

Scottish Government

International Culture Strategy Consultation

Response from University Museums in Scotland (UMIS)

1. What current international activity do you undertake?

University museums in Scotland consider international partnerships, dialogue, and knowledge exchange as central to the success and relevance of their operations. Scotland's Higher Education sector is highly regarded world-wide and university museums regularly share knowledge more broadly within the international cultural sector, strengthening the cultural industry nationally, and raising their profile globally.

Academic heritage partnerships

Beyond the extensive academic partnerships between Higher Education institutions, well documented in university reporting to the Scottish Government through the Scottish Funding Council, Scotland's university museums work collegiately with international academic cultural institutions on an ongoing basis. Through involvement in both Universeum (the European university museum network) and ICOM-UMAC (the international committee for university museums and collections), Scotland's university museums retain a high profile with colleagues globally and are held in high regard due to UMIS's collaborative approach and its Scottish sector insight.

Representatives from UMIS hold positions as the Vice President of Universeum, Member of the Executive Board of ICOM (the International Council of Museums), and Vice-Chair of ICOM-UMAC, as well as sitting on the ICOM Ethics Committee. In July 2022, representatives of the University of Aberdeen and The Hunterian (University of Glasgow), and the UMIS Coordinator, delivered sessions and workshops as part of the Universeum conference held in Belgium, and The Hunterian presented at the ICOM-UMAC conference in Prague.

University partnerships

Our host universities are involved in European and International networks including CIVIS, Universitas21 (U21), Coimbra, LERU, UNICA, Eurolife, U7+ Alliance, UArctic, Guild, and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, to name a few. The range and global reach of these networks are testament to the integral nature of Higher Education's international mission.

Knowledge exchange and support

As previously mentioned, the sharing of knowledge and expertise internationally is another key driver to the success and relevance of cultural organisations globally.

The new Forum Wissen museum at the Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany, which was opened last year, counts two UMIS representatives on their external Scientific Advisory

Board – Steph Scholten, Director of **The Hunterian**, and Jeremy Upton, Director of Library and University Collections at **University of Edinburgh**.

This year, **The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections** received funding from Research England, managed through Universities UK's 'UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative', to provide training and mentorship to archive staff at Lviv Academy of Arts to digitise their archives and collections that are under significant risk from the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. The project is intended to build research capacity and innovation and is centred around promoting sustainable cultural heritage research.

International loans

As the Museums Association puts it, 'Museums lend their collections in order to increase the public benefit that can be derived from them, to promote access, to increase knowledge and understanding and to support other museums. They balance their role in safeguarding items for future generations with their obligation to optimise access for and engagement with present day audiences.' (Smarter Loans. Museums Association, 2012) As well as lending extensively to Scottish and UK heritage organisations, international loans allow global audiences to encounter and engage with UMIS' (and Scotland's) collections. In 2021/22, international collections loans included:

University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections - material for exhibitions in the Roemer- und-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim; Denver Museum of Nature and Science; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; Museum August Kestner, Hannover; Musée de la Civilisation, Quebec City; National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo; The Museum of Kyoto; and ATC Gallery, Osaka.

The Hunterian – notable loans to Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona; National Gallery of Art; Washington Royal Academy of Arts; Tate; and the Petit Palais.

The Glasgow School of Art Archives & Collections - items to Baltimore, Nashville, Albuquerque, and Florida (as part of Glasgow Museum's US tour of 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style') and new loans to the Museum of Modern Art in Collioure, France and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

University of Stirling Art Collection – loan to the 'John Craxton: A Greek Soul' exhibition which toured to the Benaki Museum in Athens; Chania Municipal Art Gallery on Crete; and the Meshar, Istanbul.

Decolonisation, Repatriation, and Restitution

Repatriation by museums in Scotland is now recognised as an important element of the re-evaluation of Scotland's histories, as well as one of the most important ways that museums can properly respond to the wishes of people whose ancestors and belongings have been in their care.

Scotland's university museums have been a pivotal part of establishing policies and procedures for repatriation – both within Scotland and internationally – and continue to actively work on decolonising their collections and practices as well as working with First Nation and source communities on repatriation.

The **University of Aberdeen Museums'** return of a 'Benin Bronze' in October 2021 was the first recorded return by a museum and followed contact having been made by the University

with representatives of the Nigerian Federal Government, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, the Edo State Government, and the Court of the Oba of Benin. The University museums importantly took a proactive approach, with representatives of the University of Aberdeen initiating and facilitating the negotiations for the repatriation with the Nigerian stakeholders. This developed a pathway which was also used by Jesus College at the University of Cambridge, which returned a bronze cockerel the same week. The concept of proactive repatriation, following extensive provenance research and contact with source communities, is now seen as best practice, and the 'procedures' rather than 'policy' approach (in treating each case of repatriation as unique) of the University of Aberdeen has been adopted internationally.

Through strong national and international networks, such as UMIS, the European academic heritage network Universeum, and ICOM-UMAC, university museums globally have together been able to develop a Guidance for Restitution and Return of Items from University Museums and Collections. This guidance: '[...] elaborates upon the principles expressed in the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums concerning the return and restitution of items from museum collections and in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It specifically focusses on the return and restitution of items from universities and their museums and collections.'

(<https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/>) The project was chaired by Steph Scholten (Director, **The Hunterian** University of Glasgow) and proposed a set of criteria to be used when considering a repatriation.

