

# Ethics Policy and Code of Conduct for Staff

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 **Objective:** The objectives of this document are to provide a clear and concise set of statements of ethical policy, and to set the standards of conduct which the Museum expects from its staff and others, namely:
- All Museum staff including those working within The British Museum Development Trust, The British Museum Company Limited, The British Museum Great Court Limited and the British Museum Friends;
  - The Board of Trustees; and
  - Volunteers working in the Museum.
- 1.2 This document should be made available to the Museum's stakeholders and public in order that they may be informed of the ethical standards it sets for itself.
- 1.3 **Background:** This document is informed by the *Seven Principles of Public Life* enunciated by the Nolan Committee in March 1996 (see attachment) which bind the Trustees and all staff within the Museum. It also takes account of the Cabinet Office *Model Code of Conduct for staff of executive non-departmental public bodies* and the Museum Association's *Code of Ethics*, *Code of Conduct for People who work in Museums* and *Code of Practice for Museum Governing Bodies*, as well as the *Code of Professional Ethics* issued by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). In the event of conflict this document shall govern.
- 1.4 This Policy informs and is supplemented by the Museum's Procedures on Fraud and 'Whistle Blowing'.

## 2. Ethical Principles

- 2.1 Maintaining the trust and confidence of all those with whom the British Museum and its subsidiaries come into contact is critical to the Museum's success. That trust and confidence depends on the Museum's reputation for acting ethically, with integrity and to the highest professional standards. Therefore the Museum, its Trustees and its members of staff shall strive at all times to avoid acting in such a way as would, accidentally or otherwise, bring the Museum into disrepute.
- 2.2 In all actions, activities and relationships the Museum its subsidiaries, its Board of Trustees and the members of its staff will act with the highest standards of integrity and objectivity. Specifically they will:
- a discharge the public functions of the Museum reasonably and according to the law, respect then current international law and treaties, then current laws and regulations of any country in which the Museum is operating and the provisions of any trust or legal condition relating to the collections or operation of the Museum;
  - b recognise the ethical standards governing particular professions;
  - c act with honesty and integrity, and never knowingly mislead any person;
  - d give due recognition to those who have contributed to Museum undertakings;

- e be impartial, ensuring that they declare and make known personal interests and do not give or receive any inducement which could, or could be seen, to be corrupt or conflict with the interests of the Museum;
- f hold the collections, assets and information of the Museum in public trust and use them efficiently and effectively and only in the furtherance of the interests of the Museum; and
- g be objective in presenting the collections to illuminate the culture and communities from which they come.

2.3 Although these ethical principles govern all actions by or on behalf of the Museum, the Code of Conduct for Staff sets out the detailed rules for the application of these principles in specific circumstances.

### 3. **Code of Conduct for Staff**

3.1 The Museum does not proscribe limits to or interfere in the way staff chose to enjoy their private time. However staff must be aware that, in the eyes of the public, any Museum-related activity in which they are involved cannot be wholly divorced from their association with the Museum, and therefore may reflect on the Museum or be attributed to it. In any situation in which they are or may appear to others to be acting on behalf of the Museum, staff shall take care to ensure not only that personal motivations and interests do not conflict with those of the Museum, but also that they do not appear to do so to the perception of an outside observer. Staff, and others in a close relationship with them, shall therefore uphold the Museum's Ethical Principles in all situations where they might reasonably be regarded as representing the Museum. *[Informative: These principles should be applied even after staff have left the employment of the Museum for so long as their names and reputation may in the public perception reasonably be associated with the good name and reputation of the Museum].*

3.2 In carrying out their duties staff are required to adhere to the following rules at all times:

3.2.1 Staff shall consult the Secretary (or the Director of Human Resources in the case of employment issues) if they are in any doubt as to the legality or propriety of any course of action. Staff who travel abroad (for fieldwork or otherwise) or who export materials shall ensure that they understand and respect any relevant local laws and obligations which govern their activities.

3.2.2 Staff shall not arrange or procure the acquisition by the Museum of objects in contravention of the Museum's Acquisitions Policy, nor shall they arrange or procure the display of loaned objects where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the objects would not have been acquired by the Museum had they been freely offered to it. Where staff have reason to believe or suspect that an object has been illegally or illicitly acquired, transferred, imported or exported they shall immediately inform their Keeper or Director who will arrange for the Museum to inform the appropriate authorities. Except when co-operating with those authorities, staff shall not give any identification or authentication of that object to a third party.

3.2.3 Staff shall ensure that any information provided to donors or foreign governments is, to the best of their knowledge, accurate and relevant. Requests for information from the public shall be answered courteously and promptly within the constraints of time and resources available.

