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Title:	Usage of Human Remains Policy		

Responsible Executive(s): Provost

Responsible Office(s): Human Remains Oversight Board, Office of the Dean for Research

Contact(s): Please direct questions concerning this policy to hrobprinceton@princeton.edu.

I. Purpose

There are substantive ethical and cultural expectations that must be acknowledged and thoughtfully considered with regard to the care, use and stewardship of human remains in an academic environment. The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional decision-making processes that harmonize and support Princeton's core missions of teaching and research with the University's responsibilities as a respectful caretaker of human remains.

II. Scope

Princeton University recognizes that, in certain circumstances, human remains are necessary and critical for research and teaching involving various disciplines including, but not limited to, anthropology, archaeology, anatomy, biology, medicine, paleontology, and allied disciplines. Human remains, properly acquired and appropriately maintained, may also add value to institutional collections to build and disseminate knowledge and contribute to the public good.

This policy establishes a University-wide institutional body charged with providing oversight, guidance and recommendations to University faculty, staff, and students with regard to the acquisition and usage of human remains for teaching, research, collections care, training and/or display purposes. This body may also be used for consultation as future use cases involving human remains may be considered. This policy also provides a framework for processes pertaining to institutional decision-making regarding the respectful and appropriate storage, study, loan, deaccession and repatriation of human remains.

This policy outlines institutional expectations for all activities involving human remains carried out under the auspices of the University or in connection with any University program or activity. This policy therefore pertains to both human remains acquired or otherwise held by the University as well as human remains used by faculty, staff, and students for their University-related teaching and research activities.



III. Definition of Human Remains

For purposes of this policy, ‘human remains’ means the bodies and parts of bodies of once living *homo sapiens*. These typically include osteological material (e.g. whole or partial skeletons, individual bones or bone fragments); and/or materials that are naturally or culturally shed (e.g. teeth, hair, nails) from deceased human beings.

Human remains governed by this policy may also include any of the above that have been modified in some way by human skill or may be physically bound up with other non-human materials to form an artifact composed of several materials.

IV. Guiding Principles

Human remains constitute a broad and varied category of sensitive material used in many research, teaching and scholarly contexts. Human remains can reveal valuable information about the human condition, past and present. At the same time, human remains often hold great significance for affiliated individuals and groups in the present. As such, Princeton University strives to consider thoughtfully its use of human remains in connection with its educational mission and to treat such remains with particular respect. That includes considering and respecting any complex histories or events that may be associated with the remains.

In addition to these guiding principles, this policy is informed by the ethical codes promoted by various professional bodies such as the Association of American Museums (AAM), the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and the American Association of Biological Anthropologists. Furthermore, the University complies with NAGPRA (the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Public Law 101-601) and is implementing regulations concerning Native American, Native Hawaiian and Alaskan Native remains, as well as any other laws and regulations that may be applicable under specified circumstances.

V. Management and oversight

The management of the usage of human remains at Princeton University is to be overseen by the **University Human Remains Oversight Board (HROB)**. See Rules and Procedures of the Faculty, Chapter VIII, C for the description of the Human Remains Oversight Board as approved by the Faculty.

This board shall be comprised of designees as appointed, and may include individuals with appropriate expertise from the University Art Museum, the Princeton Department of Art & Archaeology, the Dean for Research, and the Office of the Provost. Additional members may be designated by the Provost from time to time, as the Provost deems appropriate. External experts may be invited to provide input to the HROB on an as-needed basis. The HROB will be administered within the Office of the Dean for Research with legal support from the Office of the General Counsel.

All Princeton students, faculty and staff members proposing to conduct a project (teaching, research, field work, or any other University activity) involving engagement with human remains, as defined by this policy, must submit a usage and storage plan to the HROB before the project commences. Given the



wide range of potential material and uses involved, the HROB's review of such plans and subsequent recommendations for best practices will necessarily be individualized. For example, the study of recent human remains may implicate different considerations and interests than the study of ancient or historical human remains.

