



Royal College
of Surgeons
of England

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums Research Policy

Collections: The Museums of The Royal College of Surgeons of England, including the Hunterian Collection; the College Museum; the Anatomy Collection; Pathology Collection; the Odontological Collection; the Historical Instrument Collection; the Microscope Slide Collection; the Special Collections and associated reserve collections.

Governing body: The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England/
The Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection

Date approved by Trustees of the Hunterian Collection: 9 October 2024

Date approved by Library, Museums and Archive Committee: 19 September 2024

Date approved by College Council: 5 December 2024

Date for review: September 2029

1. Museums Statement of Purpose

1.1. The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England) holds collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance. Some Designated and Accredited by Arts Council England. The collections are held in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. Its aim is to care for and use these collections to:

1.1.1. Enhance RCS England's reputation by raising awareness of surgeons and their work in society.

1.1.2. Aid the professional work of RCS England by providing training resources.

1.1.3. Facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research.

1.1.4. Support public engagement with, and understanding of, surgery, its history and practice and related arts and sciences.

2. Scope of Policy

2.1 Research enhances information about the collections and thereby increases their value in: supporting their use in public and professional engagement; developing academic knowledge and informing future collections care.

2.2 The purpose of this policy is to encourage and foster excellent research into the Museums' collections and practice, and to lay out procedures to ensure research is undertaken in a sustainable way.

2.3 This policy does not cover: the use of the Museums' collections for teaching; research activity relating to Library, Archives and Surgical Information Services material or surgical/clinical research or fellowships undertaken by or for other areas of RCS England.

2.4 Research may be based on the Museums' collections, texts, or practices. The Museums actively encourage research from and between a wide range of disciplines, including:

2.4.1 Biomedical (especially anatomical, pathological and dental, and work that benefits patients).

2.4.2 Healthcare practice.

2.4.3 Biology (especially zoological and taxonomical).

2.4.4 History (especially medical history and genealogy).

2.4.5 Museology (including conservation, education and audience evaluation).

2.4.6 Medical Humanities and Art History.

3. Access

- 3.1. Research may be carried out by RCS England staff, external users, or both: research partnerships and collaboration are actively encouraged.
- 3.2. External users should be bona fide researchers, broadly defined. This includes Fellows and Members of RCS England; staff and students from higher education and other research institutes; and independent scholars with specific research questions.
- 3.3. The Museums are committed to providing an excellent service for remote users, and potential researchers are encouraged to use the free online resources before making an approach (especially <http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk>). All research enquires are acknowledged on receipt with information about committed response time. All Museums collections research enquires will be responded to within a maximum of six weeks, unless otherwise advertised. Detailed feedback will depend on staff resources.
- 3.4. Some artworks from the collections are displayed in the Hunterian Museum and around the RCS England building. Artwork displayed in the Hunterian Museum and ground floor of the building can be studied in situ during opening hours. Artwork displayed elsewhere in the RCS England building may be viewed upon request. Access to artworks stored offsite is subject to additional access restrictions and will have associated costs to be borne by the researcher. Artwork will not be taken down nor removed from frames.
- 3.5. Physical access to the Museums collections will be dependent on resources available: space and staff time.
- 3.6. Access should be requested using the appropriate request form available online and following *RCS England Museums Research Access Guidance*.
- 3.7. Users should apply for access to material in good time, usually a minimum of eight weeks, collections stored off site will take longer (although see 2.9 and 2.11 below for extra notice required for invasive and prolonged work).
- 3.8. The benefits of access should be balanced with the long-term integrity and rarity of the collections, which must be safeguarded for future users. All requested material will be assessed for conservation needs, and RCS England reserves the right to refuse access to material that is unprocessed, fragile or otherwise unstable.
- 3.9. All users requiring physical access to Museums material must sign and abide by stated handling procedures; those applying to access stored collections must complete a method statement and risk assessment before commencing physical collections research. Researchers accessing collections at offsite stores may be required to sign an agreement stating that they will abide by the terms of use of the external institution.
- 3.10. Invasive research will require the permission of the Library Museums and Archives Committee (LMAC), and in the case of the Hunterian Collection, the Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection. The invasive research request form should be completed (see *RCS England Museums Invasive Request Research Procedure*). This will be submitted to LMAC (and where appropriate the Hunterian Board) via the Director of Museums and Special Collections. The request includes research objectives, evidence that there is no alternative source for the data, size of

sample(s), method statement, impact upon the material, resource implications and planned outputs. Invasive procedures will be undertaken or supervised by Museums staff. This process may take up to six months. All associated costs will be borne by the researcher.

