

# Accreditation Mentoring

A guide for mentors and potential mentors

Arts Council England

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**Large Print version**

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# Introduction

Welcome to the Accreditation Mentoring guidance and resources. These materials are designed to help you to understand the role of Accreditation Mentor and provide you with links to resources that will help you make the most of the role.

You should read these materials in conjunction with the **Museum Accreditation Standard**

([www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2)) 2018 and the Supporting Guidance 2024 – **Accreditation: How to meet the Standard** ([www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2)), which can be found on the Arts Council England (ACE) website.

Museum Accreditation is a UK-wide Standard. Partners from Arts Council England, Northern Ireland Museums Council, Museums Galleries Scotland and the Welsh Government work together to deliver the scheme across the UK, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Each nation manages the scheme and assesses applicants in its own region. ACE manages the Committee of the UK Accreditation Partnership and shares the online application platform, Grantium, with all four nations.

Most mentored museums are the smaller ‘Type 1’ museums. The Accreditation Standard is designed to be inclusive and of use to all types of public museums – from small, volunteer-run organisations to national institutions. The requirements are tailored to each museum’s size and type, and information about **scalability** ([www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2)) can be found on ACE’s Accreditation pages.

**The UK Accreditation Partnership thanks all those who give their time to support and give confidence to their mentored museums, helping them achieve and retain the trusted and nationally-recognised Museum Accreditation Standard.**

# **Part one: Becoming an Accreditation Mentor**

Accreditation Mentoring is a great way to broaden your view and gain insight into what goes on in other areas of the museums sector. Volunteering as an Accreditation Mentor is a rewarding professional development opportunity. As Accreditation Mentor, you will provide essential support to a smaller museum while sharing your professional expertise and contributing to the growth and success of the institution.

## **What are the benefits to me of being an Accreditation Mentor?**

Becoming an Accreditation Mentor provides rewarding opportunities for professional growth:

- Sharing your expertise to support the development and success of another museum.
- Expanding your knowledge and experience in diverse aspects of museum practice, particularly those not covered by your current role. If you work in a large or specialised museum, mentoring a small museum will expose you to a broader range of activities.
- Validating your professional capabilities and expertise within the museum sector.
- Working with different types of museums to gain a well-rounded perspective on museum management and operations.
- Expanding your network within the museum community.
- Honing your strategic thinking and influencing abilities while working with governing bodies, increasing your confidence and effectiveness as a leader.

- Reconnecting with a specialised type of collection, area of museum practice or subject matter.
- Demonstrating your dedication to continuous learning and growth within the museum profession.
- Engaging with a diverse range of institutions, contributing to the overall enrichment of the nation's museums sector.

Retired museum professionals can use mentorship as an opportunity to preserve their networks, support others, and remain engaged in the field.

You may choose to be an Accreditation Mentor for multiple museums; however, consider the time commitment and responsibilities associated with each mentorship before making a decision.

## What is an Accreditation Mentor?

Museums which do not employ a museum professional with at least three years' experience are required to appoint an Accreditation Mentor to ensure they meet requirement 1.3 in the Standard:

**Organisational health 1.3:** A satisfactory structure for your governance and management: evidence that your governing body has access to museum professional advice.

By governing body, the Accreditation Standard means the group responsible for the governance and strategic direction of an organisation that holds legal liability. Typically, this will be a Board of Trustees or Management Committee.

## **The Standard says:**

We want to see appropriate levels of staffing and expertise for your museum and that there's a clear line of communication between the museum professional and your governing body. The level of advice in place should be appropriate to the size and scope of your museum. For smaller museums, without paid professional staff, this requirement can be met by appointing and acting on the input of a Trustee with museum professional experience or an Accreditation Mentor. A museum professional is defined within Accreditation as having:

- At least three years' experience of working in museums as an employee, at curatorial/ managerial level. This experience can be across any of the three areas within the Standard: organisational health, managing collections, or users and their experiences
- A commitment to personal learning and development to show how they're keeping their knowledge, skills and experience up to date.

We expect the Accreditation Mentor to attend at least one meeting of the governing body a year and visit the museum at least once a year. We'll ask for an Accreditation Mentor report to accompany your application or return. This can be uploaded to the online form or provided separately to the Accreditation assessing organisation.

An Accreditation Mentor is not a free member of staff, nor are they a trustee (although museum trustees who are eligible may carry out the additional role of Accreditation Mentor). Accreditation Mentors support museums to achieve and retain Accredited Museum status by providing independent professional advice, acting as a volunteer for the museum.



