records will be maintained using Axiell Collections software. This will include detailed descriptions of work carried on human material along with appropriate imagery.



- Anyone working with human remains will be obliged to have undertaken an orientation programme before commencing work.
- Conservation of wet and dry human remains will take place in a designated Conservation Laboratory with appropriate facilities, equipment and PPE.
- Orientation on lab safety will be obligatory.
- Maintenance and conservation of human remains will follow museum standard guidelines and be up to date with latest recommendations.

Collections Management

- All human remains are being documented using approved collections software 'Axiell Collections Management System'.
- A unique accession number will be assigned to individual bones or skeletons.
- Each wet or dry specimen in the collection will be labelled appropriately with museum standard labelling.
- The Old Anatomy Museum will endeavour to store its collections of Human Remains separately from the remainder of its collections and in line with international museum standards (ICOM).

Public Exhibition and Display of Human Remains

The Old Anatomy Museum TCD collection is primarily composed of human remains which may form part of an exhibition or display. The exhibition may contain skeletons, skulls, wet specimens or disarticulated osteological material.

1. The Old Anatomy Museum considers that there is a strong educational value and high level of public interest in displays featuring human remains and will include human remains in its displays.
2. The display of remains in certain contexts can provide opportunities for learning about and understanding past lives, cultures, beliefs and practices. Careful thought will always be given to the reasons for and context in which remains are displayed.



3. The sensitivities of both source communities and potential audiences must be actively considered when human remains – and artefacts incorporating human remains or tissues – are used for display.
4. Consideration will also be given to how to prepare visitors to view remains in Old Anatomy Museum exhibitions, and to advise in advance, those who may not wish to see them.
5. The Old Anatomy Museum will make information available at access points indicating where human remains are displayed. This will include guidance on respect, photography, and place them in context.
6. Proposals for new temporary or permanent exhibitions in The Old Anatomy Museum which involve the display of human remains will pass through an internal process that will consider their ethical justification and appropriate presentation.
7. Human remains will be displayed in a manner consistent with professional standards and, where known, taking into account the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the objects originated. They must be presented with great tact and respect for the feelings of human dignity held by all peoples.
8. Exhibition of the remains of identifiable individuals or artefacts associated with human remains of identified individuals will be considered sensitively.
9. Applications for loans of Human Remains for display by other museums must demonstrate that there are valid reasons for their display that cannot be satisfied through images or other means. The Old Anatomy Museum will apply the same conditions for borrowers as apply to its own exhibitions.
10. Where images of Human Remains are used on display boards, websites or in publications, careful thought will be given to their context and positioning. The Old Anatomy Museum will take steps to make audiences aware of this content in advance.



Research on Human Remains

The Old Anatomy Museum TCD is committed to research which furthers our knowledge of peoples on this Island in the past through the study of Human Remains. Research can advance understanding of cultural and medical practices, biological processes, genetics, diet, disease and population movements over time.

The Old Anatomy Museum recognises the sensitivities around many aspects of this research and will place systems in place to manage research on human corporeal remains.

1. Research access to collections will be on the basis of formal written applications. This will include research by TCD researchers as well as research by external applicants.
2. Applications will be judged on criteria that will include the extent to which a collection has already been studied, physical condition of the collection, and a balance between access and risk to the collection.
3. Research on Human Remains must be accomplished in a manner consistent with professional standards and take into account the interests and beliefs of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the remains originated, where these are known.
4. Applications for invasive processes such as sampling for radiocarbon dating, DNA, or stable isotopes will be judged on criteria that will include experience, publication record and results of the researcher(s) previous work.
5. Submissions will also be judged on the ethics involved in the proposed research and its implications, or potential applications of medical or other discoveries.
6. Applications for research on remains from known individuals will be assessed to ensure that the rights of related people or descendants are not infringed.
7. Samples will remain the property of The Old Anatomy Museum and analytical results will be lodged on closed file prior to publication.
8. Applications for imaging, replicating, or filming will be judged on criteria that will include the appropriateness, sensitivity and presentation of the results.

Acquisition of Human Remains

The Old Anatomy Museum holds and expects to continue receiving human remains as follows:

- Transfer or loan from another museum for exhibition purposes
- Return of bones /skeletons from past medical students or their relatives. (it was not unusual for medical student to 'have their own skeleton' when studying Old Anatomy).
- Anatomical bones from archaeological digs on the site of previous Old Anatomy schools at TCD.



Deaccession of Human Remains

(Also see Deaccession and Removal Policy, and Repatriation Policy— in development)

1. Irish Human Remains will be considered for de-accession by The Old Anatomy Museum on the basis of a written application to The Old Anatomy Museum Steering Group
2. All assemblages must have been fully recorded by a suitably qualified osteoarchaeologist and a full report completed before any such application can be made.
3. The Museum may de-accession human remains in its collections for a number of reasons including where there are health and safety problems relating to the remains; where there are irresolvable difficulties associated with the storage requirements; or to transfer them to another collection where they will be more productively utilised or relate preferentially to that institution's collecting policy.
4. Before de-accessioning human remains, the Old Anatomy Museum will try to establish whether genealogical or cultural descendants exist who might wish to make a claim for return or reburial.
5. Requests for return or burial of remains in our collections will be considered on their merits with reference to the criteria laid out in the DCMS guidance and the ethical framework in that guidance (see section 2.4).
6. Any proposals for reburial within existing burial grounds must consider the possibility of uncovering further human remains during re-internment. They must also consider the potential archaeological implications of the proposed reburial site if it is a National or Recorded Monument. All such considerations will be discussed with the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Any such applications would require permission from the relevant church and/ or local authorities where applicable.
7. Applications to repatriate Human Remains will be in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN, 2007).
8. Proposals will be submitted to The Old Anatomy Museum Steering Group.



Old Anatomy Museum Panel on Human Remains

The Old Anatomy Museum TCD will nominate a panel of specialists to advise the collections staff on applications for research, analysis, storage, collections care and ethical matters as required.

The members of this panel will be recognised and experienced practitioners and academics involved in the analysis of human remains or ethical issues in relation to their study and display.

References:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906601/GuidanceHumanRemains11Oct.pdf

(<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/underwater-cultural-heritage/unesco-manual-for-activities-directed-at-underwater-cultural-heritage/unesco-manual/general-principles/human-remains-and-venerated-sites/>)

<http://umac.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/UMACJ10-Final.pdf>