Representatives from both the **University of Aberdeen Museums** and **The Hunterian**, University of Glasgow, were part of the independent steering group for the Scottish Government sponsored Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums project. The Chair, Sir Geoff Palmer OBE, is a Professor Emeritus in the School of Life Sciences at Heriot-Watt University, whose museum service is also part of the UMIS partnership.

Although, to date, the Scottish Government has not formally responded to the final recommendations included in the final report of this group (outlining how Scotland's involvement in empire, colonialism, and historic slavery can be addressed using museum collections and museum spaces), university museums and others within the museums sector are committed to actioning the recommendations as far as possible.

It is also worth noting here that often this work takes a long time from inception to eventual repatriation – it is incredibly important given the sensitivity of the events and historical injustices involved that the provenance of each item is researched fully, that relationships with the source community (or in some cases potential multiple source communities) is established and developed, and that all considerations are taken prior to repatriation. In addition, the legalities and processes around repatriation can be complex depending on political, social, and legal structures within the source countries. Multiple members of UMIS are in discussion with multiple source communities to work towards the repatriation of items from their collections and are in addition working on establishing provenance information for other objects for the purposes of establishing their status and origins, but it would be inappropriate to name either the objects involved or the source communities while discussions and research are ongoing.

(Information for elements of this section is taken from the recently published 'Curtis, N.G.W and Scholten, S.S, 2023. 'Repatriation from Scottish Museums: A Short Report', Santander Art and Culture Law Review 2/2022 (8): 427-442. DOI:10.4467/2450050XSNR.22.027.17040)

Research

Scotland's research base has a global reputation for research excellence which is strengthened by their extensive collaborations worldwide (Scottish Government, Science and Research Policy, 2022). The research collaborations between Scotland's university museums and their international colleagues are hugely valued, offering not only the opportunity to access additional expertise, develop joint approaches, and accelerate research projects, but also to gain new, broader perspectives and foster lasting relationships. Recently UMIS members have carried out collaborative international research with:

University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections works collaboratively with the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, Hildesheim and the Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst, Hildesheim, on the research, conservation, and exhibition of the university's ancient Egyptian collections.

University of Edinburgh Collections has worked collaboratively with the National Cheng Kung University, Minneapolis College art & design, Institute for Anatomy, Jena, Germany, University College Cork, Queen's University Belfast, University of Melbourne, Black Hills State University, University of Chicago Medicine, and with international partnerships including the Una Europa Museums group, Musical Instrument Museums Online, and the Musical Instrument Resource Network. They are also co-chair of the Heritage Working Group for the Coimbra Group, one of the groups set up by the Coimbra Group network of 38 European Research Universities. The work of the Group is focussed on sharing best practice and sharing information on collections to promote collaboration, and joint funding bids.

The Hunterian worked in partnership with the Georg-August University of Göttingen, Germany, to develop a postgraduate Summer School programme combining academic and curatorial expertise to promote interdisciplinary museum practice. In addition, they are partners in the EU funded Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Programme 'MAGMa' (Managing Art and Cultural Heritage in Global Markets) which will run for five years from 2023.

With the Empire, Slavery & Scotland's Museums report in mind, a consortium of the **University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections and The Hunterian, with National Museums Scotland and Glasgow Life** are working on the 'Reveal and Connect' project. Funded by Museums Galleries Scotland, the project works with international partners and will publish a national review of African and Caribbean collections in Scotland, developing guidance and training materials to support museums and communities to gain the knowledge and confidence to understand, care for and make best use of these collections. It is a reasonable expectation of the consortium that the information this project will form the basis for many types of engagement, including activities inspired by the Empire, Slavery & Scotland's Museums report and further repatriation from museums across Scotland. <https://bit.ly/RevealConnectUMIS> The University of Aberdeen Museums' current exhibition is entitled 'Legacies of Slavery: Transatlantic Slavery and Aberdeen', and forms part of this work.

A UMIS partnership, led by the **Museums of the University of St Andrews** and involving **The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections, The Hunterian and the University of Aberdeen Museums and Special Collections** secured funding through the AHRC Covid-19 Urgency Scheme for the 'Online Teaching and Learning with Digitised Collections in a Higher Education Context' research project. The project aimed to track and evaluate the capacity, capabilities, and best practice in digital teaching with collections, with the ultimate aim of developing models to ensure greater uptake in, and satisfaction with, online teaching. The research involved input from an international cohort of university-based academic and collections staff, and the final report is due to be published later this year.

Teaching

Internationally, UMIS members have provided teaching to a number of institutions. Examples include:

- **The Hunterian** – students from University of Wyoming, USA; Bard Graduate School, NYC; University of Amsterdam; and University of Tübingen.
- **University of Edinburgh Collections** - students from Northumbria University; Illinois State University, USA; and musical instrument courses in Cremona, Italy.

2. What impact does cultural activity have on your business/organisation?

As university museums, cultural activity is the centre of the UMIS members' missions. However, the impact of our members' activities on their host institutions cannot be overstated. Over and above our international reach and impact, some of the many ways university museums meet the strategic aims of their universities, and the aims the Scottish Government has for tertiary education, are:

Widening access and participation

Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Opening up collections and providing outreach and engagement activities to broader communities is core to the mission of all museums – enabling university museums to often be the first experience many have with higher education, breaking down perceived barriers to coming onto campus. This, in turn, supports universities' 'third mission', and underpins the purpose and aims of the 'civic university'. University museums are increasingly becoming involved in issues of social justice and are running projects and programming to connect to the diversity of communities to become as inclusive and representative as possible, supporting the ethos of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In 2021/22 UMIS members welcomed 222,287 visits to exhibitions and displays, 18,000 participants in physical school services, outreach activities, and special events, and 3,200 participants in digital school services, outreach activities and special events.

