

# **Guidance on the Minimum Standards for the transfer of archaeological assemblages to museums in Scotland**

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## **Executive Summary**

This document sets out procedures and minimum standards for the transfer of archaeological assemblages to museums in Scotland. Its aim is to ensure that archaeological material is transferred appropriately packed and in a stable condition, accompanied by the documentation necessary to understand and use the assemblage once it has been added to the museum's collections. Museums will only accept assemblages which meet the requirements set out in the rest of this document. These guidelines should be followed by all archaeological projects in Scotland which generate an assemblage.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document sets out procedures and minimum standards for the transfer of archaeological assemblages to museums in Scotland, which operates under a different legislative system from the rest of the UK. Its aim is to ensure that archaeological material is transferred appropriately packed and in a stable condition, accompanied by the documentation necessary to understand and use the assemblage once it has been added to the museum's collections. Museums will only accept assemblages which meet the requirements set out in the rest of this document.
- 1.2 This document was prepared as part of the 'Before the Museum Project' led by the Association of Local Government Archaeologists Scotland (ALGAO Scotland), the National Museums Scotland (NMS), and the Museum Working Group of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy, and funded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) as part of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy.
- 1.3 These guidelines should be incorporated into Written Schemes of Investigation (WSIs), Project Briefs, and Post-excavation Research Designs (PERDs) for all commercial archaeological projects. These guidelines should also be incorporated into the requirements of grant-giving bodies. As such, the same best practice should be followed by universities, researchers, voluntary groups, and any other part of the sector involved in the finding, removal, and reporting of archaeological material.

## **2.0 Fieldwork, Excavation and Recovery**

- 2.1 Organisations or individuals undertaking the excavation or recovery of an archaeological assemblage must ensure in advance, as far as practicable, that they have the necessary resources to record, research and maintain the assemblage in a stable condition (in accordance with [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists \(CIfA\) Standard for the completion and transfer of archaeological archives](#), [Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials \(CIfA\)](#), and [Society of Museum Archaeologists \(SMA\) Guidance](#)) until it is transferred to a museum for long-term storage.

- 2.2 The finds assemblage (artefacts and ecofacts) should be systematically documented at the time of excavation or recovery. In archaeological excavations, the finds should form part of a coherent excavation recording system. Work should be undertaken in accordance with a clear project design, method statement or written scheme of investigation approved by a suitably qualified person, which references collection and disposal strategies for the recovery of artefactual and ecofactual material during excavation work. Access to appropriate specialist advice should be secured and consulted as necessary during fieldwork to ensure recovery and recording are carried out to the required technical standards.
- 2.3 Under the laws of Treasure Trove and *bona vacantia* all objects, the original owner or rightful heir of which cannot be identified, are the property of the Crown. Excavators must report archaeological assemblages to the Crown via the [Treasure Trove Unit \(TTU\)](#) either after post-excavation work has been completed OR within five years of completion of fieldwork. A Data Structure Report or interim report, with list of finds, must be submitted along with the TTU reporting form. For assemblages recovered offshore, on the shoreline or in tidal water, these must be reported to the [Receiver of Wreck](#).

### **3.0 Conservation, Post-excavation, and Packing**

- 3.1 The assemblage should be assessed by qualified specialists, and any necessary material assessed by a qualified conservator where appropriate, as soon as possible after recovery. An excavated assemblage may be reduced or reorganised during analysis; for example, as a result of sediment sample processing or specialist examination of artefacts. An assemblage should also undergo minimal conservation at this stage to stabilise and identify artefacts. It is therefore important that documentation is maintained and updated throughout this period of analysis within the original recording system to ensure that there is no loss of information. Failure to maintain records at this stage will greatly complicate the subsequent transfer to a museum.
- 3.2 Conservation documentation should include as a minimum, details of assessment, treatment, further recommendations, and photographic record.

