

## Research Ethics Procedure for work carried out with Human Remains

### Introduction

The study and analysis of human remains require both ethical considerations and specific working procedures. The University's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of ethics, rigour, and integrity in all its research is outlined in the University Policy on Research Ethics. This procedure applies to research being conducted under the auspices of Wrexham University which involves the handling, destructive analysis, or digital imaging of human remains. Under the University's Policy of Research Ethics, any research conducted by staff and students at Wrexham University which involves human remains should obtain ethical approval before research commences. All applications for research ethics approval must be submitted through the Wrexham Research Ethics System.

### Definition

For the purposes of this procedure, 'human remains' are defined as any full or partial human skeletons or biological material samples retained by museums and collections, or which emerge as a result of archaeological and other investigations, which are over 100 years old. In accordance with the Human Tissue Act (2004), nails and hair are not included in the University's definition of human remains.

Research should be interpreted broadly to include all investigations being conducted under the auspices of the University which generate knowledge, understanding or assessment, whether funded or unfunded.

### Scope

The University Policy and this procedure apply with equal force to projects undertaken by staff or students of the University in any location, including joint work with third-party organisations.

### Ethical Principles on human remains

Wrexham University has adopted the below relevant principles in line with the published recommendations of the British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO Code of Ethics 2019); the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) (Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, DCMS, 2005); and the Guidance for the Best Practice for the treatment of Human Remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England, 2017.

Underlying all the below principles, when working and handling human remains, researchers should demonstrate transparency, rigour, integrity, sensitivity, and cultural understanding throughout the development of their research.

### Respect

Regardless of the age of the remains being investigated, researchers must act with respect for the person to whom the remains belong, treating the material with discretion and dignity. Furthermore, researchers must respect the diverse religious, spiritual, and cultural beliefs and attitudes, considering the cultural and historical backgrounds of the individuals, groups, and communities.

### Value

Researchers must respect the value and potential rarity of the human remains being investigated and acknowledge the scientific value of their inquiry. Research which may entail the destruction of material should evaluate and rationalise the value this will have to the scientific investigation of the study.

### Openness

When proposing and carrying out any research activities with human remains, researchers should be open about the purpose and impact of their research project with colleagues, the public, and any third parties. If the identity of the deceased is known, it is important to be open and communicate with any known descendant. Whilst this may lessen with the age of the remains, this principle should not be dismissed and consideration of genealogical descendants or affiliated cultural communities should be considered before and throughout the work.

### Preservation and Conservation

Researchers should consider the preservation and conservation of the materials being investigated. Where possible, remains should not be destroyed in their entirety, as this would prevent verification and replication studies in the future. Analysis, potential research findings, and site of discovery should be open and available for the public and other researchers where possible.

### Contacts

All queries relating to this procedure should be directed to the Research Office - [rescadmin@glyndwr.ac.uk](mailto:rescadmin@glyndwr.ac.uk)