University museums work and connect regionally and locally with partners through Place Partnerships, regional cultural partnerships, regional museums forums, regional tourism partnerships and through specific projects, programmes, and festivals.

Diversifying university entrants

As well as developing activities and programming to widen overall access to and participation in cultural activities, the UMIS members are also focused on Higher Education's key aim of diversifying those that apply to university, helping achieve Widening Access targets. Some examples from 2021/22 include:

- 'Young Artists' – a partnership between the **University of Edinburgh Collections and the University of Stirling Collections** - worked with young people (aged 11-18) from across Scotland who are traditionally under-represented at university. It aimed to develop participants' artistic knowledge and skills and apply them to discuss issues that they care about. The programme included arts event attendance, work experience with arts organisations and events organisation and participants were supported by student mentors. <https://bit.ly/YoungArtivists>
- **The Hunterian**, University of Glasgow, developed relationships with Widening Participation through the Into University centres in Govan and Maryhill, providing outreach activity to support their 'students of the future' approach.
- **Museums of the University of St Andrews** work closely with the University Widening Access team to contribute content and in-person sessions to the summer schools and First Chances programmes, and through their 'Moving Art, Connecting Voices' project have worked closely with Levenmouth Academy and recently arrived migrants and refugees, including children from Afghanistan, focusing on developing English language and collaboration skills.

Interdisciplinary learning & teaching

University museum collections enrich the teaching experience and contribute across Scotland's higher and further education institutions. This involves both the use of collections and expertise to teach within the museums' host universities, and a role as a teaching resource beyond their host universities – including internationally - contributing to the broader learning ecosystem.

Due to the breadth of their collections and the knowledge of their staff, our members have meaningful involvement across disciplines and schools and throughout academia, furthering cross-disciplinary knowledge. UMIS members provide academic engagement opportunities on courses as diverse as Anatomical Sciences and Animation to Urban Planning and Zoology and in the 2021/22 academic year provided 3,169 hours of teaching and teaching support to over 6,000 students on almost 200 courses.

Digital and hybrid teaching

Despite the fact that students are, for the main part, back on campus in the universities, online and hybrid teaching both remains an essential part of the learning experience and has allowed the UMIS members to use and share their collections in new and innovative ways.

In 2020 UMIS secured funding from the AHRC Covid-19 Urgency Scheme for the 'Online Teaching and Learning with Digitised Collections in a Higher Education Context' project to track and evaluate the capacity, capabilities, and best practice in digital teaching with collections, with the ultimate aim of developing models to ensure greater uptake in, and satisfaction with, online teaching. The report and outputs will be published on the UMIS website later this academic year. Prompted by the project, UMIS has started discussions this year with RLUK (Research Libraries UK) around the development of Virtual Teaching Spaces.

Research

University museums are recognised globally as highly important and valued research assets, integral to the international research infrastructure, due to the collections and knowledge they hold, and enhance their institutions' – and Scotland's – reputation in this field. UMIS members are also a significant resource for post-graduate researchers, and work with organisations such as SGSAH to provide research-based opportunities and placements.

In the 2021/22 academic year, UMIS recorded 6,884 direct research enquiries and visits (up from even pre-Covid 2018/19 levels of 4,764) and 441,428 visits to online collections databases.

Due to their unique position to research collections, and access research and academic resources, university museums are acknowledged to hold, and to continue to develop, provenance information – enabling us to interrogate and continue to explore our collections more fully than other parts of the heritage sector.

In addition, by working collaboratively, university museums share research expertise, enhance the quality of their research, and can disseminate this more effectively. UMIS members work with – and develop - research partnerships both nationally and internationally.

Employability

Student employability

UMIS members not only actively provide opportunities to use museums' collections and knowledge of their staff within university courses, but university museums are also employers within their institutions. Opportunities offered by the museums develop transferrable skills, provide workplace learning and, in many cases, are credit bearing or lead to recognition in students' enhanced transcripts, all improving their longer-term employment options. This year, these opportunities have included:

- Paid and unpaid internships/apprenticeships
- Volunteering opportunities across their operations (UMIS members recorded 227 student volunteers working with their museums in 2021/22)
- Work placements for undergraduates and postgraduates
- Student ambassadorships
- Board representative opportunities for students

Wider upskilling and employability

In addition to placements for students, UMIS members also provide opportunities for those in the broader community through volunteering, or through specific programmes for young people, including:

- The Kickstart Scheme - provides funding to create new jobs for 16–24-year-olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment.
- Modern Apprenticeships - deliver skills to apprentices (anyone over 16, and primarily aimed at 16–24-year-olds) who work, learn, and earn while gaining an industry-recognised qualification.

UMIS members worked with 41 community volunteers over the past academic year.

Environmental responsibility

Museums have a key role to play in increasing awareness and public knowledge around the environment and environmental issues. In the case of university museums this influence can be both within and outwith their institutions, and often involves academic colleagues, researchers, or external collaborators.

