

# The British Museum

## ETHICS POLICY

### 1) Introduction

The policy sets the standards of conduct which the Museum expects from its “representatives”, that is to say, its Trustees, staff, authorised volunteers and advocates and those working within The British Museum Company Limited. It is supplemented by the Museum’s Procedures on Fraud and Whistle-blowing.

### 2) Ethical Principles<sup>1</sup>.

2.1 The Museum’s success depends on the trust and confidence of all those with whom the Museum and its subsidiaries come into contact. That trust and confidence depends on the Museum’s reputation for acting ethically, with integrity and to the highest professional standards. Therefore the Museum expects its representatives to strive at all times to avoid acting in such a way as would, accidentally or otherwise, bring the Museum into disrepute.

2.2 In all actions, activities and relationships the Museum expects its representatives to act from the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.

2.3 The Museum expects its representatives to:

2.3.1 discharge its functions reasonably, according to and with respect for applicable domestic and international law, ethical standards and the provisions of any relevant trust or legal condition;

2.3.2 apply the ethical standards governing their particular professions;

2.3.3 act with honesty and integrity, and never knowingly mislead any person;

2.3.4 recognise and acknowledge the contributions of others to the work and support of the Museum; and

2.3.5 be impartial, i.e.: (i) ensure that they declare and make known personal interests and do not give or receive inducements which could be, or could be seen to be, corrupt, in conflict with the interests of the Museum or as devices intended merely to avoid a tax liability; (ii) adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life; (iii) offer or provide services to any donor to the Museum on terms more no more beneficial than those on which services are made available to other donors; (iv) promote objectivity in

---

<sup>1</sup> This policy incorporates the *Seven Principles of Public Life* (Nolan Committee; March 1996); it also takes account of the Cabinet Office *Model Code of Conduct for staff of executive non-departmental public bodies* and the Museum Association’s *Code of Ethics* (including the draft 4<sup>th</sup> edition dated 2001), *Code of Conduct for People who work in Museums* and *Code of Practice for Museum Governing Bodies*, as well as the *Code of Professional Ethics* issued by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). In the event of conflict this policy shall govern.

research and public knowledge relating to the collection by working, where appropriate, with professional colleagues throughout the world regardless of their national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity

- 2.4 In furtherance of these principles trustees and senior officers of the Museum shall make known to the Board or the Director (as the case may be):
  - 2.4.1 any actual or potential conflict between their own and the Museum's interests that might arise or might be perceived to arise in the mind of an impartial observer; and
  - 2.4.2 any actual or potential pecuniary interest they or a member of their close family may have in any fundraising or investment dealing entered into or proposed by or to the Museum.
- 2.5 The Museum maintains registers of interests, donations and benefits (whether received directly or through the British Museum Development Trust, the American Friends of the British Museum, the British Museum Friends or a Departmental Friends group).
- 2.6 The Code of Conduct for Staff sets out the detailed rules for the application of these principles in the specific circumstances of Museum employees.

*This Policy was approved by the Trustees of the British Museum on 5th July 2007 and will be reviewed no later than 2011.*

## **Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life**

### **Selflessness**

*Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.*

### **Integrity**

*Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.*

### **Objectivity**

*In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.*

### **Accountability**

*Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.*

### **Openness**

*Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.*

### **Honesty**

*Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.*

### **Leadership**

*Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.*