

Conservation reports

Conservation reports are an important aspect of conservation work. They are used by conservators to record investigations and to inform treatment proposals. During the preparation of a report a conservator will assess the object and its needs, and put forward advice on the steps that can be taken to ensure its conservation and future wellbeing.

The type of report required will depend largely on the needs of the client. As the client, you need to be clear about the level of information you need and the purpose for which it is to be used. For example, a more detailed report may be a precursor to funding.

Report types

Preliminary report

A preliminary report is carried out before any conservation work is started. It will describe and, as far as possible, identify damage and causes of deterioration; it will inform the treatment proposal(s) and will ultimately guide the estimate or quotation given for work to be carried out.

Interim report

An interim report may be required at one or more stages in a larger project and may act as a trigger for subsequent phases of work. The need for interim reports should be identified at the outset as part of the overall project plan.

Final report

A final report is provided on completion of conservation work. It will normally include a description of the item prior to conservation, a record of treatment carried out and will normally include a photographic record of the item before, during and after conservation. Condition report - Condition reports will form part of preliminary/interim/final reports, or they may be commissioned as distinct pieces of work to describe the condition of an item at a particular point in time (but not making recommendations for treatment) e.g. recording the condition of an item prior to it going on loan.

Condition report

Condition reports will form part of preliminary/interim/final reports, or they may be commissioned as distinct pieces of work to describe the condition of an item at a particular point in time (but not making recommendations for treatment) e.g. recording the condition of an item prior to it going on loan.

Report contents

Conservation reports will commonly include the following information:

- Description of the object location (both geographical and within the building or immediate surroundings)
- Description of the building fabric, including information on the environment
- Description of the object/item(s) to be conserved, including for example dimensions, original materials and techniques, description of present condition, how and why deterioration has occurred/is occurring, and any past conservation treatments. This is normally accompanied by diagrams and/or photographs.
- Recommendations (together with order and priority) for remedial work, emergency treatment, analysis work or further investigation required, further monitoring necessary to inform treatment proposal, removal and handling procedures, fixtures and fittings.
- Description of the treatment proposed - methods, materials and personnel, health and safety requirements, nature of post-conservation record to be provided
- Description of future conservation requirements - steps necessary for the continuing well being of the object/item including future monitoring as required
- Detailed estimate, including time (with estimated date of completion), cost (including fees, materials, accommodation, travel, documentation - including photography, carriage, research, analysis), phases of work, removal and refitting costs, access requirements (such as scaffolding, for example), VAT, terms of payment, date and duration of estimate, and insurance liability.

After completion

When conservation work has been completed, you should ask for a treatment record or written confirmation that work was carried out as originally specified in the treatment proposal.

This information, together with the initial condition report should be kept with the item that has undergone conservation.

It is your responsibility as custodian to ensure that this is the case and that the information is passed on to subsequent owners or made available to inform future conservation work.