

Call for Evidence: A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education (SFC/CE/01/2020)

This submission is made by University Museums in Scotland (UMIS) - a network of nine university museum services throughout Scotland. We are in receipt of strategic grant funding from the Scottish Funding Council and work collaboratively towards shared outcomes across our services.

This submission represents not only our collective views on areas incorporated in the scope of the Call for Evidence, but is also testament to our tangible support of learning and teaching, research, the anchoring of institutions in locations and communities, and the vital role of university museums to amplify and broaden the impact and influence of higher and further education institutions.

UMIS members provide essential and wide-ranging impacts not only to our host universities, but as a collective, to the whole higher education infrastructure:

- We hold diverse and immensely rich distributed national collections of more than 1.8 million items
- These comprise 32% of the country's materials on history of science, 31% of the nation's coins and medals, 24% of its fine art, 20% of natural science collections and 18% of its world culture collections
- Collections in five universities, including the entire holdings of the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow, have been Recognised as Nationally Significant under the Scottish Government's Recognition Scheme
- We employ 80 (fte) core funded staff, with more on fixed term or other contracts
- As a vital part of the research and teaching ecosystem in Scotland, in 2018/19 we:
 - Received over 4,500 research enquiries and visits
 - Provided 2,500 hours of teaching and teaching support involving over 8,500 students
- Our public and community programming plays an important role in engaging more broadly, and in 2018/19 we:
 - Welcomed almost 350,000 visitors to our museum displays
 - Had almost 30,000 participants in our school and outreach activities and public events

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this Call for Evidence and support an approach which addresses coherent and integrated provision and sustainability of the ecosystem of education in light of the fundamental challenges both Covid-19 and Brexit have posed the tertiary education sector. Fundamental to the Scottish Funding Council's approach is the holistic consideration of our higher and further education institutions' offerings.

The areas we feel are essential to ensure the ongoing coherent provision of higher and further education are:

- Collaboration as a means to achieving impact
- Learning and research using collections and museums
- Community engagement and 'place based' education
- Breadth of student experience

We are concerned that given the significant uncertainties faced by universities, the essential and broader contributions university museums make in supporting researchers based outwith our institutions and increasing collaboration and public engagement will be, at best, curtailed, and at

worst, cut entirely. This will negatively impact research, teaching and engagement across the universities in Scotland

We hope that our response will be helpful to you and we would be pleased to discuss our submission further. If you would like to do so, please contact Sarah Burry-Hayes via email or phone.

Kind regards

Sarah Burry-Hayes

Co-ordinator, University Museums in Scotland

1. Collaboration as a means to achieving impact

1.1 Collaboration is essential to the future success of tertiary education. The collaborative approach between our nine university museum members has led to **economies of scale and a broader reach and impact** of projects and programmes.

1.2 Knowledge exchange between our cultural institutions has ensured we have maintained a highly skilled workforce, cutting down on the need for external training and skills development, and enabling us to further develop our activities. Examples over the past two years include:

- Museums of the University of St Andrews working with staff from the University of Edinburgh Museums to formulate their own Social Prescription offering
- University of Stirling Art Collection hosted a workshop to share knowledge on 3D modelling, crowdsourcing and chatbots
- Sharing of policies, expertise and ideas around the restitution and repatriation of cultural heritage (Hunterian, University of Glasgow and the University of Aberdeen Collections)
- Overall UMIS sharing of risk assessments, policies and procedures and experiences around reopening following lockdown

1.3 The involvement of **multiple higher and further education partners** in our teaching and engagement activities has maximised the use of our distributed national collections enabling more students and academic colleagues to access this rich resource. In addition to the UMIS partners' extensive teaching partnerships, external higher/further education partnerships in 2018/19 included:

- Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow annual programme/Forth Valley College (Stirling University Art Collection)
- Hong Kong University (Hunterian, University of Glasgow)
- North East of Scotland College/SRUC Aberdeen (University of Aberdeen Collections)
- Napier University (University of Edinburgh Museums)
- The involvement of multiple academic and non-academic partners across two continents in the EULAC project (University of St Andrews Museums)

1.4 Broader collaboration with **industry partners external to the tertiary education sector**, locally, nationally and internationally, will also be fundamental for recovery. University museums regularly share knowledge more broadly within the cultural sector, strengthening cultural industry nationally and raising our profile globally. Partnerships and activities include:

- UMIS members' involvement in Museum Mentoring (partnering experienced professionals with smaller museums)
- Key policy and strategic development activities with the Museums Association and Museums Galleries Scotland (the National Development Body)
- Membership of Universeum (the European Academic Heritage Network), UMAC (ICOM International Committee for University Museums and Collections) and extensive work with the University Museums Group (representatives of the interests of university museums, galleries and collections in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) - regularly sharing knowledge and expertise
- Involvement in the Public Art Network and Scotland and Medicine groups, leading thinking with cultural organisations nationally in these specialist areas

2. Learning and research using collections and museums

2.1 University museums are recognised globally as **highly important and valued research assets**, and integral to the international research infrastructure, due to the collections and knowledge they hold. Five of our UMIS members' collections are Recognised of National Significance to Scotland under the Scottish Government Recognition Scheme. Our museum services recorded 4,703 research enquiries and visits in 2018/19.