An example from 2022 is the **Museums of the University of St Andrews** 'Dive In! Protecting our Oceans' exhibition and associated programming which explored the ocean and the threats its facing. Held at The Wardlaw Museum, the exhibition prompted visitors to consider how their actions impact what happens in the ocean and looked at how museums can have a positive impact on our environment by encouraging people to make sustainable decisions. The museums worked with a consultant in environmental behaviour change and an evaluation consultant to carefully research what effect visiting the exhibition had on audiences.

Health and wellbeing

University museums are well placed to offer their services, programming, and spaces to encourage wellbeing and help with mental health for both students and the broader community. Recent/ongoing examples include:

University of Edinburgh Collections 'Prescribe Culture' programme is a sector-leading social prescription programme involving both guided sessions for students referred via Student Services, and self-led participation for broader audiences at a variety of venues both online and offline. The programme now offers programming for those living with dementia and is the foundation of a UKRI funded research project 'Prescribe Culture Highland', in collaboration with the University of the Highlands and Islands, exploring the feasibility of scaling up cultural and natural assets for the benefits of public health.

University of Dundee Museums' Museum Engagement team also created various activities and resources to aid student wellbeing. These include a fortnightly series of Museum Mooches (combining walking tours with creative activities) and two Art Spaces in the Dalhousie Building, where students or staff can have a seat and view one of their paintings while listening to a tailored mindfulness exercise designed specifically around the artwork.

3. What are your motivations for working internationally?

As mentioned in question 1, the university museums' motivations for working with international partnerships and colleagues are many. University museums see the broadest possible global collaboration as central to the success and relevance of their operations. International loans allow global audiences to encounter and engage with UMIS' (and Scotland's) collections, and the involvement of international colleagues in research projects not only provides additional, complementary expertise and materials, but often accelerates research projects and provides new or broader perspectives on a theme.

The complementary nature of many university museum collections worldwide – around similar themes, materials, and objects held – allows us to explore and interpret collections in a more informed way and with a deeper context.

In cases of contested or colonial collections, and potential repatriation, dialogue with source communities, regardless of their location, is essential. And as museums move towards proactive and unconditional repatriation of collections, the onus is on the museum holding

these collections to make the first – primarily international – approach to possible source communities or their representatives.

Ultimately, the strategic aims of Higher Education institutions invariably include internationalisation. Not only do we work with partners internationally, but we are staffed, run, populated, and utilised by a global community. As microcosms of the globe, we are places where cultures meet and foster understanding, leading to an increasing ‘inclusivity’ of mission. This international involvement – both outward and inward facing – leads to collaborative development of projects, programmes, and research, and leads to innovation involving and for the benefit of the entire global community.

4. What, if any, are the main barriers to developing your international activity?

The cost-of-living crisis, as with the majority of organisations in the UK (particularly those funded through the public purse) has had a limiting effect on the resource of university museums. Although this is a universal problem throughout the UK, and has no easy solution given the current financial climate, even standstill budgets are affecting cuts to funding in real terms. Add to this the necessity for single-year funding agreements from the Scottish Government and public funders, and the increased competition for any available funding, and the situation is even more acute. Consequently, we have to prioritise work not only based on the museums’ and universities’ aims, but also based on cost analysis and associated risk. The result is that often the more expensive or resource-heavy projects are having to be delayed or kept on hiatus until the funding arrangements are more concrete in the long term.

Although the Scottish Government have not explicitly stated support for restitution and repatriation, neither have they imposed limiting policies (such as the ‘retain and explain’ rationale from the UK Government). The sponsoring of the Empire, Slavery and Scotland’s Museums report indicates a level of global cultural sensitivity from the Scottish Government, and indeed, repatriation of objects linked to colonialism by museums in Scotland is now recognised as an important element of the re-evaluation of Scotland’s histories, as well as one of the most important ways that museums can properly respond to the wishes of people whose ancestors and belongings have been in their care. However, the cost and resource commitment relating to international repatriation of contested items to source communities cannot be underestimated. Given the uncertainty of ongoing funding and the lack of available resource within the museums sector, this work is even more challenging. Without dedicated support and funding for provenance research and repatriation activities, this already resource-heavy work will, at best, reduce substantially.

Also see our comments on the exit from the EU, outlined in question 15.

5. What are your views on the rationale set out for an International Cultural Strategy?

Overall, the rationale for the International Cultural Strategy builds a strong foundation on which to base future international working and demonstrates a commitment from the Scottish Government to champion and support the continued international focus of Scotland’s cultural industries. UMIS particularly endorses the British Council’s approach of mutual understanding, connecting, and co-creating rather than overt promoting and

influencing. This approach will allow the full range of 'cultural exports' from a more visible Scottish cultural sector – working in true partnership - while still remembering and acknowledging our (sometimes uncomfortable) place in colonial history affecting both international communities and communities within Scotland.

It is essential, however, that the rationale isn't too prescriptive. The success of Scotland's creative industries worldwide, and its reputation, is partly down to the freedom and flexibility afforded by an actively pro-international and globally inclusive Scottish Government.

6. What are your views on the vision outlined above?

Currently the vision doesn't seem to reflect the entirety of the rationale behind the strategy. Although it is supportive of Scotland's cultural industries and their place globally, we would welcome a vision with more of a 'global community' philosophy. As mentioned in question 5, the importance of explicitly acknowledging our (sometimes uncomfortable) place in colonial history, affecting both international communities and communities within Scotland, should be considered. Many of the collections in our museums don't morally belong to us, and it would seem appropriate to reflect this.

