

Significance^{2.0}

a guide to assessing the significance of collections

The significance assessment criteria

Primary criteria

- Historic significance
- Artistic or aesthetic significance
- Scientific or research significance
- Social or spiritual significance

Comparative criteria

- Provenance
- Rarity or representativeness
- Condition or completeness
- Interpretive capacity

About the criteria

The four primary criteria and four comparative criteria recommended for use in **Significance 2.0** are listed above.

The Significance assessment check list (overleaf) recommends using the significance criteria at Step 8.

Assessment against these criteria helps to synthesise the meanings and values of an item or collection and feeds into the 'statement of significance' at Step 9.

Note that:

- one or more criteria may apply, or be interrelated
- it's not necessary to find evidence to support each criterion to justify significance
- an item or collection may be highly significant even if relevant to one primary criterion only
- the comparative criteria interact with the primary criteria to modify or clarify the degree of significance
- use the criteria to draw out the precise qualities of the item or collection's significance, rather than simply assert that it is, for example, historically significant
- using this set of criteria for assessing items and collections helps to create comparable assessments across all kinds of collections
- the recommended significance criteria present a framework for describing and elucidating how and why an item or collection is important—it can be adapted or reframed to suit particular items and collections.

When you have prepared a draft 'statement of significance', review the information gathered through the check list process (overleaf) and reconsider how the criteria apply.

<http://significance.collectionscouncil.com.au>



PO Box 263 Rundle Mall SA 5000 Australia
Telephone: +618 8207 7287
Facsimilie: +618 8207 7207
Email: info@collectionscouncil.com.au
Web: www.collectionscouncil.com.au

Significance assessment check list

Step through this process as you assess your scientific or cultural item or collection

1. **Collate** a file



2a. **Research** history and (for items) provenance

2b. **Review** scope and themes arising from research (for whole collections)



3. **Consult** knowledgeable people – to whom is the item/collection significant?



4. **Explore** the context of the item/collection – consider patterns, development, function, geography, environment



5. **Analyse** and describe the fabric and condition of the item/collection – consider nature, materials, design, manufacture, changes



6. **Compare** with other examples



7. **Identify** related places and items/collections – what else is part of the picture?



8. **Assess** significance against the primary and comparative criteria



9. **Write** a succinct 'statement of significance' – consider all information gathered; explain **how and why** the item/collection is significant and what it means; discuss with others



10. **Action** – what to do next? – list recommendations, policies and tasks arising

The 'statement of significance' is shaped by reference to the criteria and the preceding steps in the assessment process.