National Galleries Scotland  
Condition Checking and Technical Assessment

Principles

NGS makes skilled, safe and practical condition checks and technical assessments on all objects or groups of objects in our care, as an integral part of NGS collection management. We monitor and expand on the audit trail of the object and systematically record technical and handling notes for future reference.

This enables us to support the long-term preservation of all objects or groups of objects in our care, to provide evidence for audit and conservation reviews, handling and movement statistics, research and bibliographical references, and to increase public access to the collection.

Definitions

Condition Checking and Technical Assessment: The practical assessment of the condition, structure and physical properties of objects, informed by technical knowledge, skills and documentation.

Legislation and ethics

Condition Checks and technical assessment are essential components for preservation, access, determining object-history, and to meet nationally agreed standards of best practice.

Relevant statutory requirements and codes of ethics include:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- AAM Registrars Committee: Code of Practice for Couriering Museum Objects, 1986
- National Heritage Act 1980, Section 16 (as amended by the Museums and Galleries Act 1992)
- UK H&S Executive: Control of Substances Hazardous for Health (COSHH) 2002
- Health & Safety Guidance for Employers and Technicians carrying out fumigation operations 2005

Standards

BS4971 – Conservation and care of archive and library collections 2017

BSEN16893: Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections 2018

NMDC – Loans between National and non-national museums. New standards and practical guidelines 2003

NMDC – Statement of principles on environmental conditions for lending 2010

BS31100 – Code of Practice for Risk Management 2011
This policy is part of the Collections Management set of policies that form a requirement of PAS197 and Spectrum as part of the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme.

BS1153 – Recommendations for processing and storage of silver/gelatin type microfilm.

ISO55000 – Asset Management Standards

PSO14001 – Environmental Management

ISO45001 – Guidance for documenting occupational health and safety management systems requirements

MLA – Benchmarks in collections care for museums, archives and libraries

**Control measures**

A condition check may potentially be carried out by any member of staff. A condition report is normally prepared by a member of staff with conservation skills. A full condition report is prepared by a professional conservator before major treatment or movement.

External professional conservators will be consulted if NGS does not have appropriate inhouse expertise.

Before an object is handled its condition must be fit to move. Where appropriate, a suitably qualified person carries out a risk assessment.

NGS has a continuous programme of monitoring and condition checking all objects in our care in order to identify, minimise and manage potential risks to the collection, to staff and the public who are working with or visiting them.

Condition reports include one or more images marked up signed and dated, often with some written text. Technical assessments may also include diagrams, sketches or videos.

The vocabulary and terminology used follow international standards to ensure clarity and understanding of the condition report.

The technical assessment includes conservation treatment priority; environmental condition requirements; recommendations for display, handling, packing and storage and any other special requirements.

If the condition of the object gives cause for concern or differs from that recorded on previous condition checks a conservator will be asked to advise and propose appropriate action.

NGS are committed to regular training to ensure all those involved in handling and technical assessment have up-to-date skills and knowledge, and are able to apply these skills, in order to maintain or improve the preservation, storage or display of objects.

NGS have maintenance contracts for equipment and vehicles used in handling and assessment.

**Related policies**

The following are related NGS policies:

01 Object Entry
02 Acquisition and Accessioning
03 Location and Movement Control
04 Inventory
06 Object exit
07 Loans in (borrowing objects)
08 Loans out (lending objects)
09 Documentation Planning
10 Condition Checking and Technical Assessment
11 Collections Care and Conservation
13 Insurance and indemnity
15 Damage and Loss
19 Use of Collections
20 Collections Review
21 Audit

Also the following NGS documents

NGS Collection Care Framework
NGS Collections Development Framework
NGS Disaster Contingency Plan
NGS Estates Management Strategy
NGS Environmental Management Programme 2018-2022
NGS Partnership Framework
NGS Public Programme Framework
NGS Risk Management Policy
NGS Research Policy and Framework

For NGS Rights and Reproduction Policies: SEE NGS Trading Company Policies