The HROB will develop processes for reviewing plans and will:

- Issue recommendations to academic departments, units and individuals involved with the University's acquisition, usage, storage, display and/or deaccession of human remains.
- Work with appropriate academic departments and units to create and maintain an up-to-date register of human remains in the possession of the University as well as human remains being used under the auspices of Princeton University, both on campus and in connection with University programs, research, or other activities that occur elsewhere.
- Report on its activities to the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Dean for Research at appropriate intervals, to be determined by the Provost and the Dean for Research.

The HROB shall not be responsible for the day-to-day oversight of human remains. The responsibility of implementing HROB's recommendations falls to the department, unit, and individual, as applicable, engaging with human remains. In all cases, adherence to applicable law (such as NAGPRA for cases involving Native American, Native Hawaiian and Alaskan Native remains) and compliance with all relevant regulations will inform HROB's recommendations. The HROB's recommendations regarding any proposed activities involving human remains are subject to review and approval by the Provost or the Dean for Research. Any appeals regarding HROB recommendations should be made to the Provost. The Provost's decision regarding any proposed activity is final.

The following sections include ethical and operational expectations that should be addressed in a plan submitted to HROB and will be considered during the HROB review and recommendations.

Acquisition, deaccession, repatriation, and loans

Human remains may be of significant import to affiliated individuals, descendant groups and communities. The University respects beliefs regarding the sacred nature of human remains held by many, including certain cultural groups and communities. As deemed appropriate by the HROB, the acquisition and loan of human remains, and their subsequent usage, may be informed by consultations with individual or community stakeholders in keeping with the University's core teaching and research missions.

- The HROB will make recommendations about acquisitions, deaccession, repatriation and/or loans of human remains.
- Units seeking to acquire human remains must submit a plan for storage, maintenance, and use to the HROB in advance of acquisition. Such plans should explain how the contemplated project is consistent with prevailing ethical standards in the field. Plans should also identify any complex histories or events associated with the remains, to the extent known.
- Queries from external actors (including affiliated individuals, descendent groups and communities) seeking access to human remains in the possession of the University or



used by faculty, staff and students of the University will be forwarded to the HROB for consideration.

- All acquisitions and deaccessions of human remains will be appropriately registered, with oversight provided by HROB. University faculty, staff or students in possession of human remains, including visiting scholars and students, will register their material with the HROB.

Storage, handling and usage by University faculty, staff and students

Minimizing damage or potential damage to human remains forms one important basis of operational decisions regarding their storage, handling and usage. All proposals to undertake teaching or research with human remains which result in damage or loss of part of the remains should include a compelling justification, including an explanation of why the project's academic objectives could not be achieved without damage to or destruction of the remains. Plans for minimizing the damage or loss of all materials containing human remains should be submitted to the HROB for approval at the time of acquisition and before use.

- Any plans for teaching and research activities involving human remains, including activities which may result in the loss of material, must be submitted to HROB.
- Units intending to display human remains in any form must submit their plans for display to HROB for review.
- Faculty, staff and students handling human remains must be trained in what constitutes proper respect in each case, informed by history and context.
- The HROB may recommend that external actors (including affiliated individuals, descendent groups and communities) be granted permission to handle human remains to which they have a bona fide connection without undergoing the training required of University faculty, staff and students.
- In general, photography and other visual documentation of human remains in the custody of the University or University affiliates is limited to photos which have value for teaching, research and curatorial purposes.

Individual responsibility to comply with relevant local laws and regulations, including in international contexts

Faculty, staff and students of the University participating in University-affiliated activities that occur outside of University property, including independent field research, are expected to become familiar with and abide by all relevant local laws and regulations regarding their usage of human remains. To that end, faculty, staff and students working with human remains off campus (e.g., in the field) are expected to provide a summary of their proposed work along with an account of their understanding of the relevant local laws and regulations, if any, to the HROB as part of their usage plan.



Version History

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1.0	October 29, 2021	Initiation