

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
SCHOOL OF HISTORY, CLASSICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

**RESEARCH ETHICS IN FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY,
ARCHAEOLOGY, HUMAN OSTEOARCHAEOLOGY AND
ZOOARCHAEOLOGY**

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The following is meant as an effort at amplification of the only published/agreed documentation on dealing with human remains in Archaeology SHCA¹; to the limits of the writers' knowledge, there is no equivalent documentation for animal remains.

Note that the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 applies to all remains less than 100 years old in Scotland and work on such remains requires a licence. In what follows it is assumed that all human material being worked on has been dead for over a hundred years.

Special care is needed when research involves tissues or other remains of identifiable deceased persons.

The SHCA requires that all research involving human and/or animal remains is reviewed by the School Ethics Committee to ensure it meets ethical standards².

Research and those pursuing it should respect the diversity of human culture and conditions and take full account as far as is appropriate of ethnicity, gender, disability, age and sexual orientation in its design, undertaking and reporting.

Some research may involve an element of risk to those participating in it. Risk must always be kept to a minimum and explained clearly to the relevant ethics committee and to all members of the research team.

Preamble

¹*Ethics and standards in the handling, storage and analysis of human remains in the care of Archaeology, SHCA, U of Edinburgh 3pp, 2010. See Appendix 1.*

²The School standard Ethics Questionnaire is accessible at: <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/>

The conditions of storage of materials, issues of access to collections, procedures for teaching, the undertaking and supervision of research, the treatment of samples submitted for analytical procedures, disposal of materials (where necessary) and publication of results should comply with best practices as codified in the UK, even outside the UK, unless those of the other country in which the work is being undertaken are of a higher standard than that practiced here in which case they should be matched.

Storage of human and animal remains

Human material should be kept in a locked store to which access is restricted to those who need to see, examine or otherwise treat it. Environmental conditions must be appropriate.

Where SHCA is acting as the final place of deposition of human skeletal material, records should be compiled indicating the source of the material, the agreement by which deposition has been agreed, the extent of the collection and where it is stored to enable retrieval. Best practices as defined by Museums Galleries Scotland³ should be followed. Because of the costs of storing this material permanently, efforts should be made to get depositors to meet the costs of long-term storage.

All usage of the collection, other than for supervised teaching purposes, should be logged. An example of the log is shown at Appendix 2.

A general survey on keeping human bones in museums conducted in England is at:

http://www.babao.org.uk/index/cms-filesystem-action/eh%20opinion_survey_report.pdf

A similar document covering the care of remains in Scottish Museums can be found at:

<http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/publications/publication/378/guidelines-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-scottish-museum-collections>

SHCA's Teaching Collection

For human material, records should be compiled indicating the source of the material, the agreement by which deposition has been agreed, the extent of the collection and where it is stored to enable retrieval. It is acknowledged that teaching collections will suffer attrition. Bone material that no longer meets teaching requirements should be disposed of in compliance with the disposal policy (see below).

Temporary storage

Where human skeletal material has been deposited temporarily for study and / or report production, it should be treated as far as possible according to the conditions specified above.

Research Ethics

As all research projects that depend on human or animal samples will require clearance by the relevant Research Ethics committee. In almost all cases, these procedures can be fulfilled at sub-School i.e. Departmental level, in compliance with the College's *Research Ethics Framework* (2008) - see:

³ *Guidelines in the care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections, April 2011. Museums Galleries Scotland.* <http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/publications/publication/378/guidelines-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-scottish-museum-collections>

http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.17134!fileManager/ethicsframework.pdf

Depending on the nature of the research work, its procedures and practices should comply with the best appropriate standards. It is acknowledged that this is a rapidly-evolving field and thus researchers should ensure that they have the most up-to-date documentation on Codes of Conduct and Practice at the time of embarking on their projects.

