

LEARNING POLICY

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01		Head of Education and Events		Rewrite
02	04 May 2018	Director of Collections		Amendments
03	03 October 2018	Head of education & Events		Amendments

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1. Summary

We hold, study and share our collection and our expertise to enrich the knowledge, understanding, skills and experience of all physical and digital visitors. Learning is at the heart of our work and draws upon staff and resources throughout the organisation.

2. Definition

We use the term learning in its broadest sense. As a result we adopt the following definition, developed in 1999 by the Campaign for Learning, adopted by the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council in 2008 and subsequently Arts Council England in 2011:

'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values or capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more'

For the purposes of organisation and reporting, we define learning audiences as:

- **Formal learners**
3-19 year olds in elective pre-school, or mandatory school and 16+ education, HE students, FE students and participants in Adult Education.
- **Non-formal learners**
Audiences of any age participating in programmes that share the format of formal learning, for example lectures, conferences and study days, but that are not accredited.
- **Informal learners**
An audience for whom engaging with museum content or activities is elective (or at least partly elective, in the case of children with their families). Typically this audience includes visitors of any age who are motivated, consciously or otherwise, by a desire to learn. These audiences are described and segmented in detail by the [Audience Development Plan](#).

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3. Scope

The Corporate Plan defines the topical remit of the Royal Armouries as ‘arms and armour and their impact on the people, history and cultures of Britain and the world from ancient times to the present day’. Building upon its positioning as history’s expert witness, the Royal Armouries role is to inspire people to discover and understand how many of the most compelling narratives of human endeavour and experience have been, and continue to be, shaped by arms and armour. The Corporate Plan draws particular attention to:

- **History**

‘At home, and writ large on the world stage: the struggle for power and survival, dictating so much of the course of history.’

- **Material Culture**

‘Manufacturing, craftsmanship, technological advance, art, design, trade and international connections, and the stories of the men, women and communities who made and used this material and were affected by it.’

4. Mission

The centrality of learning is also expressed in our Corporate Plan, which defines our purpose as ‘to excite and educate the public’. Our mission is therefore to provide the widest possible range of learning opportunities based on the unique nature of our collections, our functionality as a museum and the knowledge of our staff, and to encourage and support the widest possible take up of these opportunities by our audiences.

5. How we make learning happen

The whole museum, from front-of-house to finance, contributes to our learning mission by increasing public awareness of, and access to, the opportunities available through the Royal Armouries. But particular Aims in our Corporate Plan (CP) identify the main mechanisms we employ for the achievement of our learning mission:

5.1. Research and dissemination (CP, Aim 3)

To ‘excite and educate’ our audiences with authority and integrity about our collection we must understand it, and ensure we remain at the cutting edge of knowledge and understanding.

We have a long, productive and pioneering record of research and publication. Our Research Strategy builds on this, ensuring that funding is deployed strategically,

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in order to provide new and challenging avenues to better understand our subject matter.

We will also facilitate research by offering resources including access to an Online Collections, Study Collections, the Library and Archives, and an Enquiries Service. (See [Collections Access Policy](#), [Collections Enquiries Policy](#), [Research Policy](#) and [Research Strategy](#)).

5.2. Display and interpretation (CP, Aim 4)

The most visible way that we impart information to all our audiences is through interpretation of the collection in our permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions. Our Interpretation Framework defines a process that focuses on the collection and stimulates interest in it, always taking into account the widely disparate learning styles and needs of our target audiences. By applying this process we will deliver a range of different types of display and programming aligned to our audience development priorities, the collection and its associated themes and stories.

Given the nature of our collection, we believe that live interpretation is particularly effective in delivering some learning outcomes (how things work, impact on people) to some **informal learning** audiences. Using the same framework and processes, we offer a daily event programme aimed at **non-formal** and **informal learners** that enhances knowledge and understanding of the permanent display collection, special exhibitions and related themes. To do this we maintain an in-house live interpretation team staffed by qualified, skilled and experienced presenters, performers and combat demonstrators, as well as investing in external suppliers of similar services.

To help us identify, understand and measure the effectiveness of these different interpretive media in delivering learning outcomes to audiences outside the framework of **formal** and **non-formal** audiences, we use a range of formative and summative evaluation tools and techniques, and especially the Arts Council England's Generic Learning Outcome framework (see also 5 below). (See [Public Engagement Strategy, Aim 8; Informal Learning Action Plan 2017-2021](#); and [Interpretation Framework](#)).

5.3. Education service (CP Aim 5)

We recognise and champion the unique affordances of museum-based learning for **formal learners**. We therefore maintain an education department staffed by educators qualified, skilled and experienced in the pedagogies associated specifically with learning outside the classroom to provide a service for **formal learners** aged 3-19; and to work collaboratively with other departments and external FE organisations to support programmes for adult **formal learners** including

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teacher training, and a wide range of museum and leisure specialisms (see [Public Engagement Strategy, Aim 7](#); and [Formal Learning Action Plan 2017-2021](#)).

5.4. Access and participation (CP Aim 6)

We recognise external impediments for all learners, such as those caused by culture, language, age, gender, economic disadvantage and physical and intellectual access, and internal barriers raised by the structure of the organisation and the practices and attitudes of staff. We will therefore strive to overcome those barriers. (See [Access Policy](#); [Equal Opportunities Policy](#); [Anti-Harassment Policy](#); [Public Engagement Strategy Aims 2, 4 and 6](#); and [Audience Development Plan](#)).

We also provide opportunities for **formal and informal learners** across the organisation, harnessing its functions as an education provider, a museum and leisure destination for applied, skills-based learning and/or personal development in the form of internships, placements and volunteer roles (see [Volunteer Policy](#)).

5.5. Digital (CP Aim 4)

Woven through all the aims outlined above, we will use digital technologies to create new opportunities for audiences to access our collections including the Online Collection and online catalogue); and to develop ways of interpreting them that are meaningful to those audience. Our Digital Engagement Strategy outlines how we will tailor content for our specific audience groups, including schools and online learners; and how we will target and reach new audiences by incorporating the use of social media. Our website will become a 'fourth destination' for the Royal Armouries, alongside the physical destinations in Leeds, the Tower of London, and Fort Nelson in Fareham. (See [Public Engagement Strategy, Aim 3](#); and [Digital Engagement Strategy](#))

6. Evaluation

We acknowledge our responsibility to learn and develop as a learning provider in all of our activities.

Learning outcomes for formal and non-formal learners are specified by curricula, examination boards and other external drivers. To ensure that we are meeting the specific needs of these audiences we will actively gather quantitative data and qualitative feedback for all **formal learning** programmes and use it to improve our service.

To help us identify, understand and measure the effectiveness of the wide range of different interpretive media we use, including live interpretation, in delivering learning outcomes to audiences outside the framework of **formal** and **non-formal** audiences, we will define outcomes and apply a range of formative and summative

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evaluation tools and techniques, especially the Arts Council England's Generic Learning Outcome framework, to improve our work. (See [Public Engagement Strategy, Aim 5](#)).

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