

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

**Guidelines for the Care of “The Human Bone Collection”  
of the Faculty of Dentistry of The University of Hong Kong**

Human remains have a unique status. They have the potential to make a contribution to the public good through research, teaching and (in appropriate cases) display. In many instances they also have a personal, cultural, symbolic, spiritual and religious significance to individuals and groups.

Human remains have a high research and teaching value and can make a major contribution to teaching and research in several aspects, such as:

- Human evolution, adaptation, and genetic relationships;
- Population relationships through genetics and morphology;
- Demography and health;
- Diet, growth and activity patterns;
- Disease and causes of death;
- History of disease and of medicine;
- Burial practices, beliefs and attitudes;
- Diversity of cultural practices in which the body and its parts are used;

The Guidelines for the Care of “The Human Bone Collection”, from now referred as the “Guidelines”, have been developed according to the Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport of the United Kingdom, which are available at <https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/DCMS%20Guide.pdf>. We also encourage to find further information about best practice in the management of human remains for teaching and research purposes in the documents listed in the reference section.

The “Guidelines” refer to the regulations, legal obligations, and general code of practice to ensure a long-term sustainable access, a meaningful research and teaching application, and an ethical and respectful attitude, in the utilisation of the “The Human Bone Collection” of the Faculty of Dentistry of The University of Hong Kong, from now referred as the “Collection”.

Scientists interested in conducting research with specimens of the Collection are required to submit the filled-in “Application for Access to “The Human Bone Collection” of the Faculty of Dentistry of The University of Hong Kong” to [bornst@hku.hk](mailto:bornst@hku.hk) - copying [jkhtsoi@hku.hk](mailto:jkhtsoi@hku.hk) and [f.savoldi@hku.hk](mailto:f.savoldi@hku.hk). Applications will be vetted by the Curators, and access to the collection will be provided under the close supervision of a member of the curatorial team. Applicants may have to contribute to the expenses for the use of materials and facilities, and the evaluation will be subject to agreement at a Faculty and Hospital level. If access to the remains has been granted, applicants are required to:

- Obtain approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Hong Kong for the study planned (<http://www.rss.hku.hk/HREC/guidelines.pdf>) - if there is the intention to publish any data;

and to:

- Follow the principles of research integrity, good code of practice, and research misconduct of The University of Hong Kong (<http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/policy>);

Once ethical approval has been obtained, access to the room has to be recorded in the “Room Access Register” each time during the project.

Note: applications may be subject to local Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and, according to the Standard Operating Procedure of IRB (<https://www.med.hku.hk/research/research-ethics/human-ethics>), the Principal Investigator (PI) must be staff of HKU or Hong Kong West Cluster of Hospital Authority. Applicants are invited to submit the Application for Access to Human Skeletal Remains and to prepare for IRB approval in advance.

## Access regulations

- Forbidden procedures

Procedures that could damage the remains are forbidden, such as:

- Destroying or altering the sample;
- Exposing to high / low temperatures that may alter the conservation state including the DNA;
- Exposing to high / low humidity that may alter the conservation state including the DNA;
- Using detergents or any other fluid / chemical that may alter the conservation state including the DNA;
- Using instruments such as scissors, knives, clamps, tweezers that may alter the conservation state, including but not limited to the surface roughness;
- Removing part of the collection or any related sample including the DNA out of the storage room without permission;
- Performing any analysis that may expose the remains to potential alterations of the conservation state such as microscopy using laser or vacuum chambers;

Furthermore, the following procedures are also forbidden:

- Treating the remains (or any related sample such as DNA) without the maximum respect required for human biological material;
- Performing any analysis (including DNA analysis) without prior approval from the Curator and the Human Research Ethics Committee;
- Taking and using any data (such as photographs) for purposes not related to research or teaching;
- Divulging (or permitting other parties to divulge) information about the Collection to third parties for purposes not related to research or teaching;

Please also consider that remains should always be handled one by one, and they should be touched only with gloves.