- 3.3 All material types should be appropriately packaged, following published guidelines by SMA (see Additional Resources), and adequately labelled. Any conservation measures that are required to ensure stability of an object for future transfer to a museum should be undertaken at this stage (UKIC 1990).
- 3.4 In general, small finds need to be housed in more protective storage than bulk finds, as they are usually more delicate in nature. Moderately robust small finds can be cushioned on a layer of polyethelene 'jiffy' foam in a polythene bag. They should not be wrapped but should be visible through the clear side of the bag. Bags should be perforated (and a humidity indicator strip included in a sealed box with the bag should the bag contain metal finds). More delicate small finds should be securely housed in clear boxes (e.g. polystyrene 'crystal' boxes in acid-free foam inserts). These should consist of a layer (e.g. acid-free foam), which fits into the bottom of the box, and a top layer which has a cut-out in the shape of the object, into which the object is placed. A layer (e.g. a wet strength repair tissue) should be placed between the object and the cut-out to facilitate easy removal OR a finger-sized cut out is made to facilitate removal. The small find should be visible through the lid of the box. Where necessary acid-free foam 'braces' or similar should be put over the object to prevent it moving and banging against the lid.
- 3.5 Larger metal or composite objects may need to be housed in their own boxes. Again, these finds should be supported by acid-free foam or similar, have a regulated micro-environment using appropriate quantities of silica gel (handled according to H&S guidance), and a humidity indicator strip included in the air-tight box. Packaged metal objects should be boxed in polythene boxes. Acid-free paper and / or polyethelene 'jiffy' foam should be used as a buffer to ensure minimal movement within the box. Packaged non-metal small finds should be boxed up in low-acid boxes. Care must be taken to ensure that the objects do not crush each other and that there is minimal movement in the box. Acid-free tissue paper and polyethelene 'jiffy' foam should be used as a buffer within the box or, where possible, internal partitions created using acid-free box-board.
- 3.6 Some objects, whether bulk finds or small finds, are too large for standard packaging. Items such as large timbers or stone carvings may not require packaging for storage but may sit directly on a shelf cushioned underneath by a layer of acid-free foam or similar, and with other surfaces protected from any potential sources of damage. Other items may require

bespoke packaging. All materials must be of a conservation standard. All items should have an archive-standard label marked with the object's small finds number and context number or other identifying number in permanent black marker pen and be attached using soft unbleached cotton tape. It may be appropriate to directly mark the details onto an object in this instance.

3.7 Temporary storage facilities should be weather-tight, with a stable environment. Cold storage should generally be utilised for organic materials until conservation advice can be sought. In particular wet / waterlogged objects need to be kept wet and in cold storage to minimise the risk of bacterial growth (see Additional Resources for links to further guidance).

### **3.8 Post-excavation and conservation work should include (as a minimum):**

3.8.1 Each find is cleaned, and where appropriate (e.g. metals and fragile materials such as jet, shale, amber, textiles) conserved and stabilised (i.e. disfiguring surface layers removed, active corrosion treated, find is stabilised) by a professionally qualified conservator. The only exceptions are where it is thought cleaning will destroy important evidence regarding the function of an object or inhibit future scientific analysis. Specialist advice should be sought if unsure.

3.8.2 Finds bagged up according to material and context number, using at least 200-gauge self-seal polythene bags with three white write-on panels to the standards specified in 3.3 – 3.5. Bags should not mix materials or contexts. Bags should hold an appropriate amount of material for their size. Bags containing metal finds should be perforated to prevent the build-up of harmful micro-environments, and silica gel allowed to condition the environment to the required relative humidity. The listed contents should be clearly visible from the outside of the bag.

3.8.3 Information should be written onto the bag using a permanent black marker pen, not a ballpoint.

3.8.4 Information written on bags should comprise: site code, context number, small find number (if appropriate), object name, material type, and object count (if appropriate) in neat, clear, and legible handwriting.

- 3.8.5 All metal objects (with the exception of lead) should be X-rayed as part of the conservation assessment, to inform treatment, and to identify objects and / or particular details.
- 3.8.6 All artefacts which are deemed significant and / or will be published, must be actively conserved to ensure that they are stable and recognisable on arrival at the museum.
- 3.8.7 Written records (texts, plans and other paper records) should be in standardised sizes and in appropriate acid-free bindings. Photographic material should be presented in archive quality digital files.
- 3.8.8 Finds List (digital spreadsheet format) detailing: find number, object type, material(s), short description, dimensions, date recovered, context number, phase and / or period, analysis undertaken, whether conserved, publication reference. Small finds will have their own line entry; for bulk finds (e.g. pottery, lithic debitage) there should be a line for every bag of material in the assemblage. The list should also include all environmental samples. Descriptions should be updated to reflect specialist identifications.
- 3.8.9 The processing of all environmental samples, such that museums will receive: dried and labelled flots; sorted residues; prepared thin-sections; sub-samples / grab samples suitably boxed and listed. Unprocessed bulk soil samples will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstances and by prior arrangement.
- 3.8.10 The physical arrangements for the transport and care of material for selected specialist examination must be agreed between the fieldwork director and relevant specialist. If postal or courier services are used, they must be guaranteed delivery, and the material must be well-packed. Appropriate documentation and insurance must be arranged.
- 3.8.11 If material is to be sent to specialists outside of Scotland, advance permission from the Crown Office via the Treasure Trove Unit must be obtained on the appropriate [form](#).

### **3.9 Packaging of the assemblage should include (as a minimum):**

- 3.9.1 The finds themselves, correctly boxed, packaged and labelled (as per 3.3 – 3.5). Boxes must be intact, dry, clean, and acid-free with brass staples, or polythene containers with appropriate acid-free packing.