The richness of Scottish culture involves being open to global dialogue, whilst also promoting Scotland's distinctive identity which, by not adopting the 'retain and explain' policy of the UK Government, involves an identity and reputation with openness and understanding/inclusivity at its core. Including more emphasis on what we as a nation can 'give back' (metaphorically rather than physically in this case) to our international colleagues may provide more of a balance to the vision.

7. We have identified 4 themes (cultural connections, economic impact, diplomacy, and reputation). How does your work connect with each of these areas?

Cultural connections

University museums in Scotland hold collections with international significance and relevance, and the complementary nature of many university museum collections worldwide – around similar themes, materials, and objects held – allows us to explore and interpret collections in a more informed way and with a deeper context.

Scotland's university museums work collegiately with international academic cultural institutions on an ongoing basis. Through involvement in both Universeum (the European university museum network) and ICOM-UMAC (the international committee for university museums and collections), Scotland's university museums retain a high profile with colleagues globally and are held in high regard due to UMIS's collaborative approach and its Scottish sector insight.

As a practical example of these connections, through strong national and international networks, such as UMIS, Universeum, and ICOM-UMAC, university museums globally have together been able to develop a Guidance for Restitution and Return of Items from University Museums and Collections.

UMIS members work with – and develop - research partnerships both nationally and internationally. By working collaboratively with colleagues worldwide, university museums

share research expertise internationally, enhancing the quality of their research, and disseminating this more effectively. In addition, the examples of teaching with collections that have been cited in question 1 allow us to share the rich heritage and collections of Scotland with students worldwide.

Finally, through loans of objects or collections to international exhibitions or organisations, university museums build relationships and partnerships and highlight the breadth of collections in their care, facilitating future exchanges and joint working.

Economic impact

University museums, and museums throughout Scotland, contribute to the tourism offer – both from other UK countries and internationally. Scotland's strong cultural identity is showcased in the collections of our museums, and despite a downturn in the number of visitors due to the Covid pandemic, these levels are now rising once more. In addition, this is enhanced by object borrowing and loans with international partners, either attracting international audiences to Scotland through broader marketing and recognition, or through introducing Scotland's culture to audiences abroad.

The contribution that university museums make to their host institutions, and the high regard in which we are held by researchers worldwide, help to attract international audiences to live, study and work in Scotland. UMIS members' contribution to learning and teaching, our venues' places as (often) non-academic 'safe spaces' on and adjacent to campus, and our programmes involving widening participation, mental health, and wellbeing also add to the students' experience of Higher Education.

Our work within employability – cited in question 2 – both with domestic and international students, develops vocational skills and confidence, often leading to recognition in students' enhanced transcripts and improving their longer-term employment options.

Diplomacy

Scotland's role in restitution and repatriation of contested collections is at the forefront of cultural diplomacy. As mentioned previously, many of the collections held by Scotland's museums (of all types) do not morally belong to us, and by acknowledging Scotland's involvement in historic slavery and colonialism we can start making restitution against past international injustices.

Further to this is the decolonisation of not only our collections, but also of our cultural organisations. By re-visiting how we display and interpret our collections - involving those with lived experience – as well as interrogating historic bias and inherent racism within our museums, we can better represent and involve the entirety of humanity, giving us a solid foundation on which to build diplomatic relationships.

Multiple members of UMIS are in discussion with multiple source communities to work towards the repatriation of items from their collections and are in addition working on establishing provenance information for other objects for the purposes of establishing their status and origins. The recent repatriation of the Benin bronze, proactively instigated by the University of Aberdeen; UMIS' involvement in the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums project; the work of the University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee around decolonising their collections; and the 'Curating Discomfort' and subsequent 'Power in this

Place' projects undertaken by The Hunterian are all examples of the active work of university museums in decolonisation, restitution, and repatriation.

Reputation

The commitment of Scotland's museums to repatriate contested items and to acknowledge past historical injustices has an important role to play in our international reputation. In stark contrast to the 'explain and retain' stance of the UK Government, with the support of the Scottish Government, Scotland's museums are seen as leading the way for repatriation and restitution work and are actively seeking to work internationally on restitution and repatriation to those communities affected.

The work of UMIS, Universeum, and ICOM-UMAC, in developing an international Guidance for Restitution and Return of Items from University Museums and Collections is testament to, and reinforces, the positive reputation Scotland's university museums have globally. In addition, the adoption of the University of Aberdeen's 'procedure not policy' approach to repatriation, and their proactive approaches and unconditional repatriations are now recognised as best practice and have been adopted globally.

Through UMIS' collegiate approach in working with international colleagues – through knowledge exchange, partnerships, and even the Glasgow School of Art's project with Lviv Academy of Arts – Scotland's university museums are held in high regard by international colleagues, further cementing Scotland's cultural reputation globally.

8. Are there aspects of your work that would not be captured by these themes, but you feel the strategy should recognise?

Although the themes are overarching enough to possibly capture the cultural work that university museums undertake, it is worth mentioning our learning, teaching, and research remits. There may be no need to dedicate substantial parts of this strategy to this (perhaps niche) work, but there are existing policies and strategies that encompass international aims towards which universities (and it follows, university museums) should be working (e.g., the Scottish Government's Universities Policy, the Scottish Funding Council's International Engagement aims, and the potential Scottish Government International Education Strategy).

