



Salary Research and Recommendations: 2024 Update

October 2024

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Purpose of the report

The MA campaigns for inclusive and diverse museums that prioritise fair working conditions and workforce wellbeing. We encourage employers, staff and funders to use the findings in this report as an advocacy tool to highlight the serious issues around low pay in the museum sector, negotiate better salaries and demonstrate the urgent case for reform.

In November 2022 we published our [Salary Research and Recommendations](#) and have encouraged employers, staff and funders to use the findings in this report as an advocacy tool to highlight the serious issues around low pay in the museum sector, negotiate better salaries and demonstrate the urgent case for reform.

Our commitment to fair pay continues and we are delighted to now share with the sector a refreshed report with greater clarity on our expectations of the sector and how we can support everyone to address the realities of low pay and its implications on attracting and retaining talent, as well as the impact on the wellbeing of our workforce.

This inflationary review and update will now take place annually to enable the sector, managers, and individuals to have the most up-to-date information to support advocacy and change in the sector. In addition to this annual review, we will undertake deeper pay research every 4-5 years.

A large, stylized teal number '01' is positioned in the bottom left corner of the page. The '0' is a solid teal circle, and the '1' is a teal vertical bar with a horizontal base. The background behind the number is a dark purple vertical bar that runs down the left side of the page.

Our recommendations

- We **recommend** that employers and funders use the **upper quartile** of salary ranges to set salaries, regardless of the size, type or location of their institution.
- Employers and funders **should not use** the lower quartile ranges to set pay rates.
- We **recommend** that all workers, regardless of contract type or hours of work, should at a minimum be paid the **Real Living Wage** set by the Living Wage Foundation, which is calculated annually based on what people need to live.
- We **recommend** that organisations work with trade unions and staff to develop **progressive working policies**, terms and conditions.
- We **recommend** that employers embed **fair and inclusive recruitment** practices, ensuring that job specifications are based on competence and knowledge, and that formal qualifications are sought only where necessary for the role. See our [Inclusive recruitment and selection guidelines](#).
- We **recommend** that employers and funders consider the recruitment, remuneration and wellbeing of the workforce in a **holistic** way. Our [Workforce Wellbeing research](#), [Front-of-House Charter for Change](#) and [Competency Framework](#) may be used as complementary documents to this report to support progressive workforce policy.
- We **recommend** that employers set aside budget for **staff wellbeing initiatives** and listen to and act on staff and freelance concerns in this area.
- We **recommend** that **funders** use these guidelines to assess whether applicants for funding are paying fairly and have best practice workforce policies in place.
- Although the salary ranges in this survey do not cover freelance rates, we **recommend** that museums*:
 - **Respect and value** freelancers as a core part of the sector workforce.
 - **Pay on time or ahead** of payment terms recognising that cashflow for freelancers is an issue.
 - **Pay fairly**: don't put downward pressure on freelancers' rates because of the cost-of-living crisis. Recognise that a freelance day rate covers costs such as such as pensions, training, tax and insurance.

* These recommendations were developed by the Museum Freelance Network, which operated between 2015 and 2021. The MA is committed to supporting the sector's freelance workforce in terms of pay, treatment and wellbeing. Please contact us if there are key areas of practice for freelancing that you would like us to prioritise.

02

2024 Update to Recommendations

03

Our recommendations remain the same as in 2022, but we want to also highlight our commitment to other practices that will not only ensure that pay is fairly distributed but that opportunities for all are in place to accelerate diversifying the sector, helping it to attract the best talent and reflecting the communities we serve. These are in the areas of inclusive recruitment and selection; pay reporting; and internships.

Inclusive recruitment and selection

All organisations want to attract and retain the best talent, one way of doing this is by ensuring you are appealing to the widest number of applicants and ensuring that everyone is best placed to perform. Our recently published Inclusive Recruitment guidance outlines key recommendations and good practice that when in place can support both the diversification of the sector and the appointment of the best talent available. These include the following:

- Regularly undertaking a [process review](#) to identify barriers or biases within the process, policy and their execution.
- Ensuring [role or job descriptions](#) and [person specifications](#) relate to the actual requirements of the role, rather than historic anomalies and that only valid and relevant criteria for short-listing are included.
- Not making assumptions around knowledge and understanding of particular terminology for example competency or values-based selection.
- Creating an accessible and meaningful [vacancy pack](#) that encourages people to apply, rather than creating an additional barrier.

- Extending your reach through meaningful and targeted [advertising](#), acknowledging the time it takes to complete an application and what this may mean for religious holidays and festivals, and the demands placed on carers.
- Adopting [positive action](#) approaches as a response to understanding your current applicant, candidate and workforce [profile](#) and their relationship to your local demographic.
- Ensuring that all selection activities are [designed](#) with inclusion at their heart, with anticipatory adjustments in place to support and respond to those that may need more specialist requirements.
- Prioritising the candidate experience and supporting growth by offering [feedback](#) to those participating in interviews or other selection activities.
- Ensuring that all those involved in recruitment and selection are competent to do so, and have received appropriate [training and development](#) around employment law, assessment practices and equality and diversity.

