ITP Final Report

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During a period of 6 weeks, from 7/7 to 17/8/2025, with the participation of 20 colleagues from 18 countries, we participated in the International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum, of which we spent 10 days in the partner museum/several museums in Britain, during which the British Museum staff presented workshops, lectures and sessions that enriched our knowledge about museum culture in the UK. We had the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and exchange information between the museum staff and the participants. This was the main objective of this programme.

Participating in the British Museum's International Training Programme was an extraordinary opportunity that reshaped the way I think about museums, cultural heritage, and my role as a professional in this field. The programme was not only an intensive period of exposure to new practices and ideas, but also an inspiring journey that gave me confidence, ambition, and a renewed sense of commitment to my work. What made the experience unique was that it was not limited to observing the operations of UK museums, but it encouraged us to reflect on how what we learned could be adapted to our own contexts and how we might carry these lessons forward when we

returned home. The ITP created a space where learning was both professional and personal, and where networking with colleagues from around the world added immeasurable value to the experience.

One of the first and most important impacts of the ITP was the way it strengthened my confidence. Seeing the scale and professionalism of institutions in the UK could have been overwhelming, but the programme made it clear that the principles of good practice are not confined to well-funded museums. Instead, they are rooted in clear vision, thoughtful planning, teamwork, and creativity. This realisation encouraged me to be more ambitious for my own institution. I came to understand that even in environments with limited resources, it is possible to initiate meaningful change. The programme inspired me to think about practical steps, however small, that could gradually transform the way museums function in my own country, whether through improved documentation, more engaging exhibitions, or greater outreach to communities.

The ITP also provided invaluable skills and experiences. Observing the way UK museums handle exhibitions, for example, showed me the importance of developing clear narratives that connect with audiences on intellectual and emotional levels. Exhibitions are not simply about displaying objects; they are about telling stories, sparking curiosity, and creating dialogue. This was reinforced by seeing how curators, conservators, educators, and designers collaborate to produce exhibitions that are accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. Another area of learning was collections management, where I was introduced to systematic approaches to documentation and preventive conservation. The emphasis on databases and digital platforms highlighted the need for accurate records and the potential of technology to make collections more widely accessible. I also learned from observing how museums in the UK are embracing digital engagement—through

online catalogues, social media, and virtual exhibitions—which can extend the reach of heritage far beyond the physical museum walls. These lessons were complemented by the day-to-day experience of working alongside international colleagues, which sharpened my skills in communication, collaboration, and cross-cultural understanding.

Reflecting on how to apply these lessons at home, I identified several priorities for change. First, I believe that improving documentation and digital access should be a central goal for many museums in regions facing similar challenges to mine. Developing databases and digitisation projects not only helps safeguard collections but also makes them more accessible to researchers, educators, and the wider public. Second, community engagement must become a stronger focus. The ITP showed me how programmes tailored to schools, families, and local groups can transform the relationship between a museum and its audience. Even small initiatives—such as workshops, guided tours, or community events—can build stronger connections and make the museum a living part of people's everyday lives. Third, I see the importance of continuous professional development. Many museum professionals, including myself, need opportunities to stay updated with international best practices, whether through workshops, training, or collaboration with universities and cultural organisations. Finally, I would like to see more innovation in exhibitions, moving beyond object-centered displays towards approaches that invite interaction and dialogue.

Of course, I also recognise that change is never simple. There are barriers that must be addressed. Funding is always limited, especially in contexts where cultural heritage competes with other urgent national priorities. Bureaucratic and administrative systems can be slow and resistant to innovation, making it difficult to introduce new practices. Staff capacity is another challenge: without adequate training and motivation, even the best ideas may not be sustainable. Finally, infrastructure limitations, especially in the area of digital technology, can make it hard to adopt certain methods learned in the UK. However, the ITP encouraged us to see these barriers not as immovable obstacles, but as challenges that can be managed with creativity and persistence. Instead of waiting for large-scale projects, we can begin with small pilot initiatives that demonstrate the value of new approaches. Instead of relying solely on government funding, we can seek partnerships with NGOs, universities, and international organisations. Instead of being discouraged by bureaucracy, we can work within the system to advocate gradually for change.

Adapting what I learned to my own context means being realistic but also ambitious. It means taking the principles I observed—such as inclusivity, sustainability, and audience focus—and reshaping them to fit local conditions. For example, while large digital projects may not be possible immediately, open-source tools could be used to begin building digital records of collections. While large-scale public programming may be out of reach, partnerships with local schools could create meaningful engagement with young people. The ITP reinforced that there is no single model for museums, and that success lies in finding approaches that are rooted in local culture and resources.

On a personal level, the ITP was profoundly meaningful. It was a reminder of why I chose this profession in the first place: to contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and to make it relevant to communities today. The programme gave me renewed energy and a sense of purpose. It reminded me that, despite the difficulties we face, our work has deep value and impact. Being part of the ITP was not only about professional growth but also about personal development—about building resilience, expanding horizons, and gaining confidence in my ability to contribute to positive change.

One of the most enriching aspects of the programme was the international community it created. Spending time with colleagues from across the world was a unique opportunity to exchange experiences, share challenges, and learn from one another. It became clear that, while our contexts differ, many of the issues we face are surprisingly similar: how to secure funding, how to engage audiences, how to manage collections, and how to remain relevant in a changing world. The diversity of perspectives was inspiring, and the friendships formed during the programme are among its most lasting outcomes.

Looking forward, I am committed to remaining part of the ITP global network. This community is more than just a professional network; it is a source of encouragement, collaboration, and solidarity. Through digital platforms, social media, and potential joint projects, I hope to continue learning from colleagues and contributing my own experiences. The international network will not only help me in my career but will also enrich my institution by bringing global perspectives into local practice.

During the 10-day training at the partner museum in the UK, in the museums of the northeast of the country in the city of Newcastle, this training provided an opportunity to try out new working methods. Through our daily visits to the museums and exhibitions in the city, we were able to learn about the method of planning and designing exhibitions, as well as attracting audiences of different age groups and how to access exhibits in museums. Exhibitions via social media opened up possibilities for working on this project and implementing it within the Iraqi Museum's collections. In addition to visiting the partner museum, our presence as a small group helps support future projects and plans, in addition to cooperation and exchange of skills.

In conclusion, the International Training Programme was not only a professional course but a transformative experience that has given me the confidence, skills, and ambition to bring about positive change in my institution, even under challenging circumstances. I have learned that small, well-considered initiatives can have lasting impacts, and that being part of a global community of professionals is a powerful source of inspiration and support. I return from the programme with a renewed sense of purpose, a clear set of priorities, and a determination to build upon what I have learned.

I would especially like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the British Museum, to all the supporters of the ITP, and to the entire ITP team for their personal commitment and invaluable support. I am also deeply grateful to the British Institute for the Study of Iraq for their generous support, which played a crucial role in enabling my participation in this transformative programme.

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