

MUSEUM LOANS POLICY

Incoming and Outgoing Loans 2025–30

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Policy principles

1. The Royal College of Music (RCM) Museum (hereafter the 'Museum') manages, preserves, interprets and displays a Designated collection of musical instruments, paintings, sculptures, early prints and drawings, photographs and memorabilia relating to music. The museum supports formal and informal learning through heritage, promoting onsite and online access to the RCM Museum's collections for the RCM's student and professorial body, as well as reaching new and wider audiences locally, nationally and internationally. Through partnership and collaboration, the Museum undertakes, promotes and supports research and knowledge exchange on the collections and in the field of music and material culture. A part of effectively delivering these outcomes includes the delivery of an active program of incoming and outgoing loans of collection items. The Museum must deliver critical work including the capture critical documentation, maintain effective communication with external parties and ensure the safety of incoming and outgoing collections on loan, facilitating the transparent and appropriate management of the Loans program.

Scope

2. This policy applies to the lending and movement of collection material from the Museum collection and the borrowing of collection material/s from external parties to the Museum. The lending and movement of collection material is hereafter referred to as 'outgoing loans' and 'incoming loans'.

Purpose

3. This policy outlines the principles and guidelines that inform the Loan of objects to and from the Museum to:
 - Facilitate access to objects from the Museum collections to wide audiences both within and outside the RCM.
 - 4. Clarify the controls required for the appropriate transport, storage and display of Museum loans, to facilitate outgoing and incoming loans between the RCM Museum and external parties.
 - Provide access to Museum collections whilst ensuring protections are in place to guarantee the safety and security of the objects, the Museum and any external parties.
 - Capture relevant and necessary information relating to the management of incoming and outgoing loans.

Rationale

5. The Museum must provide, retain and deliver documentation relating to the management of its collection to meet the requirements for Museum Accreditation. Information relating to the management of the Museum's Loan program is outlined in this Policy.

Accreditation

6. To retain Accreditation¹, the Museum is required:

4.1 *To take responsibility for all the collections you manage*

- *To be accountable for your collections you need to know what you own and which collections are on loan, and ensure you have up to date loan documentation.*
- *Robust ownership and loan and/or management agreements are critical for the long-term sustainability of your museum.*

5.1 *An approved documentation policy*

- *Accountability – ensuring you record sufficient information about the objects in the care of your museum so that each object for which you're legally responsible (including loans) can be identified and located*

5.2 *To follow the Spectrum primary documentation procedures*

- *Your documentation procedural manual should cover the primary documentation procedures in the Spectrum standard: ...Loans in (borrowing objects) (and) Loans out (lending objects)*

7.2 *An access plan (that covers...) Loans to other organisations*

Higher Education Museums Galleries and Collections (HEMG) Core Funding

7. In Section B of HEMG's Core funding monitoring it is stated that the Museum must demonstrate:

Significant reach beyond the HEI's own researchers and students ... These services may include ... the provision of loans and images both to individuals and to other museums, galleries and collections ...

8. It also requires reporting on the number of national and international loans including the number of objects, destinations, exhibitions, length and location of displays.

Annual Reporting & Designation

9. As part of the Museum's Annual Reporting and Designation requirements, it is necessary to demonstrate the scope of the Loans program including the number of loans, number of objects, locations and duration of loans and their capacity for outreach and access. As such it is necessary to maintain comprehensive records, documentation and efficient management of the Loans program to ensure the appropriate delivery of the requirements of Accreditation, Core Funding, Designation and the access and outreach goals of the RCM Museum.

¹ Museum Accreditation, *Accreditation Guidance*, 2018. p.43-62

Guidelines for outward loans

Approvals

10. Loans will be undertaken in accordance with the stipulations of this policy in accordance to the requirements of a Loan Agreement (Appendix 1). Loan requests must be submitted using the [Loan Request Form](#), approved by the Curator (or Deputy Curator), and presented to the Collection Management Committee for consideration. The College may add special conditions/variations to Loan Agreements as required, so long as these variations do not place collection at undue risk or subvert the intent of these guidelines. Once considered by the Collection Management Committee, the borrower will be informed of the outcome in writing. Requests for variations to the Loan Agreement by the borrower will need to be approved in writing by the Curator or their representative.

