



MUSEUM
ACCREDITATION

Supporting Guidance for Accreditation
Standard November 2024

Accreditation Scheme Glossary

November 2024

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Access Assessment – A review of your building and services identifying any barriers. The purpose is to aid your museum in highlighting areas of potential concern and identifying ways of addressing these.

Access Plan – Plans to maintain, and where possible to improve:

- the physical, sensory and intellectual access to your collections
- information about your collections
- access to the buildings housing your collections

Access Policy – Policy covering how people can see, use, and reference your collection, gain access to your museum buildings and sites, and how you share information about the collection with people.

Accessioning – The process of adding to your long-term collection.

Accountability – The acceptance of responsibility for honest and ethical conduct toward people and collections.

Accreditation Mentor – Experienced professionals in the sector, who help smaller museums achieve and retain Accreditation.

Accreditation Standard – The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. Also known as Museum Accreditation.

Acquisition – Formal procedure agreeing to add an item into the museum collection and taking legal ownership of objects.

Act of Parliament – An Act is a Bill that has been approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and been given Royal Assent by the Monarch. Taken together, Acts of Parliament make up what is known as Statute Law in the UK.

Approval - Evidence that policies and plans have been formally approved by your governing body, or the relevant delegated subcommittee.

Archive – A place or collection containing records, documents, or other materials of historical interest.

Audience – All those interested in visiting your museum or taking part in its activities. Also referred to as user or visitor.

Benchmarking – An agreed level of performance by which something can be measured. Benchmarking may be used to establish a set of procedures or to define levels of practice.

Bequest – The act of giving or leaving something by will.

Building Adaptation – Making changes so that your buildings respond to and address the challenges of climate change.

Business Plan – A formal statement of your goals and the activities and resources needed to reach them. Also known as Forward Plan, Corporate Plan or Strategic Plan.

Cataloguing – The ongoing process of recording and managing information about collections, often from multiple perspectives, to meet the needs of a range of users.

Charity – In England and Wales, a charity is an organisation that is:

- established for charitable purposes only, and
- subject to the High Court's charity law jurisdiction

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – A corporate body with a constitution that is registered with and regulated by the Charity Commission.

Collections care and conservation plan – A plan to maintain and, where possible, improve the way you care for and conserve your collections.

Collections loan agreement – A formal contract between a lender and a borrower.

Collections Management – Activities to ensure collections are secure, well cared for, and all information associated with objects remains linked to them.

Community – We use this to mean a group of people who live in the same geographical area or a group of people with shared interests.

Conservation – This can refer to general care of collections – making sure objects are clean and stable – this is also known as preventive conservation. It also refers to actions taken by conservators to repair damaged items – also referred to as remedial conservation.

Constitution – A legal document that sets out an organisation's purposes and how it is to be administered. It may also be known as a 'governing document'.

Digitisation – The process of making an electronic copy of a document or photograph, for example by scanning.

Documentation – The process of recording information about items in your collection, including what your objects are, where they came from and how and where they are stored.

Documentation planning – Making your documentation systems better and enhancing the information they contain as an ongoing process of continual improvement.

Documentation policy – Ensures your collections documentation activities provide you with useful and useable information, linked to your statement of purpose, and meet ethical commitments and legal requirements.

Emergency Plan – The process by which risks are identified and planning is put in place to prevent emergencies occurring where possible.

Endowment – Cash or another asset which has been donated to a charity whereby the conditions of the donation require that the asset be held or invested to generate income.

Evacuation procedures – A set of procedures developed by employers to help facilitate safe evacuations in case of workplace emergencies.

Expert Advice – Advice from specialists in their field including lived experience.

Freehold documentation absolute interests in land (Scotland) – This means that a person has unfettered ownership of property, the equivalent of a freehold in English land law.

Gallery – A non-commercial gallery displays works of art in the same way that a museum displays artefacts and specimens. Often the terms ‘museum’ and ‘gallery’ are used interchangeably.

Governing Body – The group of people who are responsible for the effectiveness and accountability of your organisation. If you are a charity these people may be called trustees or board of directors.

Governing Document – A legal document that sets out an organisation’s purposes and how it is to be administered. It may also be known as a ‘constitution’.

Governing instrument – The legal document that establishes your organisation, defines your purpose and how you will operate.

Heritage assets – Assets with historic, artistic, scientific, technological, geographical or environmental qualities held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

Heritage organisation – An organisation with an interest in preserving and promoting the natural or cultural environment, history, customs and traditions. In practice some museums call themselves heritage centres and vice versa.