- 3.9.2 Each box should be labelled with the name of the excavating organisation / group / individual, site name, site code, and material type stored therein.
- 3.9.3 Boxes must be labelled using foil-backed box labels. The labels should preferably be printed but, if handwritten, need to be legibly filled out using an archival permanent black marker pen. Labels must be stuck to the left side of both a short and long side of the box. Crystal boxes should be labelled with film marking pen or permanent black marker pen on an archive-standard label placed inside the box.
- 3.9.4 Apart from small sites, where all the finds will fit into one box, materials should not be mixed. For such smaller sites, boxes should be partitioned using acid-free boxboard. Boxes should not mix finds of significantly different robustness.
- 3.9.5 Unstable and untreated material which cannot be conserved must be packed in the appropriate microclimate, following conservation advice, to ensure its long-term stability. Fragile objects, such as those made of iron, should be packed with sufficient silica gel and humidity indicator strips in an appropriate sealed container to maintain low humidity. If stored for a long time, the gel should be checked periodically and renewed accordingly.
- 3.9.6 No box or container should weigh more than 8kg in total.
- 3.9.7 Large, worked building stones, other large stone tools and extra-large objects should be clean, stable, free of debris, protected by suitable packaging, and clearly labelled.
- 3.9.8 Labels and finds bags marked in permanent black marker pen.
- 3.9.9 Finds selected for illustration in the publication should be packed in marked containers and labelled to be easily identifiable.
- 3.9.10 Finds identified within specialist reports should be individually identifiable within the archive. Similarly, where specialists have sorted finds into different types within a context, these groups should be bagged accordingly and labelled with their identification.
- 3.9.11 Packing List stating the number and sizes of boxes and containers in which the different categories of finds are stored, the numbers of items in each box, and the number and type of any large, unboxed finds. Any particularly large objects should include their estimated size and weight.

3.9.12 Storage Location List stating where all finds are stored, including any finds or samples stored in specialist laboratories or stores with a description of what those finds or samples are.

## 4 Reporting and Allocation

4.1 For objects claimed for the Crown as Treasure Trove by the Queen and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (QLTR) the process of allocation to museums is administered via the Treasure Trove Unit through the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel. Given the desirability to allocate entire archaeological assemblages to a single museum, the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel will deal with the allocation of all parts of an assemblage although not all categories of material are strictly covered by Treasure Trove law, e.g. human remains and environmental samples. Documentary archives are deposited in the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), operated by Historic Environment Scotland. Assemblages recovered offshore in tidal waters must be reported to the Receiver of Wreck in the first instance.

4.2 Assemblages not claimed for the Crown as Treasure Trove, or which having been claimed no museum then bids for, become the property of the finder. The archaeological company, organisation or individual responsible for the excavation or recovery of the material should ensure in this case that it is offered promptly to an appropriate museum, heritage or visitor centre, or community group for long-term curation. Advice may be obtained from [Museum Galleries Scotland](#). Should no appropriate home be found for the assemblage then the responsible archaeological company, organisation or individual should dispose of the material in an ethical manner.

4.3 Site Archive for allocation and transfer should include three elements:

- The assemblage, correctly boxed, packaged and labelled - For the museum
- The documentation to accompany the assemblage - For the museum
- The original site documentation, photographs, reports etc. - For NRHE

4.4 Once an assemblage is allocated to a museum, the Treasure Trove Unit will contact the depositing archaeological company, organisation or individual, with the Treasure Trove

Reference Number. This should be added to all relevant assemblage documentation to ensure ease of cross-referencing.

## **5.0 Transfer to a Museum After Allocation**

- 5.1 Following completion of the post-excavation programme of analysis, basic conservation, and research (acknowledging that there will always be further future research possibilities around any assemblage as knowledge and techniques develop), archaeological assemblages must be reported to the Treasure Trove Unit. After allocation to a museum, assemblages become the property of that museum following delivery to the museum and signing of transfer documentation. The archaeological organisation and museum should agree a timetable for transfer following submission of a Packing List to the museum, with the transferring organisation contacting the receiving museum to agree a date for transfer and to ensure someone is there to receive and check the material. If for any reason the assemblage is incomplete at the time of transfer this must be drawn to the attention of the museum staff and a date given for the delivery of the remainder, but such a split should only occur under exceptional circumstances (e.g. an application to ‘Borrow and Display Unallocated Treasure Trove’). If any part of the assemblage is to be deposited elsewhere (such as the human remains) this must be discussed and agreed with the museum first and fully recorded. All costs of transfer are to be met by the depositor.
- 5.2 Prior to transfer, the archaeological organisation must ensure that the assemblage is complete and that it is appropriately packaged, and all documentation has been updated where necessary. All material should be clearly labelled with relevant reference numbers and the contents of all boxes / containers accurately listed.

The assemblage should be accompanied with sufficient documentation to allow the museum to catalogue, research and interpret the assemblage and facilitate its future use by all interested individuals. This will include a Statement of Significance and Potential, which only needs to be a brief synopsis or paragraph outlining the importance (or otherwise) of the site and its finds (see associated template).