Loan Requests

11. It is acknowledged that unless otherwise recommended by the Collection Management Committee, the Museum:
- Will generally prioritise the internal access and display of collections.
 - In case of prevailing cultural, educational or institutional reasons agreed by Collection Management Committee, the Museum can prioritise loans of Collection to other organisations for the purpose of public exhibition or display. The decision will also be informed by an assessment of the state of conservation of the object and of the risks related to the individual request.
 - Requests for the Loan of Collection items from the Museum Collection should be undertaken through the submission of a [Loan Request Form](#) which outlines the responsibilities of the Lender and the Borrower.
 - Loan requests must include copies of exhibition briefs and the facility report (listing environmental conditions).
12. Requests for Loans should be received by the Museum at least six months prior to the commencement of the loan. In special circumstances approval may be given by a delegate to process loan requests with less notice, however there may be additional costs negotiated with the Borrower to facilitate the loan.
13. Loan periods must not exceed 12 months, other than in exceptional circumstances.
14. International loan of collection items containing materials restricted by [CITES](#) will require the request to be submitted at least 12 months prior to the loan start date and will incur additional costs to meet CITES regulations.

Loan Agreements

15. All loans will be subject to the Museum and external party entering into a loan agreement. The Museum's specific requirements set out in its [Loan Agreement](#) and include, but are not limited to:
- The use of approved couriers.
 - Insurance requirements.
 - Copyright and reproduction.
 - Loan documentation.

- Due diligence regarding provenance of objects for loan.
- Consultation with key stakeholders.

Loans for purposes other than display

16. Under certain circumstances the Museum may lend objects from its collections for purposes other than public exhibition or display, such as valuation, research, analysis, conservation/restoration, performance and recording. Such loans will subject to the conditions of the standard Loan Agreement. Variations related to the specific requirements of the loan will be negotiated between the Museum and the Borrower and approved by the Collection Management Committee.
17. The Museum will consider loans to private organisations or individuals provided the use of the material is consistent with the Museum's functions and strategic priorities and the borrower is able to meet the requirements set out in this policy, the conditions of loan and any variations agreed with the Museum and approved by the Collection Management Committee.
18. The Museum may consider loans to shows, fairs, conventions and other commercial ventures for promotional or educational purposes. Such loans may be subject to loan fees, which may include recovery of direct costs and overheads.

Loan for Use

19. The Museum will not lend objects for performance or use unless the Borrower can demonstrate exceptional need and the ability to provide the appropriate conditions for the care of the object for the duration of the loan. Where a Loan for Performance is approved:
 - The Museum will be acknowledged in program notes and/or recording notes as belonging to the Royal College of Music. All copyright requests and accompanying fees will be negotiated with the RCM Museum.
 - A copy of any recordings, programmes or publications arising from the Loan will be provided to the Museum upon the return of the object, or, within 1 month of the performance or publication.
 - The Museum reserves the right to refuse performance or use if the object is considered to be at unreasonable risk of damage or deterioration beyond the normal risks of use, and if the programming is considered to pose a physical, social, reputational or financial risk to the RCM and/or Museum.

Loans for travelling exhibitions

20. Loans for travelling exhibitions may be approved if the Collection Management Committee is satisfied that all proposed venues conform to the required minimum standards, including security, environmental conditions, cleaning and care, and that the proposed method of transport will mitigate the risk of damage as much as possible, in line with the stipulations of the Loan Agreement. The Museum requires the borrower to provide Standard Facility Report documentation for each venue and that each venue meets the requirements of the Loan Agreement, unless agreed in advance with the Museum and approved by the delegates. Where a venue is unable to meet the requirements of the Loan Agreement, the Museum retains the right to request the immediate return of the Loan at the expense of the Borrower.

