

C Anatomical examination

Guide for the general public to Code of Practice C



Public guide to Code of Practice C: Anatomy

We regulate the storage and use of human bodies and material for anatomical examination in England Wales and Northern Ireland. Our powers to license and inspect these organisations come from [the Human Tissue Act 2004](#) (the Act). There are different, though similar, provisions in Scotland.

Anatomical examination refers to the teaching of students or healthcare professionals about the structure and function of the human body.

Anatomical examination does not include making or displaying images of human bodies or body parts. We do not regulate anyone creating or displaying photographs, films or electronic images.

Licensing

Each licence has a named 'Designated Individual' (DI), who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and licence conditions.

Bodies or body parts stored or used for anatomical examination must be kept on licensed premises. However, the DI can give written permission to move bodies or body parts to unlicensed premises. This can only be done where:

- the bodies or body parts are being used for the purpose that consent was given for; and
- the DI has identified a suitable person to take responsibility for the bodies or body parts.

Consent

Consent for anatomical examination can only be given by the person who is donating their body. Consent must be in writing and witnessed. If you would like to donate your body after your death, you will need to give consent during your lifetime.

Consent cannot be given by someone else on your behalf. This means that your next of kin cannot donate your body after your death.

Valid consent

For your consent to be valid, it must be:

- given by you;
- in writing; and
- signed by you, in the presence of at least one witness.

If you wish to give consent but are unable to write, you may be able to direct someone to sign on your behalf. For more information, please refer to the [Code of Practice](#).

Information you will receive

Before you give consent to donate, you should receive the following information:

- who will have access to your body or the material you have donated; and
- the types of courses your body or material may be used for.

Organisations may also provide human tissue and other resources to other teachers, researchers or organisations. Where they do this, they can charge to recover their costs. For example, they may charge to cover the costs of transporting and embalming bodies, or preparing tissue samples for use. You should receive clear information about:

- who they may supply your body or tissue to, including whether they supply to commercial organisations;
- the range of activities and researchers they supply; and
- how and why they charge.

How to donate

To offer to donate your body, you should contact your nearest medical school. For more information on how to donate, please refer to our [body, brain and tissue donation pack](#).

You must give consent in writing, which can be via:

- **Medical School consent forms**

The medical school will have a consent form which they will send to you to sign. Once you have signed and returned the form, they will keep it as part of their donation records.

- **Your Will**

You can also give consent to donate your body in your Will. We recommend that you also complete a medical school consent form. You can then insert a copy of the form in your Will.

We recommend you use the same wording in your Will as in your consent form. This will help avoid any confusion about what you have consented to. Medical schools need to be certain what you have consented to before they can accept your body. If your intentions are not clear, they may not accept your body.

It is important that you tell your next of kin about your decision to donate your body. This will help to ensure the medical school is contracted as soon as possible after your death.

It is also important to understand that there may be reasons why a medical school is unable to accept your donation. For example, if you have certain medical conditions. This can occur even if you have given consent to donate your body after death. This should be explained to you during the discussions you have with the medical school.

Import and Export

It is lawful to import and export human bodies or body parts for anatomical examination. Imported or exported material should only be used, handled, stored, transported and disposed of in line with the consent given.

Organisations importing or exporting bodies or body parts are responsible for making sure the donor has given consent. Organisations exporting bodies or body parts are responsible for ensuring they will be:

- treated with dignity and respect; and
- used only for the purposes the donor has given valid consent for.

Disposal

As part of the consent process, you should be given information about how your body and any tissue will be disposed of after use. There is not one set method of disposal that all organisations must use. HTA-licensed establishments can make decisions about the most suitable method of disposal in each case. You should be told about the options available.