### **5.3 Documentation accompanying the assemblage should include (as a minimum):**

- 5.3.1 Data Structure Report and copies of relevant site registers (registers and databases in an accessible digital format such as spreadsheets): contexts, finds and sample lists, including concordances of finds and samples to contexts, and all updated specialist identifications.
  - 5.3.2 Digital copies of drawings, photographs, and illustrations of the assemblage (including any copyright or intellectual property right caveats).
  - 5.3.3 Digital photographs should as a minimum include all small / special finds.
  - 5.3.4 Packing List of all boxes / containers and any unboxed finds (digital and printed copy).
  - 5.3.5 Updated Storage Location List for any finds or samples stored in specialist laboratories with a description of what those finds, or samples, are.
  - 5.3.6 List of symbols and codes used within the documentation and their meaning.
  - 5.3.7 All reports describing conservation, assessment, or analysis of the assemblage (including X-radiographs), in a digital format.
  - 5.3.8 Statement of Conservation Requirements for the mid to long-term (see Template).
  - 5.3.9 All publications deriving from the analysis of the assemblage.
  - 5.3.10 Statement on the Local / Regional / National / International Significance and Potential of the assemblage (see Template).
  - 5.3.11 The Treasure Trove allocation reference number (see Section 4.4).
- 5.4 The receiving museum will retain the right to refuse to accept any assemblage that does not meet the expected standards. It is the responsibility of the depositor to rectify any lapse in standard, and to re-deliver the assemblage to the receiving museum at their own expense.
- 5.5 The receiving museum will not accept unprocessed environmental samples.
- 5.6 At the same time as the transfer of the assemblage, the Museum Processing Fee (see separate guidance) must be paid. Failure to do so will result in the non-acceptance of the assemblage and return to the depositing archaeological organisation.
- 5.7 The museum should check the contents of the deposited packed assemblage against the documentation received within an agreed timeframe with the depositor (note that a signed

entry form or receipt at the time of deposition is not the same as accepting the assemblage as meeting this standard). Any discrepancies should be referred to the donor organisation for resolution.

- 5.8 The receiving museum, upon receipt of the assemblage, will have the right to research, study, display, publish and provide public access to all information and finds contained in the archive, subject to the relevant caveats and permissions associated with copyright and intellectual property rights of the documentation supplied at the time of transfer.

## 6.0 Acknowledgements

This guidance was prepared as part of the ‘Before the Museum Project’ led by the Association of Local Government Archaeologists Scotland (ALGAO: Scotland) and the National Museums Scotland (NMS), and funded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) as part of Scotland’s Archaeology Strategy. The guidance was developed by the Museum Working Group of Scotland’s Archaeology Strategy: Bruce Mann (Aberdeenshire Council and ALGAO: Scotland, and Chair of Working Group), Claire Pannell (East Lothian Council), Jane Flint (Glasgow Museums), Katinka Dalglish (Glasgow Museums), Jenny Murray (Shetland Museum), Mark Hall (Perth & Kinross Museum), Lisa Brown (Historic Environment Scotland), Beth Spence (Historic Environment Scotland), Emily Freeman (Treasure Trove Unit), and Fraser Hunter (NMS). Particular thanks also go to Liz Mylod (NMS) and Judith Anderson (HES) for their work on the Statement of Significance template and associated guidance. Many individuals and organisations provided feedback during the consultation stages for the development of this guidance, and the project team thanks all of them for their time and insights.



## 7.0 Additional Resources

1. Society for Museum Archaeology (SMA) Guidelines - <http://socmusarch.org.uk/training/smart-project/>
2. Society for Museum Archaeology (SMA) Resources 'Materials Factsheets':
  - [Botanical Materials](#)
  - [Ceramics](#)
  - [Collections Packaging & Silica Gel](#)
  - [Composite Objects](#)
  - [Faunal Materials](#)
  - [Glass](#)
  - [Human Remains](#)
  - [Leather](#)
  - [Metals \(Ferrous\)](#)
  - [Metals \(Non-Ferrous\)](#)
  - [Stone](#)
  - [Textiles](#)
  - [Thin Sections](#)
  - [Waterlogged Materials](#)
3. Collections Trust - <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/>
4. Collections Trust 'SPECTRUM' UK Collection Management Standard - <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/>
5. Chartered Institute for Archaeologist (CIfA) Guidelines - <https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa>
6. British Archaeological Jobs & Resources (BAJR) Guidelines - <http://www.bajr.org/BAJRread/BAJRGuides.asp>
7. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) 'The Treatment of Human Remains in Archaeology' - <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=02e7320f-4fb2-4c4a-8aba-a58e00e3f22c>
8. Museums & Galleries Scotland (MGS) 'Guidelines for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections' - <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/1089/guidelines-for-the-care-of-human-remains-in-scottish-museum-collections.pdf>
9. The Institute of Conservation (ICON) Archaeology Group Guidelines - <https://icon.org.uk/groups/archaeology>