- 3.11. Loans of Museums material for research purposes may be considered, where resources and the integrity/rarity of the material permit. Applications should be made to the Director of Museums and Special Collections in the first instance. All costs will be borne by the borrower. See also *RCS England Museums Loans policy*.
- 3.12. Major research projects will require the permission of LMAC (and where appropriate the Hunterian Board). Completion of relevant research request forms, together with a précis of the research project, including timescale, resource implications, planned outputs, and contributors should be submitted to LMAC (and where appropriate the Hunterian Board) via the Director of Museums and Special Collections. RCS England Museums staff will be credited as members of the research team. This process may take up to six months.
- 3.13. Any ethical issues will be addressed by LMAC before the research commences. In particular material and information will be supplied in compliance with data protection and freedom of information legislation and regulations. (See also 4.3 below on human remains).

4. Resources and photography

- 4.1. While fostering research excellence, RCS England Museums will seek to ensure that such activity is cost neutral and will charge for space and staff time accordingly. As far as possible RCS England Fellows, Members and Affiliates will not be charged.
- 4.2. RCS England Museums offers various items of equipment for use by researchers including microscopes, measuring instruments and protective equipment. Charges will apply, and users are liable for loss or damage.
- 4.3. Laptops can be brought into the Museums; public Wi-Fi is available but should not be relied upon. Electronic equipment that requires mains connection must be checked and approved in advance of use. It is therefore recommended that only essential external electronic equipment is used, RCS England will not be liable for loss or damage to external users' possessions. Public lockers are available for personal possessions.
- 4.4. Users may apply to undertake photography, filming or other imaging (e.g. CT scans) of stored collections for research and education. Copyright of such images would be assigned to RCS England which would in turn assign reproduction permission to the researcher. A further application must be made to reproduce images for publication, broadcast, or other purposes. As far as possible photographic images of Museum Collections will be supplied (charges will apply). In the case of Hunterian Collection material, permission must be obtained for photography or filming from the Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection, via the Director of Museums and Special Collections.

5. Human remains

- 5.1. Research on human remains less than 100 years old must be undertaken in accordance with the Human Tissue Act (2004) and Human Tissue Authority guidance.
- 5.2. Legislation and Guidance on the use of human remains will be followed (see also *RCS England Museums Human Remains Policy*).
- 5.3. External users will only be granted permission to undertake human remains research once ethical clearance from their own institution is demonstrated.

6. Outputs

- 6.1. RCS England actively encourage dissemination of research on the Museums' collections through presentations, exhibitions and publications.
- 6.2. All research on the Museums' collections will be recorded in RCS England's Museums collections management system and information retained in perpetuity. RCS England will keep the researcher's details in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018).
- 6.3. RCS England Museums will require copies of data gleaned from research on its collections or practice to be made available to future researchers, this will be included in the collection management system and where appropriate made available in the online catalogue.
- 6.4. RCS England Museums will require a copy (virtual or physical) of all publications resulting in part or entirely from research on its collections or practice.
- 6.5. All outputs are subject to compliance with all intellectual property rights resting in the material used. Where these lie with RCS England, researchers will be advised as to any associated restrictions and obligations.
- 6.6. "The Royal College of Surgeons of England" (and/or if appropriate the "Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection") should be acknowledged in all outputs.
- 6.7. In providing permission to reproduce material obtained from the Museums' collections, RCS England does not assume any responsibility for infringement of copyright in the material which may be held by others, and the publisher assumes all responsibility for any claims made under copyright legislation.
- 6.8. The Museums will not support research that is deemed in its process or outputs to risk RCS England's reputation.