Third parties

21. The Museum does not permit borrowers to lend Museum objects to third parties.

Collection Material unavailable for loan

22. The Museum retains the right to refuse the Loan of collection material without justification. In particular, the following factors may limit or impede the Museum's ability to approve the loan of collection:

- Very fragile or politically sensitive objects.
- Objects that are currently on display at the Museum.
- Objects required for display, research, use or teaching during the proposed loan period.
- Objects considered to be icons of the Museum collection and draw significant interest.
- Objects where movement is restricted by the requirements of relevant legislation, including but not limited to:
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), 1975.
 - Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970.
 - Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.
 - The Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994.
 - Protection of Cultural Objects on Loan (Publication and Provision of Information) Regulations 2008.

Loan period

23. Loan periods are included in the Loan Request Form and must be agreed with the Museum. However, standard loan periods should not exceed 12 months unless a loan variation is negotiated and approved by the Museum and the Collection Management Committee. Consideration may be given for an extended loan period subject to the Borrower's need and ability to meet the obligations of the Loan Agreement. Extended loan periods may require additional variations including, but not limited to, periodic condition reporting, photography and the provision of ongoing environmental data. To approve an extended Loan period the Museum must be satisfied that the Borrower can provide and maintain appropriate levels of care for the Collection for the duration of the Loan.

Costs and charges and reciprocal arrangements

24. All costs associated with the loan are to be paid by the borrower. Following an in principal approval of a loan request issued by the Curator, the Museum will provide the borrower an estimate of all fees and charges. Such fees and charges will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account reciprocal arrangements and Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs).

Guidelines for incoming loans

Approvals

25. Approval for inward loans will be given only in accordance with this policy and subject to the terms of the Collection Management Committee delegation. The Museum must ensure that the terms and conditions of the loan are recorded in a written loan agreement between the lender and the Museum. All incoming loans must be approved by the Curator who will then request the approval of the Collection Management Committee.

Loan assessment criteria

26. The Museum will only borrow objects if:
- The Curator or Deputy Curator has made (or agreed to) a request to borrow the objects or has agreed to pursue an offer from the lender to lend the objects to the Museum.
 - It is satisfied, based on consultation with the lender and the Museum's due diligence research in verification of the lender's claims regarding the provenance and chain of title of the objects to be borrowed, that:
 - The lender has authority to lend the objects.
 - There are no outstanding or current third-party claims on the object.
 - That there is sufficient legal/provenance information available for the Museum to proceed with the loan.
 - There are no suspicions that the object(s) was obtained through unauthorised or unscientific excavation of archaeological sites, the destruction or defacing of ancient monuments, historic places or buildings, or the theft from individuals, museums or other repositories.
 - It has consulted with relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the Museum's consultation procedures and the Indigenous cultural rights and engagement policy, where relevant.
 - The object(s) does not include or comprise culturally sensitive material.

Additional criteria for loans

27. Before acceptance of a Loan, the Museum will ensure that:
- The loan complies with the requirements of this policy and the Museum's procedures for incoming loans related to temporary public exhibitions.
 - The level of due diligence undertaken by the Museum is sufficient to identify and mitigate potential risks associated with the object. Additional consideration will be given to objects that may be associated with periods of conflict or vulnerable to illicit trade or theft.
28. The object(s) can be borrowed without contravening national or international conventions, treaties and laws which control the movement of cultural items and natural heritage, such as [CITES](#) and the [Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage on Loan guidance](#).

Disputes and/or claims

29. The Museum will seek to resolve any disagreements regarding the management of loans in a timely manner. Where the dispute cannot be resolved directly or may impact upon the reputation of the College, the Director will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable.

References

- RA Buck and JA Gilmore (eds), The New Registration Methods, American Association of Museums, Washington, 1998
- 30. [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna \(CITES\), 1975](#)
- 31. [Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970](#)
- 32. [Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007](#)
- 33. [The Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994](#)
- 34. [Protection of Cultural Objects on Loan \(Publication and Provision of Information\) Regulations 2008](#)

Signatories and document history

Curator

Gabriele Rossi Rognoni
November 2025

Museum Collections & Operations Manager

Jennifer Brian

Policy reviewed by

Collections Management Committee
October 2025

Approved by

Collections Committee
December 2025 TBC

This policy supersedes:

Former policy	
Incoming Loan Policy	September 2022
Loans in Museum Policy and Forms	September 2022
Template Loan Form	September 2022