10. ICON 'Care and conservation of archaeological materials' -  
[https://icon.org.uk/system/files/documents/careconarcha4\\_version\\_1.pdf](https://icon.org.uk/system/files/documents/careconarcha4_version_1.pdf)
11. Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) and Archaeology Data Service 'Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe' -  
<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/arches/Wiki.jsp?page=Main>
12. New South Wales Office of Environment & Heritage 'Stabilising Stuff: A Guide for Conserving Archaeological Finds in the Field' - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Heritage/guide-for-conserving-archaeological-finds-in-the-field.pdf>
13. Leigh, D., Watkinson, D., Neal, V., 1998 'First Aid for Finds: Practical Guide for Archaeologists', ICON
14. Robinson, W., 1998 'First Aid for Underwater Finds', Archetype Publications Ltd
15. Historic Environment Scotland 'Objects Thesaurus' -  
<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/arches/Wiki.jsp?page=Main>
16. Treasure Trove Scotland - <https://treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/>
17. "An introduction to the museum context and archive creation and issues: the SMART standard; NPPF (England); Mendoza review; SMA collecting surveys."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJMz8MuSPX8&feature=youtu.be>
18. "Archaeological Archives: definitions; composition and the requirements of different elements; archive practice from project planning to deposition, including selection and local and national standards."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TQVv6aQvk0&feature=youtu.be>
19. "Curatorial practice: accessioning, collections care, accessibility."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRBmNfkNZL8&feature=youtu.be>
20. "Archive use: outreach, exhibition, education, research."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsXztU5pJKk&feature=youtu.be>
21. Forum on Information Standards in Heritage – thesaurus tables and candidate terms for Archaeological Objects, Archaeological Sciences, Building Materials, Maritime Fixtures and Fittings, etc -  
<http://www.heritage-standards.org.uk/fish-vocabularies/>



## **APPENDIX 1 Processing Environmental Samples and Ecofacts**

Museums will not accept unprocessed bulk soil samples, sieve residues, or unprocessed Kubiena tins, except in exceptional circumstances (see below). Soil samples should have been assessed and those identified as being of potential processed during post-excavation. Even if post-excavation funding does not permit full analysis, all samples identified as of value should have been flotted, the flots dried and labelled, and the residues sorted.

In the case of a 'failed site', where no post-excavation work has been carried out, museums are willing to consider acting as temporary store for unprocessed samples, subject to the person depositing the archive making a good case for this.

Museums will accept sub-samples / grab samples intended as an archive for future geochemical work. These should be clearly labelled as such on the bag or other container, and listed as for other finds, with a digital box list provided.

Soil thin sections should be safely and securely stored, clearly labelled, and listed.

Waterlogged samples will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, if accompanied by a rationale for their retention, and guidance to their long-term storage or an agreed timescale for discard. Many museums have no suitable storage facilities for such material; others only for its passive storage (in a wet or cold store). Such samples should normally be processed, and if of value conserved, as part of the post-excavation process. Any waterlogged samples must be clearly flagged at the time of reporting to Treasure Trove.

Faunal assemblages are accepted if cleaned, and if bagged, clearly labelled, suitably packed, and accompanied by box lists and archive information which allows the assemblage to be interrogated. Unstratified faunal material should not normally be retained unless the excavator can make a special case for it.

Macroplant remains are another important resource for future work. They should be in a stable condition, suitably packed and labelled, and with accompanying documentation.

## APPENDIX 2 Summary of Packaging for Finds

	Plastic Box	Cardboard Box	Crystal Box	Plastic Bag Sealed	Plastic Bag Perforated	Acid Free Tissue	Polyethylene Foam	Jiffy Foam	Fluted Plastic Board	Bubble Wrap	Silica Gel	Acid Free Plastic Sleeves	Acid Free Card
<b>Material Type</b>													
Ironwork	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		
Copper / Silver Alloy	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		
Lead	✓				✓		✓	✓					
Glass	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Stone / Flint		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Ceramic		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Wood / Leather		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Textile		✓	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓
Bone		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Amber / Shale	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
							<i>These materials can be used as support or liners for any material</i>						
<b>Composite</b>	<i>Packaging will normally favour one particular type of material. Please consult your conservator for best advice.</i>												

Based on a table developed by © Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service 2018

**APPENDIX 3 Deposition Checklist**

<b>Included in this Archive:</b>		
Packing List		(digital and hard copy)
Document Boxes		(state number)
CDs / DVDs / External Memory Devices		(state number)
Contents Sheet for each CD / DVD / External memory device		
Data Structure Report		(mandatory)
Publication / s		
Statement of Assemblage Significance and Potential		(mandatory)
Statement of Conservation Requirements		(mandatory)
Copy of Context Register		
Copy of Small Finds Register		
Copy of Samples Register		
Copy of Photographic Register		
List of Finds		(mandatory)
Copies of Drawings / Illustrations of finds		
Photographs of finds		
List of symbols and codes used		(mandatory)
Updated Storage Location List (finds and samples for non-deposited material in this assemblage)		(mandatory)
Specialist Reports (conservation)		(mandatory)
Specialist Reports (analysis)		(mandatory)
Index of X-rays		(mandatory if any)
Copy of X-rays		(mandatory if any)
Assemblage Boxes – Finds		(state number)
Assemblage Boxes – Environmental		(state number)
Individual finds (large non-boxed, e.g. building stone)		(state number)
Treasure Trove Reference No		(mandatory)

