

ual:

Archives, Museum, Art and Special Collections

Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy

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1. Introduction

This Policy is intended to provide a transparent framework for deaccessioning and disposal of collections or items from collections, based upon existing approved Policy, supported by robust procedures.

It aims to set out the specific circumstances in which UAL will dispose of material from its Archives, Museum, Art and Special Collections. It aligns with the approved UAL Donations Policy, and the Acceptance of Gifts Policy. It is informed by the collection management and development policies that are used by Library and Academic Support Services, the Museum and Study Centre, the Art Collection and the London College of Fashion.

It is the intention of UAL to maintain and develop our Archives, Museum, Art and Special Collections, so this Policy also aligns with the UAL Academic Strategy to support learning, teaching and research at UAL and in the arts and design sector.

2. Audience and stakeholders

This Policy is intended to be used by University of the Arts London collection managers. In addition, sector specific policies and procedures will be implemented where necessary to support accreditation requirements eg. The accredited Museum & Study Collection at CSM; the accredited University Archives and Special Collections Centre and the University Art Collection.

Collection managers may wish to use this Policy to guide discussion on disposals with academic colleagues. It will be lodged with UAL Legal Services for consultation when establishing Donation Agreements.

The University Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board will be asked to receive and discuss proposals of major disposal of collections.

Beyond UAL, the Policy will be available online, and may be of interest across the sector, and to accrediting bodies such as The National Archives, Arts Council England and CILIP.

3. Framework for deaccessioning and disposal

The framework for the Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy is founded on the existing LS Collection Development and Management Policy, which provides the principles for effective collection management. This is supported by a Collections Review database, which identifies the scope and extent of all UAL's known collections and informs an appraisal of collections against the Collection Development and Management Policy. Based on these foundations, the Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy provides for consultation and review of these decisions.

This Policy aligns with the following approved UAL policy and strategy documents:

- Academic Strategy
- Library Services Collection Development and Management Policy
- Archives, Museum and Special Collections Acquisitions Policy
- CSM Museum Collection Development Policy
- Art Collection Policy

4. Principles

The existing LS Collection Development and Management Policy states that all collections held at UAL, support the learning, teaching and research at the University and across the art and design education sector. Also, the Policy states areas of collecting responsibility for UAL Libraries, which acknowledge their specialisms. Therefore the overriding principle is that all materials meeting the criteria of the Collection Development and Management Policy are preserved in the long-term. It is appropriate to periodically review our holdings, to ensure that all the collections continue to fulfil the Collection Development and Management Policy.

As a result of a collections review, deaccessioning and disposal may be considered for the following reasons:

1. To reduce unnecessary duplication in or between collections held at the University.
2. To remove items or collections that do not meet the criteria of any of the policies listed above.
3. To remove items that are damaged to an extent that renders them ineffective in their purpose, in an ethical way that provides opportunities to the users of the Collections.

Items or collections will only be deaccessioned when they meet one of these reasons for disposal.

5. Options for disposal

Disposal methods differ between types of collections.

Withdrawn books or bound journals

The LS Collection Development and Management Policy states the following disposal methods for withdrawn books or bound journals in good condition:

- Offer to the UAL library with the most relevant retention responsibility, then to other libraries within UAL.
- Offer to other Libraries in the art and design sector, if appropriate, e.g. via ARLIS/UK & Ireland; lis-rarebooks
- Donate to book charities, such as BetterWorldBooks
- Dispose of to UAL staff/students
- Take advice from UAL Sustainability colleagues on how best to dispose of items ineligible for the above (e.g. damaged)

Archives and Special Collections

The preferred options for disposal of archives and special collections are:

- Offer the collection back to the donor. Allow up to six months for this process to be completed and documented.
- If it is documented that the donor does not want the collection, seek to transfer the collection to an appropriate archive service which has suitable storage and access facilities; complementary collections or is already holding another part of the same collection.
- Consider offering damaged, deaccessioned objects or duplicates to students for use in their practice. An example of this methodology can be found in the “Reimagined Project” undertaken using the Camberwell ILEA Collection. See <https://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/postgraduate-study/postgraduate-community/stories/the-process-as-object-the-object-as-process> This option provides an opportunity to support art and design pedagogic practices as it gives new life to de-accessioned objects through student intervention.