## General ethical code of practice

- Personal responsibilities

These responsibilities are meant to apply corporately, and individuals are invited to be self-responsible for:

- *Rigor;*
- *Honesty and integrity;*
- *Sensitivity and cultural understanding;*
- *Respect for persons and communities;*
- *Responsible communication, openness and transparency;*
- *Fairness;*

- Ethical principles

These ethical principles are designed for guiding our thinking and action in decision making:

- *Non maleficence;*
- *Respect for diversity of belief;*
- *Respect for the value of science;*
- *Solidarity;*
- *Beneficence;*

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality agreements to protect intellectual property rights may be agreed between the Institutions, the researcher and the sponsor (if any) of the research. Where such agreements limit free publication and discussion, limitations and restrictions must be explicitly agreed, and, where appropriate, they should be noted in publications.

## **References**

1. *Care of Historic Human Remains. A Consultation Report of the Working Group on Human Remains.* Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), United Kingdom, 2004.
2. *Code of Ethics for Museums.* Museums Association, United Kingdom, 2002.
3. *Guidance for Best Practice for treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England C of E.* Church of England and English Heritage, United Kingdom, 2005.
4. *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains Museums.* Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), United Kingdom, 2005.
5. *Human Bones from Archaeological Sites.* English Heritage, United Kingdom, 2004.
6. *Professional guidelines concerning the storage, display, interpretation and return of human remains in ethnographical collections in United Kingdom museums.* Journal of Museum Ethnography, Museum Ethnographers Group, United Kingdom, 1994.
7. *The Report of the Working Group on Human Remains.* Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), United Kingdom, 2003.
8. *The Vermillion Accord, Archaeological Ethics and the Treatment of the Dead, A statement of principles agreed by archaeologists and Indigenous peoples at the World Archaeological Congress.* World Archaeological Congress, 1989.

## **Curators**

### Curator:

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**Application for Access to “The Human Bone Collection”  
of the Faculty of Dentistry of The University of Hong Kong**

**Applicant information**

First name (given name): .....  
Surname (family name): .....  
Project title (max 5 words): .....  
Affiliated Institution: .....  
Telephone: .....  
E-mail: .....  
Supervisor/Referee (if any): .....  
Sponsor/Grant (if any): .....

**Access requests**

Proposed period for access (dd/mm/yyyy): from ...../...../..... to ...../...../.....  
Sample size required: .....  
Material to be analysed:  Only cranial  Only post-cranial  Cranial and post-cranial

**Research proposal**

Background: .....

Objectives: .....

Hypothesis: .....

Methods: .....

Expected expenses (and coverage for each, if any): .....

Is there any intention to remove items from the storage room?  YES  NO

If YES, please state where and justify: .....

Will any destructive or damaging sampling or analysis be involved?  YES  NO

If YES, please state which and justify: .....

Is there any intention to publish data (including measurements, images, or others)?  YES  NO

If YES, please state where data are intended to be published and justify: .....

**Declaration and signature**

I have read and agreed to the conditions and regulations expressed in the Guidelines for the Care of “The Human Bone Collection”. I understand that the acceptance of the proposal is subject to approval from the Curators and from the Institutional Review Board.

Signed: .....

Date: (dd/mm/yyyy): ...../...../.....

**Room Access Register to “The Human Bone Collection”  
of the Faculty of Dentistry of The University of Hong Kong**

Project title: .....

N.	Name	Surname	Date	Code of the accessed material	Time of entry	Time of exit	Procedure carried	Signature
	<i>(in block letters)</i>	<i>(in block letters)</i>	<i>(dd/mm/yyyy)</i>		<i>(hh:mm) (in 24h format)</i>	<i>(hh:mm) (in 24h format)</i>	<i>(observation / cleaning / DNA sampling / photographs / CBCT / teaching / other)</i>	
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2			__ / __ / ____		__ : __	__ : __		
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