



MUSEUM
ACCREDITATION

Supporting Guidance for Accreditation
Standard November 2024

Accreditation: Post Award Information Sheet

November 2024

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Introduction

Thank you for participating in the Accreditation Scheme, the UK Standard for museums and galleries.

The Scheme sets out nationally agreed standards of good practice for the sector. It is managed as a partnership between Arts Council England, the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and Northern Ireland Museums Council. Each organisation is a national development agency for museums.

This information sheet provides guidance for museums that hold Accredited status.

Terms and conditions for participation in the Scheme

It is important that museums maintain the Accreditation Standard during the lifetime of the award. You'll need to make sure you're familiar with and comply with the [Terms and Conditions for participation in the Scheme](#).

You must contact your assessing organisation promptly if any of the situations described in Section 2 of the terms and conditions have occurred or are likely to occur.

Acknowledging you have read, understood and accept the terms and conditions Scheme form part of the declaration when you upload your application or form on the online system. We also send a copy with your award outcome letter which you'll need to accept to confirm your award.

If the panel has awarded Full Accreditation, we'll provide an award certificate normally within four weeks of you accepting the terms and conditions.

Your award letter

Your award outcome letter describes any recommendations agreed by the decision-making panel.

Please ensure that relevant colleagues and members of the governing body have sight of the letter and are aware of any Areas for Development and / or Required Actions.

How long does the award last?

- **Full Accreditation**

Your current Accreditation award remains in place until an updated assessment is reviewed by an Accreditation Panel.

Once Accredited we'll periodically invite you to demonstrate that your museum is continuing to meet the Standard. This is called an Accreditation Return and will typically take place every five years.

Your assessing organisation will email your Accreditation Return invitation six months before the submission deadline. You'll submit your application using the [Grantium online application portal](#).

During the life of your Full Accreditation award it's important that you:

- **Plan how you will address your Areas for Development**

Your award letter may include Areas for Developments. These relate to a requirement where the museum is compliant but could make improvements. They are typically applied in the spirit of development to help a museum focus on key areas, but can also be used to informally flag an issue for future monitoring. We recommend you add Areas for Development as objectives or actions in your Forward Plan/Business Plan.

- **Review your policies and plans regularly**

Your policies, plans and agreements are live documents and need to be reviewed and updated regularly. Keep a schedule of all your policies and agreements noting the date they were signed off and the date for review. Consult with staff and volunteers and ensure they are familiar with any changes to procedures.

• **Provisional Accreditation**

We award Provisional Accreditation status to museums that are temporarily unable to meet all the Requirements of the Standard. It is a supportive measure which allows museums to stay in the Scheme while they work to respond to Required Action(s) by an agreed short-term timescale.

The length of the award will depend on the museum's circumstances. Provisional awards typically last 12 months. We may agree a shorter deadline of three or six months to ensure a priority action is addressed in a timely manner.

In order to be awarded Full Accreditation you will need to submit a Provisional Review application evidencing you have completed the Required Actions.

You'll find further guidance on Provisional Accreditation in the **Provisional Review Information Sheet** available in the [Accreditation Guidance Library](#).

Promoting your award

Holding Accredited status is the mark of a professionally run museum and an accomplishment to be celebrated.

Once you've received your outcome letter notifying you of your Accreditation award you can decide how best to publicise your achievement. We love hearing your success stories so do share your photos, cuttings and social media posts if you wish.

Copies of the Accreditation logo (including logos in English, Welsh and Scots-Gaelic) and Museum Accreditation Scheme brand guidelines are available from your awarding body for use on your publicity material and your website.

We publish an updated list of Accredited museums and a statistical report after each panel on the Arts Council website.

What to do if you're experiencing significant / major change

If you're undergoing or expecting any significant / major changes that may impact on your compliance with the Standard, you'll need to let your assessing organisation know. **Please contact us promptly and don't wait until your next Return is due.** We're here to help and advise on next steps.

We'll carry out a Significant Change Review to check how the changes will (or have) impacted the museum's ability to meet the Standard.

The types of situations which might be considered as significant changes include:

- Short-term unplanned workforce change/challenge
- Unplanned museum closure (part of full)
- Longer-term workforce restructure
- Major capital (re)development
- Governance changes
- Serious financial cuts
- Change to the status, ownership or constitution of your organisation
- A proposal to sell items from the collection
- Transferring the management of the collection to another party
- You are likely to enter into administration, liquidation, receivership, dissolution or, in Scotland, have your organisation's estate sequestrated

We'll usually ask you to provide additional information which may include:

- A brief situation report
- A copy of your governing document, and any related service level or asset transfer agreements (governance changes)
- Information about the closure date, the scope of the work, the projected timeline to reopening the museum to the public, information about any ongoing public access arrangements (capital works)
- A copy of your current forward planning document (or confirmation of situation)
- A copy of your current collections development policy (or confirmation of situation)
- The date when your emergency plan was last reviewed
- The date of your most recent security review

We'll review the information and decide on the most appropriate action to take.

Overall, we aim to achieve the best possible outcome for you and provide support through the Scheme. We are flexible and can signpost next steps, appropriate guidance and support if you're having difficulties or aren't sure what to do.

We'll check that any new governing document meets the five key constitutional criteria outlined in the **Accreditation: How to Meet the Standard** guidance. The **Eligibility and How to Apply** guidance lists common reasons governing

documents are ineligible. Both resources are available in the [Accreditation Guidance Library](#).