Museum Collections

- Disposal will only be considered following a full formal review of museum collections carried out in accordance with the Museums Association’s Code of Ethics and guidance published by the Collections Trust.
- The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- Any items de-accessioned through curatorial-motivation will be offered by gift to another appropriate institution, with preference given to Accredited museums, archives or similar, unless the items are damaged beyond repair.

UAL Art Collection

Reasons for considering works for deaccessioning or disposal may include:

- Works that have acquired major irreversible damage.
- Works that have no provenance, authorisation or receipt of purchase.
- Works created by a maker not a student or educator at one of the six UAL Colleges.

Approved methods of deaccessioning are:

- Return to the maker of the work, or estate or family thereof
- Transfer to an appropriate Collection or Archive
- Donate to an appropriate charity or organisation
- Donate to an educational institute or relevant course

The Art Collection Co-ordinator will take advice from appropriate sources where necessary regarding how best to dispose of items which have acquired major irreversible damage and are physically destroyed.

6. Documentation

In all cases of de-accessioning or disposal, a full inventory (including descriptions, photographs and reason/authorisation for disposal) will be kept for each item, using an appropriate collection management system (currently CALM, TMS, Koha).

7. Sales of de-accessioned items

Sales of archival, museum or special collections held by UAL is not preferred and strongly discouraged. No part of the Art Collection may be gifted or sold. These collections are valued educational assets which sets an expectation that they are preserved as long-term research assets. The preferred options for disposal of de-accessioned items are listed in this Policy.

Financially motivated disposal risks reputational damage. Sales of archival, museum or special collections is only considered ethical by accrediting bodies, such as the National Archives or the Museums Association, if the materials for sale are duplicates or non-archival, or if it has not been possible to use any of the approved options for disposal.

If sale becomes the only option, proceeds should be returned to the appropriate university budget to continue to support the long-term maintenance of the remaining collections, for the benefit of future researchers.

Further advice may be sought from The National Archives or the Museums Association on the sale of collections.

8. Destruction

Destruction is an irreversible act and should only be considered as a last resort and unless in the case of irreversible major damage, deaccessioning should not result in the physical destruction of the work. If necessary destruction should be carried out securely, respecting legislation such as GDPR. A full inventory (including descriptions, photographs and reason/authorisation for disposal) will be kept for each item that is disposed of or destroyed, using an appropriate collection management system (currently CALM, TMS, Koha).

9. Risks

When making decisions to remove items or collections, the following risks should be considered:

1. The impact of the removal on the reputation of UAL.
2. UAL's collecting responsibilities where it claims leadership in the sector.
3. Communication and publicity around the disposal.
4. If disposing of any items that have been funded by external or public resources; examine the original funding agreement for implications.

10. Authority

Collection Managers may implement the Policy in line with the thresholds in the UAL Acceptance of Gifts Policy¹, referring to the Learning Resources Manager and escalating to the Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board.

In the case of the Art Collection, any decision to deaccession or dispose of work will be made in consultation and in agreement with UAL Art Collection and ASCC managers  shall not be the sole responsibility of the Art Collection manager.

11. Glossary of terms

Definitions are taken from the National Archives guidance on Deaccessioning and Disposal².

Accession – the process of recording the admission of an item or group of items into a collection.

Appraisal – the process of deciding whether an item or group of items has continuing value in accordance with the collecting organisation's mission statement (ie. UAL's Collection Development and Management Policy)

Deaccessioning – the formal, documented removal of a collection or item from the accession register / custody of the archive service

Disposal – the physical act of transferring the collection or item from the archive service to another destination. This covers transfer to another repository, return to donor and as a last resort, destruction. Also called removal.

Weeding – the physical act of removing items from within a particular collection, which have been appraised as not having continuing value. This may include duplicates, facsimiles, non-archival material or material which has been sampled as the value of retaining the whole collection is low.

12. Approval and Version Control

The Deaccessioning and Disposal Policy was approved by the Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board on 19th June 2019.

[Link to Collection Management and Development Policy, which has this Policy as an Appendix]

² (PAS 197 provides the basis for these definitions. The Collections Trust commissioned the British Standards Institute (BSI) to create a Publicly Available Specification for Collections Management in 2009. This was published as BSE PAS 107:2009)

Review: 3 years