

# BABAO Code of Ethics

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2019



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## 1.0 Preamble

As its name implies, the British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO), is concerned with the disciplines of biological anthropology and osteoarchaeology. The Association's area of interest is defined as follows: "Physical anthropology is the study of human biology within the framework of evolution and with an emphasis on the interaction between biology and culture. This subdiscipline is also referred to as biological anthropology, and you'll find the terms used interchangeably." (Jurmain et al. 2009: 8). In Britain, professionals and students who study archaeologically derived human remains often apply the terms, 'osteoarchaeologist' or 'bioarchaeologist' to describe themselves and their professional activities (Buikstra 1977; Knüsel 2010; Roberts 2018, 2010). Osteoarchaeology is regarded as the study of human remains from archaeological contexts but the term is also applied to research using archaeologically derived faunal remains (Reitz and Wing 1999: 3; Roberts 2018; Sofaer 2006: xi). BABAO seeks to advance our understanding of human and non-human primates past and present,<sup>1</sup> and views the generation, dissemination, and use of this knowledge as a valuable goal that should be undertaken in an ethical manner.

Since the study of biological anthropology and osteoarchaeology is multidisciplinary by its very nature (Turner 2004), BABAO members have interests and backgrounds that range broadly within the natural and social sciences. The researchers, teachers, and practitioners that make-up the BABAO membership are often members of different communities, each with its own moral rules or codes of ethics, and BABAO members often have moral obligations as members of these other groups (e.g. family, religion, and community) as well as to the profession.

In an area of such complex relationships and responsibilities, it is unavoidable that misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. It is a BABAO member's responsibility to deal with such challenges and explore avenues to resolve them. The codes will provide BABAO members with tools to engage in developing and maintaining an ethical framework for their work.

Members should recognise that the activities they engage in may be subject to more than one code of professional activity (e.g. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)), and they should aim to familiarise themselves with those affecting their particular working practices. The purpose of this Code is to foster discussion and provide guidance for conducting work in an ethical and professional manner. BABAO does not and will not adjudicate claims for unethical or unprofessional behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> BABAO recognizes that the professional activity of its members also extends to fossil and forensic material

## **2.0 Introduction**

BABAO recognises that the study of humans and non-human primates from the past and in contemporary populations is a privilege and not a right, because these remains differ from all other archaeological and anthropological material and therefore, these biological remains<sup>2</sup> should always be treated with dignity and respect.<sup>3</sup> BABAO's recognition of this fundamental tenet is the basis for this Code. This Code replaces the 2010 BABAO Code of Ethics. Recommendations for the 'Ethics and practice of digital imaging' have been issued by BABAO in a separate document.

In revising the Code, we reviewed many of the available ethical statements published by archaeological, anthropological, primatological and biological societies, organisations and institutions around the world. As such, we drew on the 2010 BABAO Code of Ethics, recent publications (e.g. Turner et al. 2018), guidance documents relevant to the practice of biological anthropology and osteoarchaeology in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (e.g. Historic England and Church of England 2017) and, in particular, the code of ethics published by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) (2003) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA) (2012). BABAO recognises that although its members live and work in many different countries throughout the world, it hopes that in conjunction with the BABAO Code of Practice, this Code will provide its members with a framework that enables them to uphold their professionalism and commitment to the understanding of humanity's shared past.

BABAO is aware of the ongoing debate regarding the ethics of excavating, analysing, curating and displaying human remains. It is a complex and multifaceted debate, influenced by concerns of genealogical descendants and cultures of origins; the diverse views held by contemporary society, modern religious and humanist philosophies; medical ethics; museological concerns; and ongoing research initiatives. BABAO wishes to engage fully with this debate and to ensure that it considers the treatment of biological remains in a way that maximises their research and educational use, whilst being sensitive to the issues referred to above and treating the remains with the utmost respect.

## **3.0 Behaviour**

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<sup>2</sup> In this document the phrase 'biological remains' is used to encompass living human and non-human primates, human and non-human primate skeletons, and other body tissue (e.g. hair).

<sup>3</sup> BABAO recognises that the professional activity of its members also extends to fossil and forensic material, and does not limit the application of this ethics statement to the study of anatomically modern human and non-human primates.