## APPENDIX 4 Statement of Significance for Archaeological Assemblages Template

Part 1 – Originating Site Identification			
Site Name / Site Code		Museum Accession Number	
Assessor(s)			
Date (dd/mm/yy)			
Excavation Details			
Has this statement been agreed with the relevant Local Authority Archaeologist? (Y/N)			
Part 2 – Site Summary and Significance			
Site Description			
Period	Palaeolithic		Roman
	Mesolithic		Early Medieval/Viking
	Neolithic		Medieval
	Bronze Age		Post-medieval
	Iron Age		Modern
Site Statement of Significance			
Part 3 – Assemblage Summary and Significance			
Assemblage Summary			
Assemblage Statement of Significance			
Materials Represented	Struck Stone		Industrial Debris
	Other Stone		Worked Bone/Antler
	Ceramic		Textiles
	Metal		Leather
Other		Glass	Wood

<b>Assessment Values:</b>	
<b>Rarity / Uniqueness</b>	
Key Points	
Site Level	
Local / Regional Level	
National / International Level	
<b>Evidential / Research Value</b>	
Key Points	
Site Level	
Local / Regional Level	
National / International Level	
<b>Historical / Cultural Meaning</b>	
Key Points	
Site Level	
Local / Regional Level	
National / International Level	
<b>Sensory / Visual Quality / Emotional Impact</b>	
Key Points	
Site Level	
Local / Regional Level	
National / International Level	
<b>Completeness / Condition</b>	
Key Points	
Site Level	
Local / Regional Level	
National / International Level	
<b>Part 4 – Object Significance</b>	

*There is a spreadsheet version for use with multiple objects: Statement of Archaeological Significance\_Objects\_Template.xlsx*

**Rarity / Uniqueness**

Key Points

Site Level

Local / Regional Level

National / International Level

**Evidential / Research Value**

Key Points

Site Level

Local / Regional Level

National / International Level

**Historical / Cultural Meaning**

Key Points

Site Level

Local / Regional Level

National / International Level

**Sensory / Visual Quality / Emotional Impact**

Key Points

Site Level

Local / Regional Level

National / International Level

**Completeness / Condition**

Key Points

Site Level

Local / Regional Level

National / International Level

**Part 5 – Gaps in Understanding**

<b>Part 6 – Associated Sites / Assemblages / Archives</b>
<b>Part 7 – Additional Notes</b>

## APPENDIX 5 Guidance for completing the Statement of Significance for Archaeological Assemblages Template

### 1. Introduction

This template is designed to help you draft a statement of significance for an assemblage prior to deposition with a museum. It should facilitate the transfer of knowledge between the archaeologists undertaking excavation and the museum receiving the assemblage, providing summary statements to aid the receiving museum in managing the objects long-term, making them accessible to the public and researchers, and seeking funding to do so.

The assessor should bear in mind that there are often significant delays between completion of work related to the excavation, deposition in the museum, cataloguing by the museum and use by researchers, and that information arising from the excavation and analysis will not necessarily be easily accessible once deposited.

As the objects are at the start of their museum life, the assessor is not expected to assess the potential of the assemblage for museum use, in exhibitions, for engagement, and the practicalities of storage. However, there is space at the end (Additional Notes) for the assessor to note this if they wish.

The template and guidance have been created using the following resources:

- Collections Trust: Reviewing Significance 3.0 <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/reviewing-significance-3-0/>
- UCL Collections Review Toolkit - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/projects/collections-review>
- Society for Museum Archaeology: Guidance on the rationalisation of museum archaeology collections - <http://socmusarch.org.uk/projects/guidance-on-the-rationalisation-of-museum-archaeology-collections/>
- Statements of Significance and Assessments of Significance for Historic Environment Scotland Properties in Care, and associated Guidance and Templates, Historic Environment Scotland (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationid=c1a6bae4-6544-4f86-9411-a57000d769df>)
- ScARF: *Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland* <https://scarf.scot/thematic/future-thinking-on-carved-stones-in-scotland/>
- Historic England, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/constructive-conservation/conservation-principles>

### 2. Detailed Guidance

#### 2.1 Identification

Site Name / Site Code	Museum Accession Number	From receiving museum (if available)
Assessor(s)	Name of person/people carrying out the assessment of significance	
Date	Date of assessment	
Excavation Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why excavated (e.g. development control, university research, community project)</li> <li>• Excavation dates</li> <li>• Nature of excavation (fieldwalking, watching brief, evaluation, full excavation)</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Percentage of site fieldwalked/evaluated/excavated</i></li> </ul>
<b>Has this statement been agreed with the Local Authority archaeologist?</b>	<i>Complete if assemblage generated through developer-led commercial activity</i>

## 2.2 Site Details and Significance

The significance of the site can affect the significance of the assemblage. This section should include key information about the site but can direct the reader to existing statements of significance, descriptive information, timelines, provided they are freely and publicly available.