Further to this, Museums Galleries Scotland has just published their Strategy for Scotland's Museums (February 2023), and the Scottish Government's Cultural Strategy, published in 2020, also gives particular aims for Scotland's cultural organisations. Although the Culture Strategy international aims are aligned with this document, UMIS feels it is important that, given the university museums dual-portfolio role of Higher Education and Culture, existing strategies and policy documents relating to these areas are both cited and acknowledged within the International Cultural Strategy.

In addition, and as previously stated, the explicit inclusion of the prevalent work by Scotland's museums around restitution and repatriation we feel would be a beneficial addition to the strategy.

9. Have you accessed Scottish public sector support for your international activity and if so which sources?

UMIS members are beneficiaries of the Museums, Galleries and Collections grant from the Scottish Funding Council which provides an overall total of £1.2million to our nine members annually. Although the entirety of this fund can't be said to be focused on international activity, as a key and substantial income source for Scotland's university museums, this grant helps us to not only care for the collections we hold, but also to harmonise our ambitions to those of our host institutions, provide a service to the wider research community beyond the needs of our institutions' researchers, provide a high quality teaching and learning experience to the wider Higher Education community, and promote and provide the opportunity of successful higher education to everyone who can benefit from it, by providing an access point to university facilities and through other community engagement and outreach work'. Often, therefore, these outcomes have an international reach.

UMIS members can also apply for funding through Museums Galleries Scotland for discrete projects. Most recently, the University of Aberdeen successfully secured a grant to improve the care and documentation of 2250 North American items – a project that also saw them working with partners such as the Reciprocal Research Network, the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation Department to deepen understanding of the collections.

10. What has been the impact of this support on your work?

The funding gained from public sources, as well as other funding outlined in question 11, in essence allow the university museums to develop partnership projects and programming, by amplifying effort and raising aspirations. To have dedicated funding to undertake projects within a given timescale allows for effective project planning, resourcing, and realistic objective setting.

11. Have you accessed any other forms of support for your international activity, and if so which sources?

In the past, university museums have benefited from the work undertaken through the Horizon 2020 funding, which is no longer available (post Brexit) to UK organisations. For example, the Hunterian has recently introduced visualisers to their Antonine Wall displays using technology developed through the EMOTIVE Horizon 2020 project, providing a richer experience for visitors – both domestic and international.

Funding was secured through the AHRC for UMIS' 'Digital teaching and learning with collections in Higher Education settings during Covid 19' project (detailed in question 2). This enabled us to work with international respondents to broaden the insights gained through the research and to compare and contrast responses from UK and international professionals.

The Glasgow School of Art's twinning with Lviv Academy of Arts (also detailed in question 1) was funded through Research England. Although the two institutions had been working together since 2022, this dedicated funding allowed further resource to be dedicated to the project, enabling the development of a tailored training and mentorship package.

Finally, often project and programme specific funding is secured by university museums to partner or carry out joint projects with particular international organisations. These sources of funding often rely on the subject matter, focus, or institution they are partnering with. For example, in 2018, The Hunterian worked with Harvard University to bring rare items from

Harvard's collections to Scotland for the first time. For this particular project, funding was secured through the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Henry Luce Foundation.

12. Is the current support for international cultural activity appropriate? Are there gaps in provision in terms of focus?

The scope of international cultural activity is incredibly broad. From a university museums perspective, and as previously mentioned, we would like to see support for efforts around repatriation and restitution, potentially through the brokering of relationships to allow these conversations to happen as well as a clear acknowledgement from the Scottish Government around colonial history and a policy or commitment regarding restitution and repatriation.

In addition, the costs associated with international working are considerable. It would be beneficial if the Scottish Government could ensure that support for international working – particularly now that EU funding is not accessible to UK organisations – is available.

13. Are you aware of international examples that Scotland might learn from in its support for international cultural activity?

The collegiate nature of UMIS' involvement with both Universeum and ICOM-UMAC is hugely beneficial to Scotland's university museums. Despite Brexit, our relationships with our European colleagues remains important, and our contribution to both these groups is recognised as valuable.

These groups thrive – as most partnerships do – on the shared ambitions of their members. They enable us to continue our dialogue with university museums worldwide, and to continue to influence and feed into international policy and practices.

As previously mentioned, the scope of international cultural work is incredibly broad, and given that it encompasses different art forms, cultural activities, and remits, it is difficult to have an oversight of the networks that are available across culture – a role perhaps the Scottish Government could play through this strategy.

14. In what ways can international activity help to mitigate current challenges? (e.g. Brexit, pandemic, cost crisis)

Through working with our European colleagues through distinct partnerships or through Universeum, university museums can both ensure communications between our countries continues, but also keep abreast of the work going on in Europe – particularly research. We can also sustain our presence and reputation within the EU and continue to assist and work with colleagues, amplifying our impact.

This is particularly acute coming out of the Covid pandemic. Museum practice has changed with a particular (sustained) emphasis on digital, but opportunities to develop our practice have also resulted. By maintaining knowledge exchange with our international colleagues, we can all learn from each other, ensuring museums globally can develop together.

15. Are there particular challenges that leaving the EU has caused to your international activity?

With the advent of Brexit, EU grants that were previously relied on to fund international research or partnership projects (such as Horizon 2020) are no longer open to UK organisations. Although there are currently discussions around the UK's use of the Horizon Europe Fund, these negotiations are still ongoing. This not only means that UK organisations are unable to apply for this funding, but also that we are unable to partner in European projects. Previously mutually beneficial relationships are suffering as a result, and this is also leading to a duplication in work – with European organisations carrying out research projects in tandem with UK-funded projects that are covering the same topics.