Some parts of the UK provide Accreditation Mentoring through a pool of museum professionals with a variety of experience, or through museum sector support providers. And some local authorities provide Accreditation Mentoring to a number of museums in their area through council-run museums or county museums advisers. A museum would have to ensure this advice is being formally received and acted upon by the governing body to confirm it meets the Standard.

## What would I be expected to do, and how does it help the mentored museum?

As an Accreditation Mentor, you'll be providing roughly four days of support annually to your assigned museum. Your role varies depending on whether the museum is a new applicant for Museum Accreditation or already accredited.

**For new applicants for Museum Accreditation**, you'll be guiding them through their first application, ensuring they meet the standards for:

- Organisational Health
- Managing Collections, and
- Users and their experiences

If the mentored museum is **already Accredited**, you'll be advising the governing body on maintaining their Accreditation status and assisting with Accreditation returns.

Regardless of the museum's status, you're expected to:

- Attend at least one governing body meeting annually
- Visit the museum at least once a year
- Provide a report accompanying their Accreditation submission

Keep in mind that Accreditation Mentors don't need to be an expert in all areas of the Standard. As Accreditation Mentor, you'll be coordinating support and guidance, connecting the museum with relevant resources when needed.

Accreditation Mentors work mainly with the governing body. Trustees (or their equivalent) may have significant experience in their own professions and may not always appreciate the requirement for a mentor. The benefits you bring to the museum are to interpret the Accreditation Standard to a lay audience, to provide a museum context to their decision-making, to act as an advocate for the museum and to help them develop relationships with the wider museum profession and support organisations.

The Accreditation Mentor's role is to guide the museum's governing body, not to complete the Accreditation submission on their behalf.

## **Trustees as Mentors**

A trustee with a museum professional background may take on the additional role of being an Accreditation Mentor if they meet the eligibility requirements and maintain their Continuing Professional Development. The arrangement should be formalised to ensure a separation from the trustee's governance decision making role and their Accreditation Mentor role.

## **What wouldn't I be expected to do?**

Accreditation Mentors are not expected to volunteer for museum activities such as events, fundraising, stewarding and tea-making! They are not expected to actually complete the Accreditation return, this responsibility sits with the museum.

Unless they have been formally appointed as a trustee, an Accreditation Mentor should not attend every meeting of the governing body or they could become classed in law as a de facto trustee. One meeting per year is the usual expectation. Museums are expected to pay reasonable travel and subsistence expenses for their Mentors to attend meetings.

## Am I eligible?

The 2018 Museum Accreditation Standard requires Accreditation Mentors to have:

- At least three years' experience of working in museums as an employee, at curatorial/ managerial level. This experience can be across any of the three areas within the Standard: organisational health, managing collections, or users and their experiences
- A commitment to personal learning and development to show how they're keeping their knowledge, skills and experience up to date.

If you are not eligible, there may be other ways you can help museums. Contact your closest museum sector support provider. They will have suggestions.

You can assess your skills and experience across the Accreditation Standard areas by using the template **Accreditation skills self-assessment tool**. Then look for others who can help support the areas in which you have less experience.

## How do I become an Accreditation Mentor?

Mentor vacancies are usually advertised on local or regional sector support providers' websites. You can also offer your services directly to a museum or mention your interest in becoming a mentor to your closest sector support provider. They are bound to know of museums that need a mentor. Then complete the **expression of interest form**.

The form should be returned to the assessing organisation for your geographic area:

Scotland

Museum Galleries Scotland

[accreditation@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk)

Wales

The Welsh Government

[MuseumDevelopment@gov.wales](mailto:MuseumDevelopment@gov.wales)

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Museums Council

[devofficer@nimc.co.uk](mailto:devofficer@nimc.co.uk)

England

Arts Council England

[accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk)

## Part two: Being an Accreditation Mentor

A parallel resource 'Working with your mentor' is available for mentored museums.

### What does the Accreditation Standard require?

The Accreditation Standard requires museum governing bodies to have access to museum professional advice. Having an Accreditation Mentor is one of the ways a small organisation without museum professional staff can access this.