2.2 Our **collections enrich the teaching experience** and contribute across Scotland's Higher and Further education institutions. This includes both using collections and expertise to teach within the museums' host universities, and as a teaching resource beyond our universities, contributing to the broader learning ecosystem. In 2018/19 UMIS members provided 2,540 hours of teaching and teaching support and recorded 9,465 students on courses involving museum collections and staff.

2.3 International research partnerships are core to the university museums' work. We have worked not only with international researchers globally, but also entered into key international research partnerships, including:

- Roemer-und-pelizaeus-Museum, Germany (University of Aberdeen Collections)
- Harvard Art Museums, Yale Centre for British Art, The Smithsonian, University of Goettingen (Hunterian, University of Glasgow)
- Max Planck Institute/University of Stockholm (Anatomy Museum, Edinburgh)

Digital learning and research

2.4 In light of the recent pandemic, the **use of digital channels** in both learning and research has been and will continue to be essential to the ongoing success of further and higher education. Moreover, digital academic engagement in all its forms will need to be optimised to ensure quality experiences for students, researchers and academic staff.

2.5 The use of our digitised and **digital collections in both teaching and research** is well established, with 681,775 collective visits to UMIS's online collections databases in 2018/19. Through the Covid-19 emergency, our museums have:

- Increased the volume of collections digitised
- Prioritised research to support our host institutions' core missions, providing scan and send services to maintain research engagement
- Specific funding through the Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund to develop an object-based storytelling tool to be made openly and freely available to all museums (University of St Andrews Museums)

2.6 Engaging international researchers digitally cuts down the need for international travel - reducing costs and supporting the environmental agenda. UMIS members have actively worked to engage researchers online through:

- Musical Instrument Museums Online partnership, bringing together international online musical instrument collections for the use of researchers (University of Edinburgh Museums, St Cecilia's Hall)

- Hunter Portal (access to Hunter-related material digitally)/ EMOTIVE initiative (using immersive technologies to engage audiences and involving a range of EU partners) (Hunterian, University of Glasgow)
- European Researchers Night (Museums of the University of St Andrews)

2.7 Going forwards, **new and more innovative ways to aid teaching** will be essential. UMIS collaboratively submitted to the AHRC's *Towards a National Collection Urgency Call* seeking to track and evaluate the capacity, capabilities and best practice in digital teaching with collections. Centred around users (students and teaching staff) the aim is to ensure a greater uptake in, and satisfaction with, online, remote and blended learning.

3. Community engagement and 'place based' education

3.1 Lockdown has highlighted the **importance of our local and regional communities**. Sharing university facilities, resources and services and working with local partners will aid recovery as whole communities. Moreover, the concept of 'civic universities' (those more deeply rooted in local infrastructure) aligns with the Scottish Government's *Place Principle*¹ – Scotland's shared context for place-based work.

3.2 University museums have long been the **conduit between our communities and host institutions**, breaking down perceived barriers to coming onto campus, engaging under-represented groups and running projects and programming with and for community groups and schools. In 2018/19, UMIS members recorded almost 30,000 participants in school services, outreach activities and special events. Other means by which our museums have involved the local community more generally are:

- Public exhibitions (total of 349,912 visitors to venues and museum displays in 2018/19)
- Involvement in broader events and festivals (Edinburgh International, Edinburgh Fringe, TechFest, Doors Open Day, Book Week Scotland, Being Human Festival, Kids In Museums Takeover Day and others)
- Public events (twilight tours of stores, lectures and talks, hands on activities for all ages, summer schools, Families programmes and niche events for interest groups)
- Improving the interpretation of and access to collections both physically and digitally
- Providing publicly accessible and user-friendly websites – UMIS members recorded 689,684 visits in 2018/19

3.3 It's essential for **school children to engage with higher and further education** during their school life in an inclusive manner. UMIS members run specific school programmes and projects to ensure learners in the region feel welcomed and are reassured of their right to progress to higher education. Examples include:

- Developing Spanish Language skills with young people from Madras College/Core Schools programme attracting 735 participants in 2018/19 (Museums of the University of St Andrews)

