




Education and Learning Policy

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Responsibility: Director of Collections & Access

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1.0 Introduction

The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) is committed to learning as an organisation-wide principle that is fundamental to our role and purpose. Our vision at NMI is to be democratic, inclusive and relevant. We aim to engage with the widest range of people in meaningful learning experiences that stimulate their imagination and curiosity, using the collections and exhibitions as inspiration. These values reflect those outlined in the NMI Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

Exhibitions of museum heritage objects are covered under NMI Exhibitions Policy. Research is covered under the NMI Research Policy. Publications are covered under NMI Publications Policy.

2.0 Legislative basis

The core responsibility of NMI in the diffusion of knowledge is outlined in section 11 (1) of the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997*. This states that:

11. — (1) The principal functions of the Board of the Museum shall be to maintain, manage, control, protect, preserve, record, research and enlarge the collection of museum heritage objects for the benefit of the public and to increase and diffuse in and outside the State knowledge of human life in Ireland, of the natural history of Ireland and of the relations of Ireland in these respects with other countries.

The role of the NMI Board is further specified in section 11 (2) of the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997*. This states that:

— (2) The Board shall have all such powers as it considers necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions under this Act including, but without prejudice to the foregoing, the following powers:

(e) to promote research and scholarship,

(f) to disseminate and promote the dissemination of literature and information relating to the collection of the Museum,

(g) to foster and promote contacts with other museums and educational establishments.

NMI has a role under the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997, to interpret the museum collections and make them accessible to the public. This Learning Policy is directed to supporting that role.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Intent & values

We believe that museum learning experiences can transform people's lives in many positive ways. A set of core values underpin our thinking and practice in our approach to learning – respect, access, risk taking, diversity, inclusivity, authenticity, openness and collaboration. These values reflect those outlined in the National Museum's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

3.2 Policy Aims

NMI endeavours to:

- Deliver participant-centred learning programs that engage and inspire.
- Create the right conditions for learning to ensure that the learning experience is meaningful, accessible, inclusive and relevant.
- Improve our knowledge of who our audiences are, both existing and potential.
- Embed research, evaluation and reflective practice into our learning programmes.
- Deepen our engagement and improve our communication with the public.
- Augment and care for the Handling Collections and maximise the potential of this invaluable resource.
- Be open, curious and ambitious with new opportunities (Partnerships, Digital and Smart Technology, Participant Experiences, Research, Systems).

3.3 Policy Actions

NMI will:

1. Research, design and deliver learning programmes on site in our four Museums in Dublin and Mayo, in community settings, and online.
2. Develop specialised programmes and services for and with schools and teachers, families, adults, and communities.
3. Design learning programmes that are participant-centred and inspired by the Museum's collections, exhibitions and the NMI Strategic lenses of Community, Climate and Shared Knowledge.
4. Create innovative opportunities for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue to reflect the diversity of our communities.
5. Maximise and build on our expertise around Education and Learning handling collection and object-based learning.
6. Develop interpretative and participative tools and techniques to stimulate people's engagement with the collections and exhibitions.
7. Develop a range of learning spaces at each of our four Museum sites to reflect the different ways in which people engage with the Museum and its collections.
8. Create opportunities for people to reflect on and respond to what they see in the galleries, online, or in an outreach setting and use this data to inform and shape future programming.
9. Ensure the audience is at the centre of our design, development, and evaluation of exhibitions and adopt a data driven, evidence-based approach to our work.
10. Collaborate and consult with NMI colleagues, individuals and organisations at local, national and international level, across a range of education, youth, health, environmental, scientific, arts and cultural heritage sectors, including local authorities, to meet the NMI's strategic aims and objectives related to public engagement.
11. Explore models of cultural participation that involve collaborating with communities as co- creators and co-producers and provide platforms to share findings with relevant

audiences.

12. Maximise communication opportunities and look for platforms to bring visibility, interest and awareness.
13. Ensure that the principles of universal access underpin our approach and delivery.
14. Create the conditions that allow the team to flourish.