It's not your role as Accreditation Mentor to act as an unpaid curator for the museum. Rather to use your mentoring time (typically a few days per year) to be a critical friend to the governing body, providing guidance and support. The accountability to meet the Accreditation Standard sits with the museum itself. The fundamental expectations on you, as Accreditation Mentor, are to:

- Attend at least one trustee meeting per year
- Visit the museum at least once per year, meeting members of the governing body and wider workforce e.g. staff or volunteers
- Provide ad hoc support and advice to your mentored museum in support of its Accreditation journey
- Take part in Continuing Professional Development relevant to the role of Accreditation Mentor.

The scope of the Accreditation Standard is broad. You may have particular expertise in one part of it. For others, you should signpost the museum to relevant resources and advice, drawing on your sector knowledge and networks.

## Starting to support your museum

Once matched with a museum, your first tasks as Accreditation Mentor are to:

- Establish clear expectations about how the mentoring relationship will work in practice
- Find out where the museum is, in terms of Accreditation readiness.

A face-to-face meeting is usually the best way to do this. Meet with representatives of the governing body on site at the museum. This allows for both:

- Relationship building and
- An in-real-life experience of the museum's setup.

Before the meeting, think about key questions for the museum. Be prepared to work up a Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement by looking over the template provided.

Before this initial meeting, check that your contact at the mentored museum has a copy of the document 'Working with your Accreditation Mentor – a guide for museums' and has read it.

At least one member of the museum's governing body should come to this initial meeting. This is true even if the museum has delegated its Accreditation submission to a volunteer who doesn't sit on the Board, Management Committee or equivalent. As an Accreditation Mentor your role is to support the governing body to work to the Accreditation Standard. This is where your primary relationship should sit.

# The Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement

To avoid problems in the mentoring relationship further down the line, establish clear mutual expectations at the start. The template is designed to help you define parameters from the outset and ensure that the respective responsibilities of Accreditation Mentor and Museum are mutually understood. The template has prompts for highlighting:

- The experience and knowledge that you bring as Accreditation Mentor
- Key facts about the museum, its collection, services and Accreditation status
- Roles and responsibilities in the mentoring relationship.

The Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement places expectations on the museum to proactively involve you as their Accreditation Mentor. For example, it is the museum's responsibility to invite you to governing body and other key meetings, and to keep you informed by sending you meeting minutes and newsletters.

## Time commitment

A vital aspect of the Agreement is to set clear, mutual expectations about the Mentor's time commitment. The total anticipated commitment for an Accreditation Mentor is around four days per year.

There are some essentials – to attend at least one trustee meeting; visit the museum at least once (meeting members of the workforce); take part in CPD relevant to the role; write a report as part of the museum's Accreditation submission.

Additionally, you are encouraged to allow for some ad hoc support and advice.

Your museum is likely to appreciate lots of support from you as their Accreditation Mentor - potentially more than you can realistically offer, alongside your other commitments. Being clear about your availability and time commitment avoids pressure on the relationship. Be upfront about this and set clear boundaries at the outset around the times when you are available.

Expect greater demand on you the first time your mentored museum applies for Accreditation and when returns are due. Be responsive to ad hoc requests without allowing them to squeeze out your core Accreditation Mentor activities.

Mentor relationships aren't expected to go on forever. However, frequent Accreditation Mentor turnover can be disruptive and unhelpful to the museum in achieving and sustaining Accreditation. The Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement template prompts you and the museum to agree an expected duration of the relationship. This is up for mutual discussion, something between 3 and 7 years is probably reasonable. Plan to review the Agreement around the 4-year mark. Consider whether there is still a good fit between what the museum needs and what you can offer.

The Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement is not a legal document. In addition, both parties should sign the museum's own standard volunteering agreement. Accreditation Mentors act in a voluntary capacity for the museum. This is true even if you perform the role as part of a paid role elsewhere. To formalise this, the museum should induct you using its own volunteering arrangements and ensure that you are properly covered by the museum's liability insurance policies.



**Although you are formally a volunteer of the museum, it's still important to remember that the museum gets the most value from your detached, independent, professional view as a critical friend.**

In some parts of the UK, the Accreditation Mentor role is occasionally performed by two or more museum professionals working together to support a single museum. While this can be a good way to share the workload, it calls for coordination and clear communication. To ensure success in such cases:

- Clearly define roles and expectations between Accreditation Mentors and the museum.
- Hold an initial meeting with all parties to align goals, discuss responsibilities, and address potential concerns. This can be conducted online if necessary, to accommodate everyone's schedules.
- Adapt the Museum Accreditation Mentor Agreement template to accommodate the involvement of multiple mentors.