For Forensic Anthropology projects, attention should be paid to the draft Codes of Conduct and Practice (Feb 2011) of the Forensic Science Regulator in the Home Office:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police/forensic-science-regulator1/codes-conduct-practice?view=Standard&pubID=858085>

See also, for example:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/forensic-science-regulator/specialist-groups/>

Also of importance are the *Standards and guidance for forensic archaeologists* of the Institute for Archaeologists (4th draft : 2010) – see:

<http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/Forensicdraft.pdf>

In Scotland, the fullest statement is Historic Scotland's revised Operational Policy Paper 5 (2006):

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/human-remains.pdf>

The Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 also applies:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/4/pdfs/asp_20060004_en.pdf

Work should also comply with the standards of the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology, including its *Code of Ethics* and *Code of Practice* for which see:

<http://www.babao.org.uk/index/ethics-and-standards>

Note that the BBAO website also offers useful guidance on disposal / reburial / repatriation.

For England, there is also the Advisory Panel for the Archaeology of Burials in England (founded 2009) which has a useful website at:

<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/apabe/formation.html>

<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/apabe/report.html>

Potentially also of interest is the documentation of the Royal College of Pathologists (accessible as a pdf). See:

<http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=38>

For work in the UK and beyond, the World Archaeological Congress First Code of Ethics and associated documentation is of primary importance. This includes the *Vermillion Accord on Human Remains* (South Dakota 1989). Of less direct relevance to the work of our unit is *The Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects* (2006).

http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/about_ethi.php

Health issues

Students working with bone from the earth should have up-to-date tetanus inoculation cover. White lab coats should always be worn when handling human remains and should be removed before leaving the lab.

It is unlikely that human remains carry a risk of infection because pathogens are unlikely to survive more than a few months after death, however, BABAO advise that “individuals working with human remains should be aware of the circumstances under which they may be encountered” (BABAO Code of Practice 2010).

Non-latex gloves and face masks should be available for use when required.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics Issues Table

Areas Excluded From Funding Under FP7 (*Art. 6*)

(i) Research activity aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes;
(ii) Research activity intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (Research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads can be financed);
(iii) Research activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer;
All FP7 funded research shall comply with the relevant national, EU and international ethics-related rules and professional codes of conduct. Where necessary, the beneficiary(ies) shall provide the responsible Commission services with a written confirmation that it has received (a) favourable opinion(s) of the relevant ethics committee(s) and, if applicable, the regulatory approval(s) of the competent national or local authority(ies) in the country in which the research is to be carried out, before beginning any Commission approved research requiring such opinions or approvals. The copy of the official approval from the relevant national or local ethics committees must also be provided to the responsible Commission services.

Does the proposed research involve human Embryos?

Does the proposed research involve human Foetal Tissues/ Cells?

Does the proposed research on human Embryonic Stem Cells involve cells in culture?

Does the proposed research on Human Embryonic Stem Cells involve the derivation of cells from Embryos?

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL

Does the proposed research involve children?

Does the proposed research involve patients?

Does the proposed research involve persons not able to give consent?

Does the proposed research involve adult healthy volunteers?

Does the proposed research involve Human genetic material?

Does the proposed research involve Human biological samples?
Does the proposed research involve Human data collection?

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL

Does the proposed research involve processing of genetic information or personal data (e.g. health, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinion, religious or philosophical conviction)?

Does the proposed research involve tracking the location or observation of people?

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL YES

Does the proposed research involve research on animals?

Are those animals transgenic small laboratory animals?

Are those animals transgenic farm animals?

Are those animals non-human primates?

Are those animals cloned farm animals?

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL

Is the proposed research (or parts of it) going to take place in one or more of the ICPC Countries?

Is any material used in the research (e.g. personal data, animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic material, live animals, etc) :

a) Collected in any of the ICPC countries?

b) Exported to any other country (including ICPC and EU Member States)?

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL

Research having direct military use

Research having the potential for terrorist abuse

I CONFIRM THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE ISSUES APPLY TO MY PROPOSAL YES

If any of the above issues apply to your proposal, you are required to complete the "Ethical Statement and Questionnaire" (template provided at the end of this document).

Without this Annex, your application cannot be properly evaluated and even if successful the granting process will not proceed.

Please see the Guide for Applicants for the Advanced Grant 2011 Call for further details and CORDIS http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ethics_en.html for further information on how to deal with Ethical Issues in your proposal.

