

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Archives & Collections

POLICY DETAILS:

Purpose of this policy	Sets out GSA's approach to monitoring and conservation of its archives & collections.
Date of approval	May 2026
Approving body	Academic Council
Supersedes	Collections Care & Conservation Policy, Dec 2021
Date of EIA	April 2026
Date of next review	May 2029
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Responsible Executive Group area	Vice-Principal and Deputy Director (Research & Innovation)
Related policies and documents	Documentation Policy
Benchmarking	Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme for Museums

Our mission is to actively safeguard, develop, document and preserve the institutional records of The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and the artefacts and archives of staff, students, businesses and individuals associated with the School which are held in our care.

We do this to make the collection accessible in order to support scholarship and research, inspire creativity, and to surface hidden narratives contained within the School's history which are of relevance to contemporary academic and civic audiences.

The Glasgow School of Art is widely recognised for being an open and accessible institution that shares its expertise, knowledge, heritage and resources with local, national and international partners. The Glasgow School of Art has a duty of care for the art, design, architectural and archive collections, including born digital, held in its possession and it understands that the responsible management and care of its collections and archives is of the utmost importance and central to its reputation.

Collection Conditions Overview:

GSA pursues 'best practice' in the care of its collections and archives as outlined in the Collections Trust's [Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives](#).

Environmental Monitoring:

GSA will monitor and evaluate the physical environment in which its collections and archives are stored and displayed, and actions will be undertaken to promote the maintenance of storage and display areas which meet Museums Galleries Scotland's recommended parameters for temperature, relative humidity and lighting levels.¹

Environmental monitoring, including pest management, will be carried out in person, through regular site visits to storage areas and displays, and will be aided through data acquired from remotely accessible data loggers.

¹ <https://www.museumsgalleryscotland.org.uk/advice/collections/temperature-and-humidity-in-museums/>
<https://www.museumsgalleryscotland.org.uk/advice/collections/conservation-and-lighting/>

Preventative Conservation:

GSA recognises that preventative conservation involves the limiting of damage or deterioration of items in its collection and archive and it is therefore important to understand how the environment can impact on the well-being of objects.

- *Appropriate Building Conditions:* The School seeks to provide high quality conditions and accessible and secure areas for the storage, display and use of items. Material is further safeguarded by the storage of collections and archives in appropriate packaging and storage systems; the use of security alarm systems with 24hr cover and incident response; the use of CCTV; invigilation of the service's reading room and display spaces; a fire and evacuation system; and quarterly spot checks to verify locations' accuracy.
- *Disaster Planning:* A disaster recovery plan exists for the School's Archives and Collections holdings and is regularly reviewed and updated. The School also subscribes to Harwell's Document Restoration Service as a Priority user.
- *Digital items:* The collections' born-digital material is stored locally and backed up in two further locations – one on-site and one off-site. Back-ups are taken on a daily basis. A digital asset register is maintained to document all the details of the born-digital materials.
- *Surrogacy/Digitisation:* Where possible, and appropriate, surrogate or digital copies will be considered as a means of minimising wear and tear to original objects. Increased access to material can also be supported through the provision of material in alternative formats. If duplicates exist, consideration will be given to identifying objects that could form part of a recognised 'handling collection'. In instances where the original media is particularly vulnerable to deterioration due to its format, (for example VHS tape and 35mm slides), digital copies will be made where resources allow and the originals will be disposed of. This work is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Remedial Conservation:

GSA acknowledges that in addition to preventative conservation, interventive or remedial conservation will sometimes be required to stabilise or improve the physical condition of an item. Priority will generally be given to an item whose condition is poor and is likely to deteriorate quickly, or where the condition of an object needs to be enhanced to allow it to be used for exhibition or display. The School also recognises that:

- Only qualified conservators should be employed to undertake such remedial treatments and where possible these conservators should be ICON registered.
- All treatments should be planned and carried out in consultation with an appropriate member of GSA staff and should be recorded (and photographed) as a means of enhancing the history and understanding of an object.

Collections Care and Conservation Programming:

Collections Care and Conservation programming is undertaken in consideration of collection needs, user demands and equality impact. Activities are designed to promote access to the holdings while safeguarding them for future use. This work is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis and aided by quarterly spot checks of the collection to identify material which may require conservation.