<b>Site Description</b>	<p><i>Should include name of site, short description, location, key features, key facts. It could include references to publications about the site.</i></p> <p><i>Previous work on the site should be mentioned, to allow correlation of assemblages.</i></p>
<b>Site Statement of Significance</b>	<p><i>A short statement of the most important aspects of significance for the site. This should include a history of the site and indication of where the assemblage fits into this, and how the assemblage relates to site. See assemblage significance below.</i></p> <p><i>See the summary statement of significance from Historic Environment Scotland as an example - <a href="https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationid=c1a6bae4-6544-4f86-9411-a57000d769df">https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationid=c1a6bae4-6544-4f86-9411-a57000d769df</a></i></p> <p><i>This statement could refer the reader to existing statements of significance for the site if they exist elsewhere.</i></p>

## 2.3 Assemblage Summary and Significance

<b>Assemblage Summary</b>	<p><i>Descriptive statement to include key facts such as:</i></p> <p><i>Number of items</i></p> <p><i>Types of items</i></p> <p><i>Material type</i></p> <p><i>Age/date range of items</i></p> <p><i>Scope of assemblage being deposited, and details of any review/reduction in size/sampling of material types/exclusion of specific object types (e.g. soil samples removed from assemblage following analysis)</i></p> <p><i>Analysis done on the assemblage (this could be covered in evidential assessment values below)</i></p>
<b>Statement of Significance</b>	<p><i>Summary statement based on values assessed below. This statement should express how and in what ways the assemblage (and/or objects within it) are significant in relation to the site and the local area, and its significance nationally and internationally. It should consider the assemblage as a whole, but could draw attention to key objects or groups of objects within the assemblage. This might be especially unusual, or typical, objects, those which provide dating evidence, those in excellent condition.</i></p>

<b>Assessment Values</b>	
<i>The assemblage should be assessed as a group for each value. It may be pertinent to refer to specific objects which are outliers or key examples. The significance of individual objects can be assessed separately in the object significance section below. The table is divided into general, site, local/regional and national/international level, but the assessor may decide to focus on general points or one particular level only, depending on the assemblage and the information known about it to date.</i>	
<b>Rarity / Uniqueness</b>	
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>This explores the uniqueness or rarity of the material; whether it represents the only, an unusual or a particularly good/typical example of its type. Is the assemblage unique, rare or unusual? Does it contain objects which are unique, rare or unusual?</i></li> </ul>
Site level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>This is relevant where one larger site has seen multiple interventions (for instance, urban excavations); otherwise it need not be filled in.</i></b></li> <li>• <i>Is the assemblage typical of objects found at this site in other excavations/finds? Are the objects the only ones found at this site/at this period? Does the assemblage contain objects which are unexpected or unusual examples for this site?</i></li> </ul>
Local/regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is the assemblage typical of objects found at similar sites in the local area/region? Does the assemblage contain objects which are unexpected or unusual examples for this local area/region?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage contain unique (or excellent) examples of objects of a type with strong regional connections?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there objects which are the only (or best) examples of particular types from this local area?</i></li> </ul>
National/ International level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage contain objects which are unexpected or unusual examples for Scotland, UK, worldwide?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there objects or groups of objects which are the only (or best) examples of particular types in Scotland, UK or worldwide?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is the assemblage as a whole unique, or an excellent example of its type/date in Scotland, UK or worldwide?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evidential / Research Value</b>	
Key points	<p><i>This section assesses the potential of the assemblage to yield information about the past at the site, local/regional, national/international levels. The assessor should include any future avenues for research or analysis.</i></p> <p><i>The assessor could note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publications arising from study of the assemblage</i></li> <li>• <i>Research potential (current research projects, avenues for future research and analysis)</i></li> <li>• <i>Specific objects or groups which provide dating for site contexts or other objects.</i></li> </ul>
Site level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To what extent the assemblage provides evidence for the site's use, age etc.</i></li> </ul>
Local/regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To what extent the assemblage feeds into Regional Research Frameworks</i></li> </ul>
National/ International level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To what extent the assemblage feeds into Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) and other national or international research frameworks</i></li> </ul>
<b>Historical / Cultural Meaning</b>	
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or any of the objects reflect or illuminate a particular theme, group, event, place or activity of cultural or historical significance?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there objects or examples of object types associated with any event, activity, place or theme of significance to a specific community or group?</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it have a close association with specific people, events, spaces; or is it illustrative more generally of a way of life, tradition, practice, belief, or group of people?</i></li> </ul>
Site level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Could the assemblage support study of the site, its topography, land use, built environment, or the use of resources?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does it enrich understanding of the site itself or of other objects from the site? Does it help to interpret aspects of the site’s history, building, or locality?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, event, belief, place or activity of cultural or historical significance from the site?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects demonstrate past ways of life on the site at specific periods?</i></li> </ul>
Local/regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, organisation, event, place or activity of local / regional cultural, artistic, scientific, spiritual, technological or historical significance?</i></li> <li>• <i>Could it support study of the local /regional natural environment, topography, land use, built environment, or the use of resources?</i></li> </ul>
National/ International level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, organisation, event, place or activity of national / international cultural or historical significance?</i></li> <li>• <i>Could it make a significant contribution to the study of any specific discipline within Scotland, the UK or internationally?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does it have a significant place the development of the work of a creative movement, a particular manufacturing or technological process?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is the assemblage or objects within it linked to a pivotal discovery or innovation in the history of science, technology or design?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Sensory / Visual Quality / Emotional Impact</b>	
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it demonstrate technical and/or creative accomplishment, or have artistic value?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the assemblage or objects within it have a strong visual / sensory / emotional impact?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is the assemblage or objects within it linked to an event, site or person with a strong emotional impact at a local, regional, national level? E.g. objects from battlefields, graves, religious or spiritual sites</i></li> </ul>
Site level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Was the assemblage or any object within it a focal point for users/inhabitants of the site at a particular period?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the form, colour, materials, or imagery in the assemblage or specific objects have a particular meaning or significance?</i></li> </ul>
Local/regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the form, colour, materials, or imagery in the assemblage or specific objects have any specific local / regional meaning?</i></li> <li>• <i>Could any of the objects have a particular emotional resonance for local / regional communities?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the objects recognised as ‘iconic’ or linked to other objects, peoples or sites recognised as ‘iconic’ locally or regionally?</i></li> </ul>
National/ International level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Could any of the objects have a particularly strong emotional resonance for Scotland’s, the UK or other countries’ communities?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the form, colour, materials, or imagery in the assemblage or specific objects have any implicit national / international meaning?</i></li> </ul>