Other documentation

ICOMOS Ethics Statement (Madrid 2002, revised 2005)

http://www.international.icomos.org/ethic_eng.htm



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, CLASSICS and ARCHAEOLOGY
ETHICS STATEMENT

In my view, ethical issues regarding this research project:

have been satisfactorily addressed,

OR

have arisen and the steps taken to address them are listed below:

**delete as appropriate*

Name:

Matriculation/Personnel Number.....

Research Proposal Title:

.....

Funding Body (if applicable):

Issues (if none, please state none):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signature:

Date:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete all questions.

Risks to, and Safety of, Researchers

List those who will be involved in conducting the research

Do those named above need appropriate training to enable them to conduct the proposed research safely and in accordance with the ethical principles set out by the School. Yes/No

Are researchers likely to be sent or go to any areas where their safety may be compromised? Yes/No

Could any of the researchers have a conflict of interests? Yes/No

Risks to, and Safety of, Participants/ Research Design

Will you interview living human subjects? Yes/No

If no please continue to Data Projection section

o

How many participants are intended to be included in the research?

Are any of the participants likely to be vulnerable or sensitive to questioning, such as elderly or disabled people?		Yes/No
Are any children under 16 years of age to be interviewed, complete questionnaires or otherwise participate in the research?		Yes/No
Will any of the participants to be interviewed in situations that will compromise their ability to give informed consent, such as in prison or residential care?		Yes/No
Could this research adversely affect participants in any way?		Yes/No
Could the research induce any psychological stress or discomfort?		Yes/No
Legal Requirements		
In the case of participants whose first language is not English, what arrangements will be made to ensure informed consent?		

Data Protection

Will the research require the collection of personal information from any persons without their direct consent?

Indicate whether any part of the research involving participants be audio/film/video recorded or will it use any other electronic material?

Who will have access to the raw data?

How will the confidentiality of data, including the identity of participants, be ensured?

Specify where the data and any other media will be retained after the study, how long will they be retained and how will they be disposed of?

What criteria will be used in deciding on the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the study?

How will the sample be recruited?

Will written consent be obtained from all participants?

Yes/N

o

Will there be a control group? Yes/N

Will any participants receive any financial or other material benefits because of their participation? Yes/N

How do you intend for the results of the research to be used?

Is any information likely to be passed on to external companies or organisations in the course of the research? Yes/N

INVASIVE PROCEDURES/BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Does the project involve the collection of tissues, or other biological material or physiological tests? Yes/N

Will material collected for another purpose (e.g. diagnostic use) be used? Yes/N

Will any samples be imported into the country where you are based? Yes/N

If yes provide evidence that you have obtained the necessary permits for the use of this material for transportation and research.

Does the biological material belong to living individuals? Yes/N

If yes, did the donors give permission for the use of the material in this study? Yes/N

If yes provide evidence of the donors consent.

If no, provide information on how consent will be obtained. Where the samples have

been anonymised and consent cannot be obtained provide justification for the use of these specimens.

Does the biological material belong to deceased individuals? (E.g. skeletal samples, autopsy material etc). Yes/N
o

If yes, is the material recent or archaeological (e.g. skeletal samples of a contemporary skeletal collection, autopsy samples of bone/soft tissue or samples of an archaeological collection)

Describe the material to be taken and the method used to obtain it. Include information about the training of those taking the samples and the safety of all persons involved.

Will the material be stored? Yes/N
o

If yes, describe where and for how long.

Describe how the material will be disposed of (either after the research is completed or at the end of the storage period). (Note that the wishes of relevant cultural groups must be taken into account).

Please provide the necessary documents to prove that you have obtained the permits to use the material for research (e.g. Permit by the Prosecutor Fiscal for Scotland).

Does the research involve living animals? Yes/N
o

If yes, does the research involve any degree of discomfort for the subjects? Yes/N
o

If yes, please justify the use of these subjects for the research project.

Does the research involve animal remains?

Yes/N

If yes describe the material to be taken and the method used to obtain it. Include information about the training of those taking the samples and the safety of all persons involved.

Will the material be stored?

Yes/N

If yes, describe where and for how long.

Describe how the material will be disposed of (either after the research is completed or at the end of the storage period).

Are there any physiological tests involved in the research?