Incorporated organisation – An incorporated organisation is a legal entity in its own right. This means that it can enter into contracts, employ staff, lease property and have its own obligations and liabilities.

Intellectual Access – People can easily understand what your museum offers and does, even if they have no previous knowledge of a subject.

Judicial Process – The jurisdiction of the courts to provide a legally-binding process of review and judgment to control the activities of an entity.

Learning styles – Different methods of learning or understanding new information. The way a person takes in, understands, expresses and remembers information. There are four predominant learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinaesthetic.

Leaseholds – Legal agreement with the landlord (sometimes known as the 'freeholder') called a 'lease'. This tells you how many years you'll own the property.

Licences – Contractual, personal right to occupy the property and do something specific on the property.

Loans in (borrowing objects) – Managing objects you borrow for a fixed period of time and for a specific purpose.

Loans out (lending objects) – Assessing requests for you to lend your objects and managing the lending process until loans are returned to you.

Local authority – A body subordinate to central government and normally controlled by democratically-elected members that provides services to local people either on behalf of central government or on its own account.

Location and movement control – Keeping a record of where all the objects in your care can be found, and updating the location each time an object is moved.

Memorandum & Articles of Association – A written document that limits and defines the functions and powers of a company, and the rules for its administration. A form of governing document.

Museum – An institution that cares for a collection of artefacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, cultural, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing through permanent or temporary exhibitions.

Object entry – Logging all objects coming into your care for whatever reason, including loans, enquiries and potential acquisitions.

Object exit – Recording when objects leave the buildings you are responsible for and pass out of your direct care.

Organisation – We have used this as a broad description for your group; in practice it could mean a museum, charity, company or unincorporated association – or a combination of these.

Organisational health – The Accreditation Standard expects museums to be responsible, responsive and resilient and will look at all aspects of how your business is constituted and run.

Tenancy agreement – Contract between you and a landlord.

Permanent entity – Planned long-term existence as an organisation.

Permissions to occupy – Permissions to occupy a building given by the Ministry of Defence.

Plan – Document outlines specific projects and includes objectives, actions, resources, measurable results, and milestones. Plans should include timelines, who is responsible, and where they will take place.

Policy – Document sets out the principles and rules for guiding decision making and achieving an organisation's desired outcomes and strategic aims over several years. They should be expressed formally by top management or the governing body.

Procedures Manual – Document describes the practical implementation of your organisation's policy, including how to do processes at an operational level and who is responsible for the steps that need to be taken.

Policies, procedures and plans – See this helpful [video](#) which outlines the difference between policies, procedures and plans.

Public Benefit – Provision for the general social, economic and cultural wellbeing, and health and safety, of the general public.

Risk Assessment – A careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

Royal Charter – A document issued by the monarch that gives independent legal standing to an organisation.

Salvage priorities - A record of any priority collections you would save first in an emergency.

Single Outcome Agreement – An agreement between the Scottish Government and each council, which sets out how each will work towards improving national outcomes for local people in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities.

Senate – An assembly or council usually possessing high deliberative and legislative functions.

Service Level Agreement – A contract between a service provider and its customers that documents what services the provider will furnish.

Spectrum documentation procedures – The procedures ensure that your museum is managing collections effectively, is accountable for collections in its care, and makes collections accessible.

Stakeholder – Anyone who has an interest or concern in your museum. It includes your users, staff, volunteers, trustees, funders and wider communities.

Statutory Regulation – A law, rule, or other order prescribed by authority, especially to regulate conduct.

Subject Specialist Network – Supports the development, use and wider understanding of collections by sharing knowledge, expertise, and resources with people working with collections.

Succession Plans – Identify and grow talent to fill leadership and business-critical positions in the future.

Surplus – Once running costs are covered, any additional income is a surplus. Running a museum is a business, even though any surplus will be reinvested in the business and not be taken out as profit.

Tenancies – The period of time for which you have the right to use a building or piece of land.

Trust Deed – A formally-executed legal document that creates a trust and sets out the charity's purposes and (usually) how it is to be administered. A form of governing document.

Underrepresented groups – A subgroup of the population or community whose representation is disproportionately low relative to their numbers in the general population or community.

Unincorporated organisation – Being unincorporated means that an organisation has no separate legal identity of its own. All risks and liabilities involved in running the organisation are carried by the individuals who own and/or manage it.

User – Anyone who visits your museum or website or who takes part in any of your activities.

Volunteer Agreement – Document which helps organisations/charities and volunteers to understand exactly what is expected of each other.