

Re: Call for Evidence SFC/CE/01/2020

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), as the national development body for Scotland's museums and galleries, are responding to this call for evidence to highlight the valuable contribution made by university museums to higher education in Scotland.

The collections held by University Museums in Scotland stretch across 9 institutions, and include nearly 2 million items. Five of these institutions hold collections that have been Recognised by Scottish Government as holding intrinsic cultural value for the entire nation, and form part of the distributed national collection.¹ As such, these collections are an extraordinary repository of knowledge: in 2018/9, University Museums in Scotland received more than 4,500 research enquiries and visits.

The programming run by these museums plays a crucial role in connecting Scotland's universities to their communities, and the Museums at Scotland's Universities offer a public gateway to University spaces often considered otherwise private by local people. 350,000 members of the public visited university museums last year, with almost 30,000 participants in school visits, outreach activities, and public events.

The collections held within Scotland's University Museums are crucial to the active interpretation of our past, and hold the key to forging the relationships that Scotland will take forward in the future. Our University Museums include leaders in the field of decolonising our institutions, engaging with communities worldwide, and actively tackling the challenging issues that are at the very heart of the foundation of our educational establishments. Museum professionals employed by universities are at the cutting edge of museological research and debate, for example at Aberdeen and Glasgow Universities, museum staff are looked to as thought leaders within the field of decolonising practise, and their knowledge and experience in this increasingly important field offers Universities an opportunity to engage students, researchers, and the wider public in exploring these important social themes in a way that has a very real impact on communities worldwide.

Museums within Scotland's Universities also make a substantial economic impact. In total, University Museums in Scotland employ 80 (FTE) staff in museums-specialised role. The Museums at Scotland's Universities are also a considerable draw for students, especially international students, who come to study museums and galleries practise at undergraduate or postgraduate

¹ Scotland's Recognition Scheme celebrates, promotes and invests in Nationally Significant Collections beyond those held in our national museums and galleries. <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/accreditation-recognition/recognition-scheme/>



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level in cities across Scotland. Scotland's programmes in museums and heritage are recognised as world leading, with programmes offered at 7 of these 9 institutions. In 2018/9, Museum staff at Scottish Universities provided 2,500 hours of teaching and teaching support, involving nearly 9,500 students.

In the financial year 2019/20 MGS awards to University Museums in Scotland totalled just under £177K to support projects including such as renovations to the Macintosh interpretation centre and a project to address the need by contemporary museums to find new and inclusive ways to open the interpretation of contested collections to a wider diversity of voices by the University of Glasgow and to fit an environmental control system, new exhibition displays and AV equipment at the Museum of the University of St Andrews.

As MGS is unable to provide core funding to museums and galleries, our financial support enhances the strategic investment provided by the Scottish Funding Council.

The essential core funding support provided by the SFC to University Museums in Scotland enables these educational institutions to have a positive impact on an international and community level and we feel that there is great value in SFC continuing this core support.