- 3.2.4 Staff are encouraged to share their professional knowledge and expertise with both professional colleagues and the general public. However:
- a written certificates of authenticity or valuation (appraisals) shall not be given;
  - b opinions on the monetary value of objects may only be given to, and on official request from, other museums, the Inland Revenue or other competent government departments and recognised public bodies or charities;
- 3.2.5 In any situation in which they are or may appear to others to be acting on behalf of the Museum, the relationships and communications between staff and third parties shall always be courteous, both in public and in private. Differences of opinion shall not be expressed in a personalised fashion and no member of staff shall engage in any correspondence with any third party in any official format which is or may be associated with the Museum unless directly related to the Museum's purposes and objectives.
- 3.2.6 The processes for the selection of suppliers and contractors shall be competitive, fair, objective and open so that potential suppliers can be confident that their bids will be held confidential and the business will be awarded solely on the grounds of merit.
- 3.2.7 Staff shall not undertake other paid or unpaid employment outside the Museum or accept outside appointments which compromise the proper discharge of their duties and responsibilities to the Museum.
- 3.2.8 Notwithstanding paragraph 3.2.7, any member of staff who by virtue of his or her employment at the Museum or Museum employment-related knowledge, experience or contacts receives a request to:
- (i) participate in an external body;
  - (ii) provide an advisory or consultancy service,
  - (iii) teach, write or broadcast; or
  - (iv) value or authenticate any object in a personal capacity
- shall not accept any such request without first obtaining the consent of the Museum which shall normally be granted where the activity enhances the reputation of the Museum and does not and would not appear to a reasonable disinterested third party to create a conflict of interest.
- 3.2.9 Staff shall not participate in dealing (buying or acquiring with the intent of selling their own or another organisation's for profit) in objects similar or related to the objects collected by the Museum.

- 3.2.10 Staff may buy objects with the intent of long term personal ownership, but must always put the interests of the Museum before their own. If the object they wish to acquire is one that in their professional judgement might properly form part of the Museum's collection (whether of their own department or another department), they should first offer it for acquisition to that department, or, if this is impossible at the time of purchase, offer it at the price they paid at the first available opportunity. Similarly, staff wishing to dispose of any object in their possession that in their professional view might properly form part of the Museum's collection (whether of their own department or another department), should first offer it for purchase by that department at a price to be determined by an independent third party. Staff intending to buy objects or build collections for future gift or bequest to the Museum should put their intention in writing to the Director and gain written approval.
- 3.2.11 Staff owe their primary professional and academic allegiance to the Museum. The intellectual property in all information which is not in the public domain, and which is connected with work within the Museum, is acquired on official duties or relates to the subjects covered by the work of the Museum, belongs in law to the Museum and should primarily be applied in furtherance of its interests. If staff wish to use the Museum's intellectual property for purposes which are not primarily in the furtherance of the Museum's interest then they must first obtain written permission from the Museum to do so.
- 3.2.12 Staff owe a duty of confidentiality to the Museum, and shall protect from disclosure to third parties information which is designated as confidential. Staff must also protect confidential information relating to the source of material owned by or loaned to the Museum, as well as information concerning the security arrangements of the Museum, or the security arrangement of private collections or any place visited in the course of official duties. The disclosure of information which is confidential to the Museum must be authorised and given only in compliance with the Museum's Policy and Procedure on Access to Information
- 3.2.13 When negotiating to raise funds staff shall exercise the utmost care not to enter into any obligation with donors which would be seen to be partial to the interests of the donor but in conflict with any Museum policy, priority or objective or otherwise affect adversely the wider interests of the Museum. In return for sponsorship or donations in kind staff shall never undertake to award contracts to donors or any entity in which any donor has a significant interest.

#### **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 Staff shall at all times be familiar with, understand and act in accordance with this Ethic Policy and Code of Conduct and all the approved policies and procedures of the Museum. Particular attention is drawn to the Procedures on Fraud and "Whistle Blowing". It is the responsibility of staff to inform management if they feel that they are under pressure to act illegally, unethically or improperly whether contrary to the Ethics Policy, the Procedure on Fraud or otherwise. If they do not feel they can discuss the matter with their management they shall raise the matter with the Secretary or Head of Assurance whether under the "Whistle Blowing" procedure or informally.
- 4.2 Directors, Keepers and Heads of Departments shall ensure that the Ethics Policy and Code of Conduct are communicated to and implemented by all members of their staff. The implications of each shall be openly discussed.

- 4.3 Directors and Keepers shall determine whether to approve the activities of their staff where the Ethics Policy and Code of Conduct so require. They in turn must seek the approval of the Managing Director or the Director as appropriate for their own proposed activities.
- 4.4 The Secretary or Head of Assurance shall provide advice on the resolution of issues arising and adjudicating whether the action taken is appropriate. Directors and Keepers are required to consult the Secretary or Head of Assurance whenever a potential conflict of interest arises.
- 4.5 The Accounting Officer shall provide overall assurance to the Trustees and the DCMS that the Ethics Policy is understood, being implemented and that the assets under the Museum's control are being used with regularity and probity.

## **5. Assurance**

- 5.1 Each year Keepers and Heads of Departments shall confirm formally to the Accounting Officer that they have made their staff and (insofar as may be relevant) any volunteers working within their departments aware of the Ethics Policy and Code of Conduct and report any issues arising which come to their attention.
- 5.2 Any breaches of this policy (including any disciplinary action taken) shall be reported to the Accounting Officer.
- 5.3 If any member of staff has reported a matter pursuant to paragraph 4.1 and believes that the response does not represent a reasonable response to the grounds of his or her concern he or she may report the matter in accordance with the "Whistle Blowing" procedure for further investigation or action.

## Ethics Policy: Attachment

### Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life

<b>Selflessness:</b>	<i>Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.</i>
<b>Integrity:</b>	<i>Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.</i>
<b>Objectivity:</b>	<i>In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.</i>
<b>Accountability:</b>	<i>Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.</i>
<b>Openness:</b>	<i>Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.</i>
<b>Honesty:</b>	<i>Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.</i>
<b>Leadership:</b>	<i>Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.</i>