



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Dnr UFV 2014/1374

Guidelines for the handling and conservation of human remains in the museums of Uppsala University

List of contents

Definitions_____	3
Age, management and conservation_____	3
Access for students and researchers _____	3
Exhibitions and educational activities _____	3
Research, documentation and sampling _____	4
Publication of images _____	4
Loan of material _____	4
Acquisition and deaccessioning _____	4
Repatriation and reburial _____	5
Responsibilities _____	5
Updating _____	5

Definitions

The term 'human remains' is understood to include everything that was once part of the body of a person of the species *Homo sapiens* (eg. bone, hair, teeth, soft body parts etc.). The state of preservation of the human material (eg. ash, mummified bodies or anatomical specimens preserved in spirit) is of no consequence for this definition. An exception is made for objects made from human material where the object was originally intended to be used as a tool, musical instrument, utilitarian object or religious object (including relics). Human remains in the care of Uppsala University's museums are primarily made available for research and education. The primary consideration is that all handling of human remains must be guided by respect for the integrity of the individual, ethical considerations, restrictiveness, and transparency/openness.

Age, management and conservation

Uppsala University's museums do not make any distinction between objects on the basis of their age, but aim to give equal treatment to all human remains irrespective of how old they are. All identified human remains must be clearly labelled in storage.

Access for students and researchers

The collections of Uppsala University should be regarded as a resource for students and researchers at the University and other scientific institutions. Students and researchers who are granted access to the collections must follow the regulations of the museums and show respect for human dignity. The general public gains access to the collections of the museums only through their exhibitions. Decisions about exceptional access are made by the director of the museum in question; there is no right of appeal.

Exhibitions and educational activities

One of the aims of keeping human remains at Uppsala University is that these can be used in educational contexts such as presenting research findings, illustrating human evolution or the place of humankind within the biological sciences, and illuminating both life in the past and past perspectives on dead bodies and "The Other", with focus on how concepts of the normative and the abnormal have been defined and expressed at different times and in different cultures. Human remains can also be shown in exhibitions in order to, for example, illustrate the values of the collections or various biological aspects. Exhibitions must be produced with due regard to ethical norms and in accordance with the guidelines for the museum profession set down by the International Council of Museums, ICOM. When human remains are exhibited, the context must always be made explicit, and explanatory texts must always accompany the specimens.

Research, documentation and sampling

Permission to carry out research on human remains may be granted upon application from a researcher who is attached to a research institution. The qualifications of the researcher, aims of the study, human material to be examined and, if applicable, amount required for sampling, should be clearly stated in the application, along with information about planned publication of the results. Uppsala University does not grant access to human remains that are the subject of ongoing repatriation proceedings.

If permission is given for examination and/or sampling of human remains, this work must be carried out in consultation with, and, if necessary, in the presence of, authorized museum staff. Destructive analysis is only permitted in exceptional cases. A report on the results must be submitted to Uppsala University within four years.

Publication of images

The museums of Uppsala University shall adopt a restrictive policy in relation to the publication of images of the human remains in their care, with the exception of photography for their own documentation of their collections. In order to obtain permission to publish photographs of human remains in scientific contexts or show them in public exhibitions, an application must first be submitted to the University for approval. Photographs must not be manipulated or used in unethical contexts, nor may they be modified without permission or used commercially. Uppsala University's own photographs should be used in the first instance.

Loan of material

The museums of Uppsala University shall adopt a very restrictive policy in relation to loans of human remains. A special application is required. Scientific investigation should, if at all possible, be carried out on the premises where the collection is housed. If human remains are given out on temporary loan, for example to an exhibition or for research, the aim of the activity and the precise use of the material must be clearly documented. A receiving institution must be identified, and this institution is required to provide a secure place for the material to be analysed and stored. The material must be handled in an ethically acceptable manner, including during transport. The receiving institution is responsible for the safe return of the loaned material.

Acquisition and deaccessioning

The museums of Uppsala University shall adopt a very restrictive policy in relation to new acquisitions and deaccessioning of human remains. Only remains with full rights of disposal will be considered for acquisition; no restrictions or exceptions will be accepted. Each new acquisition must be motivated in writing and full documentation must accompany the remains. Deaccessioning will not normally be considered (for exceptions see below).

Repatriation and reburial

All decisions regarding repatriation and reburial will be taken by the Vice-Chancellor following due consultation. Each case is considered individually; before any decision is taken the scientific, ethical and cultural aspects must be taken into consideration, and the legitimate claims of the recipient must be examined. Uppsala University is not able to work actively for repatriation, but if a request for repatriation is received the responsible museum shall initiate an investigation of the case. Final decisions about repatriation are taken by Government following application by Uppsala University.

The position of Uppsala University is that reburial should be avoided if possible. Repatriated material should instead be stored in such a manner as to remain accessible to future research, for example by deposition in an ossuary or other appropriate facility, unless there are strong arguments against this. The conditions of storage should ensure that the human remains do not become mixed or destroyed, for example by damp or mould.

In cases where a decision is taken to rebury material, the remains should first be subjected to thorough scientific documentation. The documentation shall be housed in the collections of Museum Gustavianum or the Museum of Evolution as appropriate, and may be used for scientific purposes.

Responsibilities

Each case will be handled by the museum that houses the object(s) in question. The museum directors have ultimate responsibility for the collections of their museums.

Updating

This document will be revised and updated at intervals of no more than five years, or when the need arises.