The end to a freedom of movement and the customs union is also having an effect on the complexities and cost surrounding international loans, borrowing, and even repatriation. There now exist increasingly complex and expensive export/import arrangements, delays at borders, increasing transport costs, complexities around legislation and legal status, and increased bureaucracy around moving collections, and people, between the UK and the EU.

As a sector we are still navigating this complex environment. Some effects are still to be felt but given our historic (and current) close ties with our European colleagues, what is apparent is that the impact to date of our exit from the EU has been marked. Without support and frameworks in place to simplify and facilitate our work with the EU, we are in danger of seeing a less open knowledge exchange and partnership, and an increasing (imposed) cultural divide.

University museums are, as mentioned in question 14, working to maintain relationships with our European colleagues through Universeum and discrete partnerships. We hope to allow, therefore, an element of mitigation around this situation. What has become clear is that the press and news coverage of culture from the UK in Europe has decreased. This further underlines the need to keep communication channels and collegiate working at the forefront of our priorities.

16. If so, in what ways might this strategy seek to address those challenges?

In order to ensure UK cultural organisations, have the financial resource to continue to collaborate and operate within the EU, and without the ability for the UK to regain access to particular EU funding streams (including negotiations on the Horizon Europe scheme), replacing these streams with an alternative will be essential, as will ensuring the criteria are focused on and prioritise work in partnership with European colleagues and organisations.

Given our exit from the customs union, work to facilitate easier transfer and passage of objects, equipment, collections, and indeed people, between Scotland and the EU, with a view to making this process as simple as possible given inherent restrictions, will help to ensure museums continue to be able to share our collections and expertise with Europe, and vice versa. Further to this, again where possible, simplifying the legislation around visa status for both Scottish professionals hoping to work in Europe and European nationals seeking to work in the Scotland, and ensuring these visas encourage rather than deter skills exchange, will help to ensure we retain the rich, diverse, and valuable international workforce Europe-wide.

To achieve this, continued open dialogue with the European Parliament, EU representatives, and EU political bodies to ensure ongoing political relations and understanding of legislation within the EU as regards Scotland, will seem essential. By ensuring Scottish cultural

agencies are fully aware of and supported to navigate this legislation, we will be better equipped and more proficient in planning future work within the EU.

17. Are there new ways that you have begun to engage internationally or ways in which you wish to do so?

Yes, I have begun to engage internationally in new ways

Given the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment in which we are operating (given Brexit, the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and unstable political environments globally), university museums have had to adapt their activities. Additional pressure on resources has meant that UMIS members have had to carefully prioritise activities. Although our relationships within Europe and our part in European partnerships has continued, planning for joint projects has become more complex.

University museums will continue to build on our partnerships worldwide, working with existing partners and brokering new relationships, but the cost, resource, time, and legislation implications are having to be more carefully considered ahead of activity.

18. What are your views on how this strategy should consider the impact of international activities on climate change?

UMIS endorses the approach of considering environment and climate change in this context. International travel can be incredibly carbon heavy and detrimental to the environment. As museums, our international activity can often involve the shipping of objects and materials abroad, which by necessity involves international couriering. If we are to continue to share our collections with international audiences, the choice of methods of shipping – taking into account cost, duration, and carbon footprint - must be considered carefully. Shipping by air is often cheaper and faster, while shipping by sea (although considerably safer for the environment) can be associated with (sometimes prohibitive) costs and considerably extended timescales.

In addition, there is also the consideration of the carbon footprint of digital technology. University museums – and museums in general – are increasingly providing digital exhibitions and programming, as well as using online software in their day-to-day operations. Indeed, this has provided opportunities for more international colleagues and audiences to connect more easily and frequently.

Specific guidance and support for museums and other cultural organisations on the carbon footprint of import/export of larger items, the environmental impact of digital vs. face to face international activity, and measures they can put in place to offset such activity could provide a framework within which cultural organisations can ensure they are working towards both the Scottish Government's 2045 net zero targets and their ongoing environmental sustainability.

Finally, having an awareness of the environmental policies of countries worldwide – especially those in which environmental sustainability is still in its infancy – would further help to either partner with countries with a similar 'net zero' ethos, or to ensure the 'green agenda' can be explored and measures put in place to assist with sustainability.

19. How would you like this strategy to further the aspiration of handling historic injustices responsibly?

UMIS believes that first and foremost, an explicit acknowledgement from the Scottish Government of our part in historic slavery and colonial history needs to be made, and a framework on how Scotland will respond to and offer restitution for these actions provided. As there has yet to be a formal response to the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums report, this would seem to offer the opportunity to embark on this process.

Scotland's university museums are already very active in researching the provenance of their collections, exploring possible links to historic injustices, and looking to offer restitution to source communities or to repatriate items where this is appropriate. We see this work as essential, but it is inherently very time consuming and expensive.

Although each organisation seeking to repatriate objects will be working to specific guidance and within their own legislative and governance frameworks, the Scottish Government could take an essential role in helping navigate the regulatory landscapes of affected communities, and offer support in endorsing or facilitating discussions with source communities or governments, navigating the sometimes complex legal environments involved.

