

Collections Development Policy

Archives & Collections

POLICY DETAILS:

Purpose of this policy	Sets out GSA's approach to developing its Archives & Collections, including acquisition and disposal.
Date of approval	May 2026
Approving body	Academic Council
Supersedes	Collection Development Policy, May 2022
Date of EIA	April 2026
Date of next review	May 2029
Author	Michelle Kaye, Collections Lead
Responsible Executive Group area	Vice-Principal and Deputy Director (Research & Innovation)
Related policies and documents	Acquisitions Decision Guide Acquisitions: Transfer of Title Form Deaccessions: Transfer of Title Form Archival Selection Guidelines Appraisal Guidelines
Benchmarking	Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme for Museums The Spectrum Museum Collections Management Standard (v5.1, 2022) Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3 rd ed., 2002)

Name of museum: The Glasgow School of Art

Name of governing body: The Glasgow School of Art Board of Governors

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: May 2026

Policy review procedure: The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from at least once every three years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: May 2029

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1 GSA's Archives and Collections statement of purpose is:

The Archives and Collections operates in line with the following core functions:

- To support GSA staff and students in their teaching, learning, creative practice and research activities
- To support the School's administrative functions
- To enable the wider community to access and enjoy GSA's heritage

The service does this by collecting, safeguarding and making accessible the materials it holds in trust for society and which serve as the institutional memory of the GSA.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, GSA's Archives and Collections has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in GSA's Archives and Collections.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 GSA's Archives and Collections recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard and be in line with the Archives Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management and ISAD(G) for archive cataloguing. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 GSA's Archives and Collections will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, or bequest any object or specimen unless the governing

body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 GSA's Archives and Collections will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

The Glasgow School of Art was founded in 1845. Many of the items in the collections were acquired as teaching tools during the School's lifetime, including plaster casts, ceramics and metalwork. In addition, the collections include a wide range of artworks, architectural drawings, design work and archive material relating to former students and staff. Archive holdings include GSA's institutional records, and a number of collections deposited by former staff, students and related organisations. This material has been acquired throughout the School's history and continues to be collected in order to capture the development of courses, creative outputs and the School's activities.

3. An overview of current collections

There are over 5000 individual items in the collections plus over 100 deposited archive collections, and 25,000 items in the GSA institutional archive. The majority of collections are in physical form (furniture, works on paper, sculpture, textiles, plaster casts, ceramics, metalwork) with a small amount of born digital material. The 280 works by Charles Rennie Mackintosh form a Museums Galleries Scotland "Recognised Collection" of national significance.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The extent of future acquisitions for The Glasgow School of Art's Archives and Collections (as a result of gift, bequest or purchase) will be restricted to items of a fine art, design or architectural nature. All future acquisitions will relate to either the history or development of teaching at the School, or will consist of work and/or records either produced by, or in the collection of, former staff and students of the School, current staff and students of the School, or by individuals or groups directly associated with the School. Priority will be given to material created during the maker's association with GSA. Collection development activities take into consideration the UK Government's Public Sector Equality Duty and aim to ensure the holdings represent GSA's diverse and evolving learning & teaching, research and cultural environment as it is now and as it was in the past. This policy ensures that The Glasgow School of Art acts in accordance with nationally agreed standards for museums and archives in the UK with regard to acquisitions and disposals.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 GSA's Archives and Collections recognises that the principles on which priorities for appraisal, rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent appraisal or rationalisation will not reduce the quality or

significance of the archives and collections and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 GSA's Archives and Collections recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics, the International Council on Archives Code of Ethics and The National Archives Code of Conduct when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 GSA's Archives and Collections will take account of the collecting policies of other archives, museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

- The University of Glasgow
- The University of Strathclyde
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Glasgow Life
- National Museums of Scotland
- National Galleries of Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Victoria and Albert Museum
- Members of the Scottish Universities Special Collections and Archives Group
- Members of the University Museums in Scotland group
- Art Schools in the UK

8. Archival holdings

As GSA's Archives and Collections holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002) and best practice guidelines from The National Archives (TNA).

9. Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

Possible acquisitions are reviewed by Archives and Collections staff in light of suitability in line with the Archives and Collections Development Policy, Plan and Acquisitions Decision Guide.

Items that meet the criteria set out in these documents are accepted into the holdings, meanwhile items that are deemed unsuitable are declined. Items where the suitability is unclear are presented to the Archives and Collections Advisory Group for discussion and review. A regular accessions report is submitted to this group to note recent accessions and work in this area.

A transfer of title form is completed for all acquisitions received by transfer, gift or sale. In instances where material is left with the Archives & Collections without donor information, or where the donor cannot be contacted, the Archives and Collections will presume ownership of the material and process it in line with usual procedures: items (including multiple works) that The Glasgow School of Art deems not to be worthy of permanent preservation/inclusion into GSA's holdings shall be disposed of in line with the disposal procedures set out in section 16 of this policy.

9.2 GSA's Archives and Collections will not acquire any archives, objects or specimens unless it is satisfied that the objects or specimens have not been acquired in, or exported from, their country of origin (or any intermediate country in which they may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, GSA's Archives and Collections will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

10.1 GSA's Archives and Collections does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, GSA's Archives and Collections will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

12.1 GSA's Archives and Collections will not acquire any archaeological material.

13. Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because GSA's Archives and Collections is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
 - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
- In these cases GSA's Archives and Collections will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. GSA's Archives and Collections will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoliation

14.1 GSA's Archives and Collections will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

15.1 N/A

16. Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals of archives and collections will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal, and the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries (Section 7), respectively.

16.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object or archival item is being considered, GSA's Archives and Collections will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, or as a last resort, destruction.

16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for GSA's Archives and Collections and collections held by archives, museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by GSA's Archives and Collections will also be sought.

16.6 A decision to dispose of archive material, specimens or objects, whether by gift, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the

governing body of GSA's Archives and Collections acting on the advice of professional archive or curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited museums or archives likely to be interested in its acquisition.

16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum or archive to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum and archive community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, the Archives and Records Association Journal, or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of the archive material, specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, GSA's Archives and Collections may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

16.10 Any monies received by GSA's Archives and Collections governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland or the Archives and Records Association.

16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of GSA's Archives and Collections.

16.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum or archive procedures on deaccession and disposal.

16.13 Disposal by exchange:

GSA's Archives and Collections will not dispose of items by exchange.

16.14 Disposal by destruction:

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where archive material or an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

16.18 The destruction of archive material or objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the GSA's Archives and Collections team. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.