Preface
The University will aim for the highest standards possible and to be known as having a leading museum service. It will therefore maintain the Full Accreditation status of the University's museums, and develop museum provision such that the University is able to retain the Recognition status of its entire museum collection.

Alongside maintaining and enhancing the museum’s services, a priority will be given to developing a plan for a new collections centre, aiming for a single accessible facility for most of the university's museum collections. This will require an external assessment of requirements and will consider collections care, research access and public engagement facilities. At the same time a plan will be developed for major improved interpretation facilities as a permanent replacement for the displays in Marischal College.

The programme of changing exhibitions will continue, with plans developed for enhancements to the Zoology Museum. Displays and activities should be designed to draw on the full range of material and ideas relating to the university's museum collections.

Collaboration within and beyond the University will be essential to enhancing the use and standing of the University’s museums and collections, including participation in and leadership of networks and collaborative projects, including those that have a national and international impact. Opportunities for increased external funding will be discussed with the Development Trust and all operational areas critically evaluated to ensure the highest quality approaches and efficiency. The main staffing priority is appointment to the vacant role of Curator (Collections Access); this will enable a review of collections-related activities as well as delivering the expected level of service.

1. Provide high quality and accessible public engagement

1a Provide and develop user focused experiences

- A culture of high quality customer care will be nurtured, including training for staff and volunteers, a review of opening hours (particularly for the Zoology Museum), and increased consultation and evaluation and survey to ensure that activities meet the needs of visitors. The use of comments books, informal focus groups, surveys and customer feedback (such as TripAdvisor) will be considered as ways of understanding visitor experiences.

- The range of methods of interpretation will be widened and access enhanced for a wider range of visitors, recognising the variety of learning styles and preferences and the incorporation of activities and events with exhibitions.

- Relationships with community groups to be nurtured through collections-inspired projects and events, with specific priority groups and projects identified.

- Proposals will be developed for improvements to external signage of museum venues will be improved, in conjunction with other university sections.

- Monetary donations from visitors will be more actively encouraged.
1b **Enhance collaboration within the University**

- A priority will be given to ensuring close articulation between museum activities and the University’s public engagement strategy and opportunities for international impact, with increasing collaboration with External Relations and the Development Trust.

- A priority will be given to ensuring that museum interpretation and activities reflect current scholarship. This will include collaboration between museum and academic staff on at least one major co-curated exhibition per year, as well as scholarly work by museum staff.

- The scope of public engagement activities will continue to be developed to make use of the full range of the collections, working in collaboration with other University staff.

1c **Develop an effective marketing strategy**

- The highest priority is to be given to marketing of the University’s museums and collections, with a focus on social media (particularly Facebook and Twitter), three publicity leaflets each year, and improvements to the web pages (particularly improving the pages relating to learning, events and engagement with students and the public).

- Work will continue to maintain and develop a suitable selection of images for marketing.

1d **Develop a clear focus for the learning and events programmes**

- The University Museums Learning and Access Policy will be reviewed, with a clear focus on the collections and academic excellence to deliver a distinctive service that aims to engage and challenge people.

- Developing provision for young adults and students will be the main priority for development, with innovative and exciting events to target this audience. This will include large scale events to generate interest, alongside a programme of specialised events targeted at specific groups.

- The service to schools will focus on at least three enhanced projects each year, with long-term relationships with selected schools being developed.

- Engagement with families will be encouraged through the events programme, focusing particularly on two ‘Night at the Museum’ events in January and May.

- The events programme will be developed to articulate more closely with exhibitions, while the evening lecture series organised in collaboration with partner organisations will be reviewed.

- The museum will participate in national and University events, such as the University’s May Festival, Doors Open Day and the Festival of Museums.

1e **Provide a stimulating changing exhibition programme**
• Exhibitions will draw on current scholarship, aiming to challenge preconceptions and develop fresh interpretations of the collections. The ‘Museum Dogme’ will be used to challenge the creative practice of making exhibitions.

• The development of the University Museums’ exhibition policy and procedures will be completed, including new proposal forms and the establishment of a peer review process.

• King’s Museum will host two exhibitions each year, displaying material from across the collections in relation to current research and thinking. The summer/autumn exhibition in King’s Museum will normally be curated by students on the ‘Curating an Exhibition’ course, while other exhibitions will aim to involve academic staff as co-curators.

• Interpretation material about the Old Aberdeen Town House will be developed, while a programme of small displays of current interest will be developed for the stairwell case.

• Two exhibitions each year in the Art Spaces in King’s College (James Mackay Hall) and the MacRobert Building form a core part of the University Museums exhibition programme, and will be enhanced with improved signage and publicity.

• In conjunction with staff of the Aberdeen Biodiversity Centre, proposals will be developed for further improvements to the Zoology Museum.

• Procedures will be developed to enable the Museums to more effectively support short-term small displays on campus in association with other sections.

1f Develop the loans programme
• Continue to support loans to other museums and similar institutions as part of the museums’ public engagement programme. The costs of such loans will normally be borne by the borrower, with priority given to those in which the loan would have a significant public impact.

• Priority will be given to the development of partnerships leading to the co-curation of exhibitions in other venues, particularly in venues offering an international impact. Loans to source communities will also be encouraged.

2 Enhance teaching and learning in the University
2a Deliver the MLitt in Museum Studies and other credit-bearing teaching
• Continue to deliver and develop the MLitt programme in Museum Studies and identify opportunities for museum contributions to other degree programmes, including involvement in the design of new courses.

