



Museum Basics – The Course

Museum Basics is a foundation course for people working or interested in Irish museums. Devised by the Irish Museums Association (IMA), it offers a practical introduction to the nature, context and operations of museums. Aimed primarily at smaller and voluntary-run museums, participants are encouraged to use the course as an opportunity to meet with their colleagues and develop local museum networks.

The intention of the training is to provide practical examples and indicators of good practice and where and how further information can be found.

The panel of trainers are drawn from the museum sector and are widely regarded as leaders of industry.

It is hoped that the process will also validate the participants' existing experience and knowledge and enable them to evaluate their current practice against agreed norms. A key element of the programme is contextualising and positioning museums as public entities working as part of, and in the service of, society as whole.

Museum Basics is bench-marked against agreed international standards and is relevant to institutions embarking on the Heritage Council's Museum Standards Programme for Ireland or the Northern Ireland Museum Council (NIMC) Museum Registration scheme. All the Instructors are leading figures in their respective fields.

Museum Basics consists of eight class based sessions, normally run over an eight-week period. Sessions last approximately one hour and forty-five minutes. In addition, there is a practical site visit to a local museum at the end of the course. As well as providing a theoretical grounding to the participants, all sessions have a practical relevance.

Introduction to Museums: This session looks at museums in their historical, social and cultural context. It provides participants with an understanding of the function of museums and how they are organised in Ireland.

- What is a museum?
- History
- Types of museums
- Purpose and context of the museum
- The museum and its position in the community

Outcome Basic understanding of what museums are and how they are organised in Ireland.

Collection Care: This session covers the broad collection care principles and offers a practical introduction to the principles of preventive conservation covering storage, handling and correct methods of display.

- Broad principles of preventative conservation
- Nature of materials found in museum collections

Collection care under the headings of:

- Storage
- Handling
- Display
- Disaster Plans

Outcome An understanding of basic preventive conservation principles and the role of the professional conservator

Interpretation and Display: Covering both interpretation and display in museums, participants are encouraged to look at interpretation strategies within their museums, as well as practical issues such as writing text, choosing cases, displaying objects and arranging lighting. Advice is also given on dealing with contractors.

- Position in wider communication context
- The 'Interpretation strategy'
- Choosing a topic: What is the story?
- Team, working with contractors
- Display methods:
 - Text
 - Cases
 - Panels
 - Lighting
 - AV

Outcome Basic understanding of the purpose and production of exhibits

Management and Governance: This session looks at types of governance within the museum sector, the roles of executive officers (including curators), forward planning and project management. Advice is also given on fund-raising and ensuring sustainability

- Sustainability: Strategy, Business Planning and risk assessment
- Types of governance
- Roles of executive officers – including curator
- Funding

- Project management

Outcome Basic understanding of management roles and function

Collecting and Collections: This session examines the role of collections, why and how to collect and how to devise a collection policy. It also looks at the meaning and context of collections and the challenges of collecting intangible heritage.

- Introduction to curation and interpretation
- The meaning of collections and their context
- Types of collections
- Developing a collection
- Collection Policies

Outcome Basic understanding of collections and their role

Documentation: Participants are given an understanding of the role of documentation in the museum and its importance. Topics covered include loan management and documentation systems, collection audits and writing facilities reports.

- Purpose
- Broad Principles
- Entry/Exit/Loan documentation
- Cataloguing
- Audit
- Facilities Reports

Outcome Basic understanding of the centrality of documentation in museum function, especially in terms of sustainability and responsibility

External Relations: Covering all aspects of external relations, marketing and communications. It enables participants to gain an understanding of the place of the museum within its various environments and a practical understanding of how best to communicate with their audiences.

- Public Administration Awareness and Private Sector Dynamics
- Marketing
- Publicity and media relations
- Fund-raising: broad principles
- Audience development
- New communication channels: social media

Outcome: Basic understanding of the place of the museum within its various external target markets and environments and a practical understanding of how best to communicate with those areas

Education and Outreach: The Education and Outreach session emphasises the centrality of learning as a function of museums. It gives an appreciation of the diversity of museum audiences and the different approaches required to connect effectively with each of them.

- Emphasise centrality of learning in general museum operation
- How people learn - learning styles and how this can be facilitated
- Education for different audiences: 1st, 2nd, 3rd level education, life-long learning
- Public programming
- Working in partnership with the community

Outcome Understanding of the centrality of learning as a function of museums. Some appreciation of diverse audiences and of the different approaches required

Summation and Evaluation: The final part of the programme consists of a visit to a chosen museum or cultural organisation. Participants have an opportunity to offer feedback on the course. They are also encouraged to sustain and build upon the networks established over the previous eight weeks.

Dialogue with participants – question and answer
Evaluation & Follow-up

Outcome Social and organisational networking, Evaluation; Continuity with group

*To register your interest in participating in this **Museum Basics** course or to host a course in your area, please contact Gina O’Kelly at the Irish Museums Association: + 353 (0)1 873 4216 or office@irishmuseums.org*