In addition, dedicated funding and associated resource to support this work would help all museums, particularly smaller organisations who are often unable to undertake this activity due to prohibitive costs, and any large-scale repatriations of contested objects. Ideally this should be built into any Scottish Government policy or framework around historic injustices.

20. Are there particular geographies that are of greater importance to you, your organisation, or the wider sector, than others? If so why are they of particular importance?

No!

Universities and university museums do not take an inherently exclusionary approach to international working. We see ourselves as international and European organisations. Specific networks and partnerships do depend on the operations, collections, and focus of individual organisations, but new affiliations happen regularly. You can see examples of our international partnerships in question 1. In addition, many Scottish universities are 'twinned' or historically linked with those in Europe or elsewhere globally and so work together more frequently on that basis.

For university museums, there are geographies that we focus on specifically – some in the long term and some for more acute reasons. Currently source communities impacted by colonialism and historic slavery are a particular longer-term focus – this has been discussed extensively elsewhere in this response – and working with Ukrainian colleagues (through a number of initiatives) to provide expertise and resource to help preserve collections that are under threat from the Russian invasion is a more acute priority.

In addition to the above, UMIS members do tend to work more closely with our European colleagues, given their proximity and possibilities of easier/facilitated partnership working, and maintaining these relationships has become more important since our exit from the EU.

21. Do you think an international culture strategy should prioritise particular geographies?

As previously stated, the cultural sector is so broad that prioritising any particular geography would seem to be difficult and could be unrepresentative.

However, differences in requirements, needs, and the politics of each country needs to be considered, and political situations are fluid. For example, UMIS held a programme of cultural and knowledge exchange with Russia and Ukraine early in 2021, but, given the current war on Ukraine, cultural relations with Russia have ceased. Conversely, Ukraine needs more of our support than ever before.

As concerns the European Union, despite our existing and ongoing partnerships with our European colleagues, these are now requiring more consideration and focus since our exit from the EU.

With this in mind, prioritising a specific geography would seem to be counterproductive. Instead, the global environment needs to be monitored to ensure that prioritisation of cultural relationships is responsive to global political situations.

The one issue that UMIS feels needs to be prioritised, however, is to focus on those countries and communities impacted by historic injustices or slavery imposed by Scotland.

22. Are there aspects of engaging in international cultural activity that affect equalities groups differently? (in your response please reflect on both positive and negative effects)

Globally, this is a difficult question to answer.

There are countries where there are oppressive political regimes or human rights issues and, naturally, these will not be a focus for Scotland's international cultural activity as in more stable countries. Although this could be seen as a negative as far as international cultural relations are concerned, the cultural sector does not alone have the power to change these regimes. However, where there is bigotry towards particular equalities groups, culture can often educate communities, and by partnering with international organisations to bring about change in these beliefs, culture can make a real difference.

The acknowledgement of and seeking restitution for historic injustices towards those communities that have suffered historic slavery or colonialism is a positive outcome that culture can affect and is explored in detail throughout this response.

Given that some countries may not be as far along the journey of facilitating physical access to or ensuring the intellectual accessibility of exhibitions, Scottish cultural organisations can work to ensure that when partnering internationally these elements are considered.

In short – by ensuring, when partnering or working internationally, that we have the same criteria for inclusion, diversity, and equity that we work to in our projects and programming, we can help to mitigate any exclusionary practices.

23. If you identified any negative effects, what do you think could be done in the future to try and prevent this from happening?

There are some instances where the work of museums internationally can help to positively influence discrimination against particular groups (e.g., Trans, LGBTQ+, etc). In dealing with international colleagues and organisations, Scottish cultural organisations will have to ensure a shared understanding and strong equality and inclusion policies are in place when partnering.

However, in others, culture alone cannot affect this change. A full understanding of the political landscape and avoiding undertaking cultural activity with oppressive regimes would seem to be the only option. In this case, central Scottish Government policy and advice around any particular global issues and dealing with particular countries or regimes would be beneficial.

Generally, we need to ensure that venues for joint exhibitions are inclusive, that interpretation is accessible, that, in building programmes or projects that those with lived experience have been involved in planning, and that the technologies we have available ensure that all those visitors or participants regardless of ability, are able to enjoy and take part in the same way.

24. Are there any other comments you would like to make on this strategy as a whole at this time?

It is of the utmost importance, particularly given the challenges that the Scottish cultural sector is facing, that this strategy is practical, realistic, and workable. We feel there is a need to address the current limitations and challenges we are seeing, and an understanding within the strategy of how to work within these, with an understanding of why work may not be happening. Any aims or obligations for cultural organisations that result from the strategy will need to have clear policies, procedures, and – most importantly - resourcing to support them.

We feel it is worth mentioning that the entirety of the cultural sector will not be able to take part in international activity. This may be due to size, resource, scope, or priorities, but it is equally important that should organisations want to be involved, they are able and supported to do so. Culture is currently struggling with real-terms cuts to budgets, cost of living pressures, and resourcing challenges, and we are still very much in a state of flux. We hope that, in future – perhaps, for example, with a less volatile funding environment, and clarity in the situation with the EU - that international work will be accessible to a greater proportion of the Scottish cultural sector.

In the same vein, as Brexit and the global political climate evolves, this strategy will need to be flexible (or scalable) enough to respond effectively.

UMIS very much looks forward to the Scottish Government's official response to the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums report, and our members will continue to work in the spirit of the findings in the meantime. We would like to re-iterate that any official next steps from the report need to be supported with funding and resource in order to affect real change.