

Ethics Committee

1. Purpose

The Museums Association's Ethics Committee upholds the principles of the Code of Ethics for Museums and oversees the effective and consistent operation of the Code. The committee is independent and accountable to members of the MA, the sector and the public through the MA Board. The committee is recruited and selected by the Museums Association (MA) and is chaired by a member of the committee appointed by the MA Board.

2. Terms of Reference

- To develop and monitor the application of sound ethical principles and behaviour within the museum community
- To give advice and guidance on ethical matters to the museum community, including MA Board, staff and members
- To review the code and recommend to the MA Board amendments to the Code of Ethics, where thought necessary

3. Membership

The chair of the Committee and the director of the MA appoints Committee members upon the recommendation of Committee members.

The committee consists of a maximum of ten members including:

- A chair appointed by the MA Board
- At least one member of the MA Board
- A representative of museum users
- A member with legal expertise
- Six places for MA members from a wide range of museums and museum work

The Ethics Committee meets at least once a year and typically four times a year. Committee members are unpaid, but can claim reasonable travel expenses. Members will be appointed for a three-year term and will be eligible for one further consecutive three-year term.

Members of the Ethics Committee are voluntary and are not appointed to represent their own institution.

Members of the Ethics Committee should adhere to all of the MA's policies, including the MA's conflict of interest policy.

4. Remit

The committee champions ethical best practice and supports the museum sector to make informed ethical decisions.

The Museums Association is regularly asked to provide confidential advice on specific issues. Usually this advice is straightforward and is handled by MA staff or the chair of the Ethics Committee. Sometimes issues are discussed by the full committee. Occasionally a substantial investigation needs to be undertaken and individual Ethics Committee members are expected to help with this if they have appropriate experience or expertise.

Alleged breaches of the Code can be considered by the Ethics Committee. In some cases, where a museum or museum professional is alleged to have acted unethically, the Ethics Committee will investigate a matter in order to provide a considered opinion. The Committee is also able to report a breach of the Code to the director of the MA, who may in turn report the matter to the MA Board and Disciplinary Committee for further investigation and possible sanction.

From time to time committee members may be asked to:

- serve on small sub-groups formed to oversee particular initiatives
- investigate a particularly difficult case
- comment on, or help draft, documents or articles
- participate in MA seminars or events
- respond and contribute to policy development.

Terms of reference to be reviewed in March 2020.