Yes/N

Describe any physiological tests/procedures that will be used.

External Bodies

Is the research proposed subject to scrutiny by any external body/sponsor?

Yes/N

If so, please provide the name of the external body/sponsor

Date Approval Sought

Outcome known

Outcome expected

When completed please return the ethics statement and questionnaire to:

Lesley McLean, Research Administrator, School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

APPENDIX 1

ETHICS AND STANDARDS IN THE HANDLING, STORING AND ANALYSIS OF HUMAN REMAINS IN THE CARE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, SCHOOL OF HISTORY CLASSICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

The Archaeology subject area at the University of Edinburgh holds a number of collections of archaeological human skeletal remains. These are retained for the teaching of human osteology to archaeology, osteoarchaeology, human osteoarchaeology and forensic anthropology students at undergraduate and graduate level, and for scientific investigation by researchers.

We consider that, while teaching undergraduate and postgraduate archaeology and forensic anthropology students about the value of studying human remains is an essential part of their education, it should always be remembered that utilising human remains for teaching or research purposes is a privilege.

It is the policy of the Archaeology subject area that the human remains in our care are treated with respect and dignity.

We adhere to the following code of ethics and standards advocated by the British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology⁴:

1. The generation of knowledge about past human lifeways using archaeological data is a worthy goal. Human remains are our most direct source of evidence in this respect. Their study is therefore central to our understanding of the human past
2. By virtue of their status as the remains of once living people, treatment of human remains requires ethical considerations over and above those that pertain to other classes of archaeological materials.
3. Human remains should always be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age or provenance.
4. Given the importance of human remains as a source of information about our past, osteoarchaeologists should work toward the long-term conservation of the osteoarchaeological record.
5. Osteoarchaeologists should be committed to public education and promote the value of the scientific study of ancient human remains.

We also endorse the Policy on the Excavation, Conservation, the Display and Storage of Human Remains adopted by the signatories to the Vermillion Accord on Human Remains 1989⁵:

1. Respect for the mortal remains of the dead shall be accorded to all, irrespective of origin, race, religion, nationality, custom and tradition.
2. Respect for the wishes of the dead concerning disposition shall be accorded whenever possible, reasonable and lawful, when they are known or can be reasonably inferred.
3. Respect for the wishes of the local community and of relatives or guardians of the dead shall be accorded whenever possible, reasonable and lawful.
4. Respect for the scientific research value of skeletal, mummified and other human remains (including fossil hominids) shall be accorded when such value is demonstrated to exist.
5. Agreement on the disposition of fossil, skeletal, mummified and other remains shall be reached by negotiation on the basis of mutual respect for the legitimate concerns of communities for the proper disposition of their ancestors, as well as the legitimate concerns of science and education.

⁴ <http://www.babao.org.uk/index/ethics-and-standards>

⁵ http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/about_ethi.php.#codes

6. The express recognition that the concerns of various ethnic groups, as well as those of science are legitimate and to be respected, will permit acceptable agreements to be reached and honoured.

In adhering to the above principles we will ensure that:

1. human remains are kept in suitably safe and secure premises with access provided only as and when authorised.
2. rooms where human remains are stored or examined will be kept locked at all times.
3. human remains are stored in clean and dry conditions, protected from the elements and extremes of climate and seasonal changes.
4. the transportation of human remains between storage rooms and laboratories will occur only where essential.
5. human remains will only be examined in designated laboratories.
6. human remains are housed in suitable, clearly-labeled containers.
7. the risk of dissociation of human remains is minimised.
8. human remains are handled, studied or viewed for bona fide research or educational purposes only.
9. prior to the handling of remains students will be reminded of ethical obligations and provided with written guidelines on the handling and treatment of human remains.
10. destructive tests or analysis will be considered in the light of the type and amount of information they can provide and samples taken will be the minimum required.
11. health and safety precautions will be followed and lab coats, protective gloves and masks will be provided.

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HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS, OSTEOLOGY TEACHING COLLECTION

CONSULTATION LOG

Skeletal Collection	Context/ Skeleton No.	Date of request	Name of Person Consulting	Staff/Student/ Visiting Researcher	Purpose	Date Returned