Members will abide by the requirements of the UK Equality Act (2010). The protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- The UK Equality Act (2010) also protects individuals against sexual harassment (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/sexual-harassment/>).
- BABAO also supports the statements issued by:
  - Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (<https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>)
  - American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA) (<http://physanth.org/about/position-statements/aapa-code-ethics-sexual-harrassment/sexual-and-other-harassment/>)

BABAO has created an 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' (EDI) sub-group to support EDI in our organisation and professional community.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.1 Be Open and Transparent:**

- Biological remains, particularly human remains, of any age or provenance must be treated with care and dignity
- Recognise that human remains can be viewed differently in other countries at local, regional or national levels
- Biological remains should only be studied or viewed for legitimate purposes, e.g. the production of human bone reports by commercial units, analysis and research in institutions
- Biological remains should not be considered as private property

### **3.2 Act with Integrity:**

- All applicable laws and regulations within institutions and countries regarding biological remains should be followed, and relevant guidance considered
- Health and safety precautions must be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of researchers, students and visitors, or other collections
- Not to traffic, sell, or illegally appropriate any type of cultural items or biological remains
- To the best of their knowledge, members should refrain from working with or even consulting on cultural items or human remains acquired illegally<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.babao.org.uk/committee/equality-diversity-inclusion-sub-group/>

## **4.0 Excavation, analysis, and further research**

BABAO members involved in excavation, analysis and further research should adhere to the following:

### **4.1 Be Open and Transparent:**

- In both proposing and carrying out these activities, to be open about the purpose(s), potential impacts, and source(s) of support for research projects with funders, colleagues, the public and persons participating, or providing information, and with all relevant parties affected by the research
- Endeavour to identify potential ethical difficulties when designing projects and determine how these can best be resolved following ethical codes beyond those of BABAO, where appropriate
- All research methodologies should consider the preservation and conservation of the item being studied. Remains, or parts thereof should not be destroyed in their entirety, as this would prevent the replication of the study in the future
- Report findings without omission of any significant data — to the best of their ability, research must disclose details of hypotheses, research designs, and materials and methods used that might influence the interpretation of their research findings
- Make their analyses and research findings available to other colleagues and the public in a timely fashion
- All those responsible for projects should ensure that outputs are properly archived with the curating institution or relevant stakeholder, and their own place of employment or study

### **4.2 Act with Integrity:**

- Strive to maintain objectivity and integrity in the conduct of excavation, analysis and further research;
- Adhere to the highest possible ethical and technical standards in excavation, data collection, further research and publications (see Brickley and McKinley 2004; CifA; Mays et al., 2018)
- Be aware of local, national, and international laws and regulations that have bearing on professional activities (see, Marquez-Grant and Fibiger 2010)
- When providing an informed opinion: be responsible for its content and integrity when giving and explaining statements, and the foundations on which they are given; and bear a professional duty to contribute to a satisfactory definition of reality;
- Aim to ensure that the biological remains available for research are curated in adequate environmental standards to ensure their long-term survival;

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<sup>5</sup> BABAO recognises that within the context of repatriation, such work may have to be undertaken for the human remains to be returned to their country of origin.