Pay reporting

The Equality Act 2010 included the requirement for public sector bodies of a particular size to undertake annual reporting of the pay gaps as they relate to gender. The aims of this pay reporting is to address current and historic underpayment of women in the workplace, and those roles most often undertaken by women, which is known as occupational segregation.

While not all organisations are required to undertake gender pay reporting, this practice clearly signals a commitment to equity and the fair distribution of pay which may affect an organisation's ability to attract and retain staff.

The methods to undertake an equal pay audit are straightforward and there is guidance about it and equal pay in general available from the following sources:

[Equalities and Human Rights Commission Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service Government](#)

While there is currently no requirement to undertake an equal pay audit on other protected characteristics, the UK Government has issued guidance for how to carry out ethnicity equal pay audits, and much of the guidance could also be applied to other protected groups who experience lower pay, for example individuals with a disclosed disability.

Adopting a transparent and objective pay policy should ensure that pay is distributed fairly based on the complexity and impact of a job, rather than the demographic background of the employee.

Internships

Volunteering is part of the ecosystem of the sector, with many museums being wholly volunteer run. A volunteer being defined by the National Council of Volunteering Organisations (NCVO) as someone who spends unpaid time doing something to benefit others.

This is different to being an intern, whereby an internship is an agreed, and often more discrete exchange with an organisation, based on the premise of an intern not only gaining experience in a particular field or role, but also being formally developed as part of it, and having an agreed training and development plan. Internships can be paid or unpaid.

The 2017 [Taylor Review](#) of Modern Working Practices described unpaid internships as an “abuse of power by employers and extremely damaging to social mobility” and there are clear legal and reputational risks associated with hosting unpaid internships.

The [Sutton Trust](#) a charity dedicated to addressing social inequality and mobility has made recommendations on limiting the length of unpaid internships, and more recently stating that all internships should be paid.

Organisations need to ensure that any internship is exactly that, an internship rather than a job, although there is no UK definition of being an intern. How an internship is designed and the approach taken will influence whether the intern is seen as a worker, and thus eligible for the National

Minimum Wage or National Living Wage, depending on age, or not.

Our position is that long-term unpaid internships do not provide equality of access to development opportunities, specifically by those from a working class or lower socio-economic background, where access to the ‘bank of mum and dad’ does not afford the luxury or the opportunity to undertake unpaid work experience and vocational development.

This has a detrimental impact on the talent pipeline entering the sector, which results in a sector having less diversity from a class perspective and from other legally protected groups as a function of the impact of multiple group memberships and intersectionality.

Equally we understand that individuals may wish to gain experience and more formal vocational development outside of a volunteering relationship with an organisation, or postgraduate study.

It is on this basis that the Museums Association recommends the sector only offers unpaid internships for a maximum of three weeks, where it is more possible individuals may be able to apply for funding or allocate time or savings to support their development in the short-term.

We hope that, by adopting a clear but flexible approach to sector experience and vocational development, more people will be able to engage, participate and develop to realise their potential.

Increasing National Minimum and Living Wage

The Museums Association welcomes the continued revision and uplift of pay rates in line with legislation. We know that this has created an increase in the pay for those who have historically been most underpaid within the sector, and this is essential in the current economic climate.

This positive impact has not been without other impacts on pay structures and the workforce. The roles in this report, from sector feedback, are now being paid in real terms only a small amount more but with much greater complexity, risk and accountability. We encourage all organisations to review their pay policy and structures to address this ‘pinch’ to ensure there is fair pay and remuneration across the organisation to support attraction and retention.

These are the upper quartile figures for current rates of pay in the UK museum sector. We recommend paying at this level as standard upon appointment.

Our figures are based on the 2022 research into pay scales across a variety of roles and levels of seniority, and across museums of different sizes, types and locations.

The figures shown here are the upper quartile figures from the 2022 rates of pay in the UK museum sector, increased to reflect inflationary rises in 2023 and 2024. We have used Consumer Price Index and Housing (CPIH) as the most comprehensive indicator of inflation, as opposed to the Retail Price Index (RPI) or Consumer Price Index (CPI), and within this we have also sought to explore how CPIH relates to public sector pay awards, acknowledging that not all museums are public sector organisations.

To be consistent in our window of measurement we have looked at rates in July, and these are as follows – July 2023, CPIH = 6.4 and in July 2024 CPIH = 3.1.

* The cost of living varies within the UK. This figure should act as a baseline before London weighting, regional variants and markets are taken into account

Salary benchmarks: 2024 update summary

Salary benchmarks*	Assistant	Officer/Co-ordinator	Supervisor/Team leader	Manager/Head of dept
Attendants/Front-of-house/Security	22,892	26,655	31,662	45,980
Museum technician/Building management	26,697	29,619	38,285	48,782
Fundraising/Marketing	26,698	31,981	41,898	53,067
Learning/Programming/Outreach	25,996	29,320	35,439	49,364
Conservators	30,348	36,104	44,339	59,219
Curators/Collections management	25,933	31,950	38,049	57,558
		Manager/Director		Director/Group director
Directors/Group directors		75,692		93,047

These benchmarks may be used in combination with other sources of advice on pay in the sector, such as the Institute of Conservation's salaries research.

Front cover image: Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Photograph by Ian Wallman.