2b Enhance collaboration between museum and teaching staff to support teaching
• A range of academic staff will be appointed as Honorary Curatorial Fellows and so enabled to increase the use the museums and collections for teaching, including the development of teaching collections and the use of museum venues for teaching and learning.

• When the Curator (Collections Access) is in post, work with Honorary Curatorial Fellows and others to develop teaching resources.
• Museum staff engaged in teaching will be encouraged to develop their skills to enable them to more effectively contribute to university teaching.

2c Enhance opportunities for student involvement with the museums

• A priority will be given to developing events and the use of social media to develop greater student involvement

• Develop the student volunteering programme, including reviewing volunteer recruitment and support to ensure the highest quality volunteer experience. Collaboration with the University’s Careers Service will ensure that museum volunteering continues to contribute to the STAR award programme, noting the importance of Spring recruitment to enable this.

• Where practicable, participate in internship and placement projects to offer workplace learning opportunities for students

3 Enable and promote research

3a Improve the research use of the museums and collections

• The research access policy and procedures will be reviewed to enable continued support for research enquiries, equality of access to all external enquirers and to ensure that findings are incorporated in museum documentation.

• Enhanced support will be offered to research projects that offer a clear input to the museum’s public engagement programme, and to those in which the museum is involved from the planning stage. Wherever possible, this will be supported by external funding.

• Museum staff will be supported to undertake research leading to publication and conference presentations on aspects of the collections and museum activities.

• Work with Honorary Curatorial Fellows and others to identify research opportunities, including student research projects and externally funded projects that use the collection.

4 Support our people

4a Ensure that the staff structure reflects changing requirements

• Filling the vacant Curator (Collections Access) post is an urgent priority

• Identify means of ensuring long-term funding for the Museum Communications Assistant post

• Identify opportunities for funding to support professional curation of the Zoology and Herbarium collections.

• Participate in appropriate internship schemes to provide additional support as well as personal development.
4b  Support staff development

- Improve induction procedures for paid staff and for volunteers

- Fully implement the University appraisal scheme, including a formal six-monthly review and individual staff development plans that consider the resources required. Participation in external networks, conferences and research activity will be planned as part of the appraisal process.

- Advantage will be taken of networking opportunities offered by professional organisations, with staff encouraged to engage in at least one relevant professional network, notably University Museums in Scotland, the Group for Education in Museums and the Museums Association. Cascading learning will be encouraged.

- Where possible, staff will contribute to academic conferences and publications, highlighting the work and collections of the University’s museums. Consider hosting a UMIS/Universeum conference and meetings of other professional and academic organisations as appropriate.

4c  Develop the volunteer programme

- Develop the volunteer programme to enhance the recruitment, appointment, supervision, training and development of volunteers.

- Develop the role of volunteers and Honorary Curatorial Assistants, identifying appropriate areas of work and supervision.

4d  Enhance collaboration between museum and academic staff

- A forum of Honorary Curatorial Fellows will be established to provide advice and support on museum issues, including identifying research projects and contributing to the peer review process for exhibitions.

- A priority will be given to enabling more academic staff to use the museums and collections for teaching, including the development of teaching collections and the use of museum venues for teaching and learning, with the recording of such collaboration being improved.

- Consideration will also be given to joint appointments of academic/museum staff to further develop close collaboration.

5  Care for the collections

5a  Review disaster prevention and preparedness policies and procedures

- A priority will be given to a review of disaster prevention and preparedness, in conjunction with other areas in Library, Special Collections and Museums, including risk assessments for museum premises and emergency plans and protocols written and implemented.

- Conduct a security review of all sites, ideally with external advice, and review arrangements for the insurance of the museum collections.
5b  Improve conservation and care of collections

• A high priority will be given to writing a collections care and conservation delivery plan for all collections.

• The house-keeping programme and work in the museum stores to improve storage of objects will continue, including increasing the use of volunteers wherever possible

• Work will continue to maintain and improve existing storage facilities, including the use of new storage boxes and rationalising storage.

• Proposals will be developed for further improvements to be made to display conditions in the Zoology Museum.

• Identify art conservation projects for external funding through the University of Aberdeen Development Trust

5c  Improve documentation of the collection

• When Curator (Collections Access) is in post, there will be a focus on a review of collections-related activities, particularly focusing on the science collections. In the meantime, the documentation plan will be reviewed.

• Documentation will continue to focus on up-dating records of object locations in the CALM database and removing temporary inventory numbers, as well as enhancing other information available.

• A priority will be given to externally funded projects and work by volunteers working under the supervision of museum staff.

• Work will continue on the Recognition Fund Pacific Ethnography project. Priorities will be identified for future applications to the Recognition Fund, such as Scottish and Egyptian archaeology.

• A procedure will be developed to ensure that the results of research projects are incorporated into the documentation system, through the use of collection-level descriptions as well as enhancements to records of individual items.

• Photography of the collection will be increased, with images made available online in association with the museum catalogue. A priority is the establishment of protocols to manage photography and subsequent access to images.

5d  Develop the collection

• Acquisitions will be considered where they meet the Collection Development Policy

• Full consideration will be given to repatriation requests if received, following the existing procedure.

• Damaged and inappropriate material will be considered for disposal, especially from Pathology and Scientific Instruments collections