Depending on the nature of the change:

- **We may confirm that we will not need to amend your award**, but you should tell us about the changes when you next submit a Return, including updates (or planned updates) to any relevant policies and plans.
- **We may complete a Significant Change assessment** recommending a change to Provisional Accreditation whilst you're working through change. We will set Required Action(s) which you'll need to respond to by an agreed short-term timescale. The report will be considered by the decision panel who will make the final decision on the award outcome and any Required Actions and Areas for Development.

Museums undergoing redevelopment that are closed to the public for longer than six months will be reviewed as a Significant Change assessment. We'll recommend a move to Provisional Accreditation status during the closure period. This is a supportive measure which allows a museum to stay in the Scheme while it is temporarily unable to meet the public access requirements of the Standard. We'll usually add a Required Action for submission of a full Return once the redevelopment work has been completed. After a major capital project quite a few of the policies and plans will be out of date and need review, e.g. the emergency plan, the access plan and risks may all have changed. Within 12 months of your Provisional award you'll need to submit a Provisional Review with a progress update.

Financially-motivated disposals

Financially-motivated disposal is considered a significant change for an Accredited museum due to the reputational risk attached to an inappropriate sale both to the individual museum, the wider sector and also to the Scheme as a whole.

Accredited museums considering a financially-motivated sale, or a disposal by sale that might be viewed as financially-motivated, should follow the process set out in their approved Accreditation-compliant Collections Development Policy and the Museums Association Disposals Toolkit.

If your museum governing body is considering undertaking a financially-motivated disposal and is unsure whether a sale proposal from the collection meets with Accreditation requirements, you should request advice from your Accreditation assessing organisation.

Compliance Reviews

You must contact your assessing organisation if the museum or its governing body has made an irreversible decision or action which contravenes the Standard and goes against the shared ethical basis of the Scheme.

This includes but is not limited to the unethical sale of an item accessioned into the museum collection. This is where the museum does not appear to have followed the ethics and process outlined in the Museums Association Disposals toolkit and in their own Collections Development Policy.

We will carry out a Compliance Review assessment to determine to what extent the decision or action did not comply with the published criteria and terms and conditions of the Scheme. The assessment report will be considered by the decision panel who will make the final decision on the museum's Accreditation status.

Possible outcomes include a move to Provisional status with targeted Required Actions; or Remove and Exclude due to deliberate non-compliance.

Excluded museums may apply for eligibility to rejoin the Scheme five years after removal for non-compliance. They must demonstrate that former non-compliant issues have been addressed through appropriately amended and compliant policies, plans and procedures. Museums continuing to deliberately contravene a requirement or requirements of the scheme are not eligible to reapply.

Hosted museums

Where a museum participating in or wishing to apply for Accreditation is hosted within the premises of another museum, and where an agreement exists for shared services and/or responsibilities, the host museum is expected to be part of the Scheme and hold the Accreditation award. If a panel decides to remove the host museum from the Scheme, then we'd also want to check the continued compliance of the hosted organisation.

What to do if you no longer wish to participate

If you decide to withdraw from the Scheme, get in touch with your Accreditation assessing organisation. We can offer help and advice and welcome your feedback.

If you choose to leave, we'll ask you for written confirmation of your decision showing this request has been approved by your governing body. We'll ask for a brief situation update explaining why you've decided to leave. Please let us know if there are any risks to your collection or premises.

If your governing body manages more than one Accredited museum and closes an individual site, we'll expect the collections from the closed site to remain managed and cared for in line with the Standard.

We'll take your request to a panel to formally remove your museum from the Scheme and we'll confirm this outcome in writing.

If at a later point you decide you're interested in applying for Accreditation again, you'll need to start from the beginning by completing an Eligibility Questionnaire.

Feedback and complaints

We welcome your feedback so that we can continue to develop the Accreditation Scheme and help with any difficulties you may encounter. Please send any comments or suggestions to your Accreditation assessing organisation.

If you're still not happy with the service you've received, there is a complaints procedure for you to use. This explains the formal procedure for dealing with complaints and the sorts of things you can make a formal complaint about. We recommend firstly contacting the appropriate partner in the country where your museum is based to see if your concerns can be addressed before making an official complaint.

Support and advice

You can download the Accreditation Standard and a range of guidance and resources in the [Accreditation Guidance Library](#).

Each UK Partner provides Accreditation advice and support within their geographic area. If you have any questions about your award please contact:

Scotland

Museum Galleries Scotland

[Museum Accreditation - Museums Galleries Scotland](#)

Email: accreditation@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk

Wales

The Welsh Government

[Museum Accreditation Scheme | GOV.WALES](#)

Email: MuseumDevelopment@gov.wales

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Museums Council

[Museum Accreditation Scheme | N. Ireland Museums Council \(nimc.co.uk\)](#)

Email: devofficer@nimc.co.uk

England

Arts Council England funds a programme of Museum Development to support the delivery of the UK Accreditation Scheme in England. For advice on responding to Required Actions or Areas for development, please contact your local Museum Development team. Contact details are available on their website:

[Museum Development North](#)

[Museum Development Midlands](#)

[Museum Development London](#)

[Museum Development South West](#)

[Museum Development South East](#)

UK National museums (governed by national legislation and directly receiving central or devolved Government funding) please contact accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk in the first instance.

Museums based in the **Channel Islands or the Isle of Man** please contact accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk in the first instance.

Support using Grantium

Guidance on setting up a User Account and Applicant Profile is available at the following link: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/grantium-support> You can find information tailored to the Accreditation Scheme in the [Accreditation Guidance Library](#).

For help and advice using Grantium please contact the Arts Council's Customer Services team. Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk Telephone: 0161 934 4317 (10am-4pm) You can also Livechat by visiting: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact>

