

# Research Framework

## 1 INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

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The Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal Museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner of the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) group. The Museum is fully Accredited; its collections, comprising more than half a million works of art and cultural artefacts from five millennia, are acknowledged by the Designation Scheme as being ‘pre-eminent [and]...of national and international importance.’

Within the University and wider academic community, the Fitzwilliam Museum contributes significantly to teaching, research and public engagement. The breadth and quality of the collections coupled with the expertise of the staff provide a unique and distinctive environment for research, creating opportunities for innovative forms of inquiry and multi-disciplinary research, debate and discussion that would not be possible in the absence of collections.

Through embedded programmes for postgraduate students, post-doctoral researchers and interns, the Museum is actively involved in training the next generation of collections-focused researchers and practitioners, while exhibitions and public programmes provide a means of engaging the wider public with this research.

## 2 RESEARCH

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Research is a core activity that underpins exhibitions, teaching and public engagement and currently falls into **three** broad categories:

- i. Research on all aspects of the collections.
- ii. Research in areas related to, but not restricted to the collection, driven by research interests of staff - e.g. monetary history, Archaeology of Ancient Cyprus and the Aegean, medieval and Renaissance sculpture, the history of collecting etc.
- iii. Conservation and Heritage Science, key examples of which include the technical investigation of manuscripts (MINIARE), Ancient Egyptian coffins and *in situ* investigation of East Anglian medieval rood screens.

Principal outcomes include:

- a. Publications: catalogues, monographs, edited volumes, conference papers, articles
- b. Displays, exhibitions and other interpretive material, including digital resources
- c. Teaching, both in the University, nationally and internationally
- d. Early-career training and professional development
- e. Public engagement: programmes and activities for schools, adult learners and families

### 3 STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES (2016-2021)

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The Museum's priorities over the next 3-5 years will focus on **three** key areas:

1. **Build research capacity:**

- i. To secure research funding, prioritising funding applications which bring in overheads. In view of lack of capacity, to work strategically – e.g. in partnership with other University Departments or external institutions – in order to maximize: the chances of funding success; the quality of research outputs; and potential for impact.
- ii. To focus on securing grants to research and make accessible parts of the collections about which little is known, but where there is established expertise, either within the Museum or a University Department. To aim to optimize research quality and maximize impact by ensuring research outcomes inform, teaching, stimulate new research and enhance public engagement/access – e.g. through the creation of teaching collections, new displays and digital resources.
- iii. To explore potential for joint posts with Departments, which will embed object- or collections-led, interdisciplinary research, teaching and learning across the University.
- iv. To explore potential for building backfilled research-leave to allow staff to write up or undertake new research for extended periods.

2. **Strengthen collaborative links** within the University, nationally and internationally, prioritizing existing areas of excellence or emerging excellence, such as:

- i. **Interdisciplinary research** on parts of the collection (and related material) that offer the greatest potential for generating high quality research and impact through exhibitions, education, and other forms of public engagement. Specific projects include:
  - Ancient Cyprus and the Aegean
  - Works of Degas
  - Medieval polychrome wood sculpture and rood screens
  - MINIARE; Cambridge Illuminations
- ii. Heritage science and Collections Care – e.g. developing protocols for non-invasive analysis of flat art and 3-D objects; Museums and the environment; Digital Humanities.

3. **Explore opportunities to diversify**, build capacity, generate new income and extend impact.

Key Areas include:

- i. Doctoral training
- ii. Early career training (particularly in conservation, curatorial research and collections care)
- iii. Training and networks for established, mid-career professionals
- iv. Visiting scholars programme to research and publish parts of the collection where there is currently no in-house expertise