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Government%20and%20COSLA,combined%20energy%2C%20resources%20and%20investment.>

- Hosting the Forth Valley Art Teachers Network, providing CPD to teachers to work with collections/providing an annual portfolio weekend with local partners to S6 art students (University of Stirling Art Collection)
- Bilingual touring for school visits from Paris (Cockburn Geological Museum, University of Edinburgh)

3.4 Widening participation and access to universities needs to continue to ensure that we achieve the Scottish Government's National Outcomes for young people. UMIS members have been strengthening their relationships with the universities' Widening Access departments, working on the ACES and REACH agendas and with SHEP schools and supporting the aspirations of WP students. Recent examples include:

- Drumchapel High School - object handling/educational activities (Hunterian, University of Glasgow)
- Northfield Academy/Tillidrone Community Campus (University of Aberdeen Collections)
- Informal learning sessions for Widening Participation summer schools (University of St Andrews)

3.5 In order to underpin Scotland's recovery from Covid, **working with the full diversity of our communities and cultures**, particularly traditionally under-represented groups, will be key to establishing 'strong, resilient and supportive communities' (Scottish Government National Performance Framework²). In order to reinforce this inclusive, 'community-led culture' (National Culture Strategy³) approach, UMIS members have worked with various partners:

- Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Festival Scotland/Forth Valley Welcome (University of Stirling Art Collection)
- The Star Project (a befriending and family support project in Paisley) (Glasgow School of Art)
- *Internationalisation at Home* programme: specifically working with the Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Portuguese communities across activities (University of Edinburgh Museums)

3.6 Supporting the health and wellbeing of our wider communities is a particularly pertinent issue following the Covid crisis. Working across various groups and with key regional and national partners, university museums work to tackle health inequalities within our society. Recent examples include:

- *Museums Socials* for those living with dementia (University of Edinburgh Museums)
- Work with the ArtLink Central ArtSpace group (a group for adults with mental health issues) and work with prisoners and women under custodial orders (University of Stirling Art Collection)
- *Through the Glass Darkly* project involving research and programmes relating to dementia and memory impairment and the use of object handling (University of St Andrews Museums)

² <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/arts-culture-heritage/culture-strategy-for-scotland/>

- Community volunteering opportunities which carries well-documented mental and physical health benefits⁴

3.7 Digital engagement with communities, particularly during lockdown, offered university museums an opportunity to maintain, and even to extend, our universities' profile with the public. This included:

- Museums staff-led sessions for early years, wellbeing and school children
- Curators' chats and tours
- Sharing objects and collections via social media
- 'Learn at home' and wellbeing activities
- Involvement in broader digital campaigns
- UMIS's *Capturing Lives* project, involving 6 university museum services. Built for 11-18 year olds and aimed particularly at young people with Widening Participation backgrounds the six week programme resulted in 90 participants being put forward for an Arts Award Explore qualification⁵

4. Breadth of student experience

4.1 Post-Covid, giving students a sense of place and community will lead to increased retention. University museums are ideally placed to not only contribute to student studies and learning, but to offer a more pastoral environment in which students of all backgrounds can feel welcomed, included and involved.

4.2 Mental health and wellbeing of students may well be more prevalent or acute following the global pandemic crisis. UMIS members have spearheaded key initiatives to tackle isolation and provide an environment where students can be involved outwith their academic university life:

- The University of Edinburgh's *Prescribe Culture* pilot, run within the student community in 2018/19, provided guided sessions and self-led visits to a range of heritage and cultural venues across the city. The latter was inspired by findings from the *Calm and Collected* research from the Art Fund endorsing the idea of culture and heritage tackling low level mental health issues and supporting general wellbeing. Referrals were made from the student services team.
- The University of Stirling Art Collection's wellbeing activities have included a 'happy to chat' bench, in partnership with the university pastor, and a gardening club held specifically for students wanting to meet others outside their courses.
- The University of St Andrews Museums' involvement in the reframing of their student engagement programme around the *5 ways to wellbeing*⁶

4.3 University museums are also well placed to **increase the future employability of students** during their time at university through providing vocational opportunities. Through offering positions for Modern Apprentices, Student placements, Trainees, Volunteers, Fellowships, Internships and paid term-time employment, UMIS members enable students to gain a breadth of experience while still studying, preparing them for future employment. The

⁴ Example: <https://thirdforcenews.org.uk/blogs/volunteering-improves-health-and-wellbeing>

⁵ <https://sites.google.com/view/capturinglives2020/capturinglives2020>

⁶ <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

University of Stirling Art Collection, for example, hosts International Summer School placements for students wanting a career in museums.