<b>Completeness/Condition</b>	
Key points	<p><i>Identify any especially vulnerable objects or object types. The specific condition of objects and any conservation requirements will be on separate list.</i></p> <p><i>Looking at the assemblage as a whole, is it:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Intact / complete / largely in original condition?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it in unusually good condition for its type?</i></li> <li>• <i>Can it be safely handled by staff / researchers?</i></li> <li>• <i>If altered / repaired, does this tell us about its history of ownership or use?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is its impact / interpretive value affected by its condition?</i></li> </ul>
Site level	<i>Does any alteration, wear or damage tell us anything about the site?</i>
Local/regional level	<i>Does any alteration, wear or damage have a local/regional significance?</i>
National/ International level	<i>Does any alteration, wear or damage have a national/international significance?</i>

## **2.4 Object Significance**

*This section can be used to: assess the significance of particular sub-groups of objects, or to highlight especially significant objects. If a large number of objects are assessed, consider using the spreadsheet ‘Object Statement of Significance Template’. There is no section on condition as this is recorded on the condition/conservation packing list.*

## **2.5 Gaps in Understanding**

*Please indicate:*

*Any major gaps in the understanding of the site or assemblage*

*Limits of our knowledge on which these statements are based*

*Unknown unknowns...*

## **2.6 Associated sites/assemblages/archives**

## **2.7 Additional Notes**

*Further useful comments about the assemblage. The assessor might use this to:*

- *Identify specific parts of the assemblage which would benefit from further review/disposal*
- *Make recommendations on storage*
- *Indicate if the objects have already been used in engagement activities or future potential for this*

## APPENDIX 6 Statement of Conservation Requirements Template

<b>Statement of Conservation Requirements</b>	
Please specify below items which need particular care within this assemblage.	If none, please tick here: <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Items requiring storage in low-humidity conditions</b> (primarily metals)	
<i>Specify items by find number &amp; box number Specify any particularly fragile items within this</i>	
<b>Items requiring storage in other stable-humidity and temperature conditions</b>	If not applicable, tick here: <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Specify items by find number; box number; conditions required</i>	
<b>Other items of particular fragility</b>	If not applicable, tick here: <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Specify items by find number; box number; precautions required</i>	
<b>Items with particular issues over lifting and transport</b>	If not applicable, tick here: <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Specify items by find number; box number; precautions required</i>	
<b>Other relevant conservation issues</b> (e.g. fragile objects of composite materials)	If not applicable, tick here: <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Specify items by find number; box number; conservation required</i>	
<b>Date Completed:</b>	<b>Completed By:</b>