- All forms of study which involve sampling, particularly those concerned with destructive methodologies, should weigh the potential findings against resource availability and the amount of information that could be gained from such a study. All extant material, results, and associated documentation should be returned to the institution or individual who provided the samples for analysis;
- Treatment and invasive methods used for a particular study should not hinder future studies using different techniques;
- Facilities that hold biological remains should maintain archival quality copies of all records (e.g., written records, maps, raw data, results of analyses, all types of illustration ( e.g. pictures, photographs or drawings), film, tape records, or digital images);
- Images of human remains should not be published without consultation with and permission from the curating institution or relevant stakeholder (see Harries et al. 2018);
- Where applicable, images of human remains should not be published without consideration of the views of any demonstrated genealogical descendants or affiliated cultural communities (see Harries et al. 2018);
- In all dealings with employers: be honest about one's qualifications, experience, capabilities and aims;
- In employment: an employee should review the employer's mission and strategy, and be careful not to promise or imply acceptance of conditions that contravene competing commitments and professional ethics;
- Researchers should acknowledge all persons who contributed to a research project and subsequent publications. In addition, claims and ordering of authorship and acknowledgement should accurately reflect contributions of all main participants in the work and its dissemination (i.e. conferences, publications, teaching, outreach and media);
- Data and material taken from another person's unpublished written work should be approved in advance, and explicitly identified and referenced to its author(s), including the citations of ideas developed in the written work of others;
- Data and material taken from published written work should be explicitly identified and referenced to its author(s), including the citations of ideas developed in the written work of others;
- Researchers should acknowledge and make public the communities, institutions, and/or individuals that supported or funded their research;
- [Copyright](#) and [intellectual property](#) legislation must be respected;
- Endeavour to make every reasonable effort to complete the project on schedule, especially when financial support for the project has been accepted;
- Establish explicit agreements regarding the division of work, rights and responsibilities, access to data and rights of authorship at the onset of a project when several researchers, colleagues from other fields, or students are involved;

- Be aware of situations that may lead to a misuse of knowledge. This should be conscientiously considered before the information is made available to the public;
- All results of scientific value should be published, ideally in peer reviewed publications as well as publicly accessible media (e.g., museum exhibits, non-specialized publications, and/or internet) within a reasonable time. In sensitive cases, where biological material can be demonstrated to be connected to genealogical descendants or affiliated cultural communities, these groups should be informed of the results prior to publication, if feasible

## **5.0 Teaching**

### **5.1 Teacher/mentor**

#### **Be Open and Transparent:**

- Endeavour to be fair, objective and reliable, and help students obtain support, as appropriate, for their studies or placements, counsel, and be realistic with respect to career opportunities in the disciplines represented by BABAO;
- Avoid conflicts of interest with students for whom they are responsible;
- Acknowledge the contribution of students in publications and act on their behalf in setting agreements regarding authorship and other recognitions, such as acknowledgements; and
- Provide a fair and honest statement of the scope and perspective of their courses and/or modules they teach, and give clear evaluations of a student's performance in a fair, timely and easily accessible fashion.

#### **Act with Integrity:**

- Seek to engage in professional development in order to improve their teaching/training skills;
- Avoid presentation of students' work as their own;
- Ameliorate personal animosities or intellectual differences with other colleagues that prevent student access to, and collaboration with, those colleagues; and
- Take the time to introduce students to their peers at conferences and other events.

### **5.2 Students**

#### **Be Open and Transparent:**

- Acknowledge the time and effort teaching and mentoring involves, and understand that teachers and mentors have many commitments beyond these roles; and



- Recognize the contribution of mentors in publications regarding authorship, data collection etc..., such as acknowledgements.

**Act with Integrity:**

- Strive to achieve a high level of professional and academic honesty and assume appropriate responsibility for their own education; this includes during their taught courses/modules and research dissertations.

## **6.0 Epilogue**

Throughout their working-lives, those studying or interested in the fields of the social and natural sciences are required to make decisions that pose questions or challenge professional behaviour. The nature of these questions is not static, but influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic events. Therefore, it is essential that decisions must be undertaken in such a way as to ensure professional behaviour is upheld and maintained. As no single framework will fit all circumstances or eventualities, individuals should understand that this Code has been formulated to provide general guidelines to help BABAO members in their decision making.

## **7.0 Acknowledgements and thanks**

The Code of Practice acknowledges the use of some language from the AAPA (American Association of Physical Anthropologists) and AAA (American Anthropological Association) codes.

The BABAO code of ethics has been adapted and revised by Rebecca Redfern (RR) and June Jones from the 2010 BABAO publication, which was created by working-group: Margaret Clegg, Myra Giesen, Louise Loe, RR (Chair) and Charlotte Roberts..

RR thanks Charlotte Roberts in her role as President of BABAO, who instigated the update of the codes and for her discussions during this time. RR also wishes to thank the TRACES project whose 2018 conference at the University of Edinburgh helped shape the new code, and the past and present members of the BABAO committee without whom, it would not have been possible to undertake this task.

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