## **Assessing the museum's Accreditation readiness**

The Accreditation Standard provides a checklist for exploring the museum's Accreditation readiness at the first meeting. It guides the museum through each item, exploring:

- Which areas are strengths for the museum and which ones are key development areas?
- Which are identified as areas for development via the museum's Forward/Business plan - or referenced in the last Accreditation outcome letter?
- Which areas is the Accreditation Mentor able to advise on?
- Which areas require additional input from someone else? If so who?

If possible, move around the museum during your discussions, going to areas of the museum relevant to each section of the Standard. For example, cover 'Users and their Experiences' in a public-facing area. This gives the museum an opportunity to showcase its current practice and offers you deeper insight into how the museum operates.

The Museum Accreditation Standard is designed to be inclusive of both national institutions and small volunteer run organisations. Most mentored museums are in the latter category. When considering the Accreditation readiness, be realistic in your expectations, based on the museum's size and capacity. The **Museum Scalability Indicators** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2>) are designed to help. In the '**How to Meet the Standard**' (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2>) guidance, Accreditation evidence requirements are tailored according to museum size and type. Yes, do encourage the museum to raise its standards. But bear in mind that it's unfair to expect a small all-volunteer community museum to perform as if it had the scale and capacity of a professionalised organisation with dozens of staff.

If the mentored museum is new to the Accreditation scheme, you will probably need to spend more time guiding your museum contact through the requirements and the process. There is a **suite of specific 'First time applicants' material** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-5>) in the guidance library. On the other hand, if the museum is seeking renewal of its Accreditation, encourage your museum contact to look over the museum's last Accreditation award letter together with you,

discussing in particular any Required Actions or Areas for Development listed. (Note: these were previously called Areas for Improvement.)

## The Mentor's role in the Accreditation application

Accountability for preparing and submitting Accreditation applications and returns sits with the museum's governing body. As Accreditation Mentor your role is to offer guidance through the requirements and the steps of the process. You also have to provide a report as part of the submission.

Wherever they are in the UK, museums submit their Accreditation application or return via Grantium, Arts Council England's application portal. It is then assigned to the relevant assessing organisation. It is the museum's responsibility, rather than the Accreditation Mentor's, to prepare and submit returns via the portal. The process can be daunting for some museums, especially if the governing body members are not confident with digital platforms. You can signpost to Grantium guidance in the Accreditation guidance library; '**Getting started with Grantium**' (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-7>) is particularly useful. You can also signpost to Arts Council England's **Customer Services** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact>) who are accustomed to helping with Grantium enquiries. If you are familiar with Grantium yourself, you may offer tips. As Accreditation Mentor you can set up your own Grantium profile and request a link to the museum's one.

## The Accreditation Mentor report

A core expectation of the Accreditation Mentor is to do a formal report that is submitted as part of the museum's Accreditation submission, either for a new application or a renewal. A template is provided. The report outlines:

- Your engagement with the mentored museum
- Your opinion on how the museum is doing against the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

The report should both celebrate the museum's successes as relevant to the Accreditation Standard and offer an honest appraisal of Areas for Development. You should have shared any concerns with the museum in advance of writing your report - the contents shouldn't come as a surprise to the museum.

Your report will be considered by an Accreditation assessor, who will weigh the evidence that the museum is accessing appropriate professional advice, and consider how the governing body engages with you as the Accreditation Mentor – for example via meetings and site visits.

Your report should fairly reflect the scale of the mentored museum as highlighted in the **'How to Meet the Standard'** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2>) guidance.

It's not mandatory for you to share the report with the museum in advance. You may submit it on Grantium or, alternatively, you may choose to send it confidentially to the assessing organisation. This can be a sensitive decision for you as Accreditation Mentor, especially if there are significant areas for improvement that the museum has not addressed. Ideally you should aim to share a draft of the report with the museum up front and discuss it together in advance of the deadline. This allows the museum to learn from your assessment and consider how to improve.

## Dealing with Areas for Development

Helping the museum to recognise and understand its strengths and weaknesses is a central part of your Accreditation Mentor role.

Museum governing bodies will generally be delighted to hear your feedback on areas of practice they are good at. Discussing the things that aren't going so well can be more challenging.

Remember that many mentored museums are an all-consuming labour of love for a small group of committed volunteers. They may be particularly sensitive to perceived criticism. However, Accreditation Mentors can't gloss over things that are being done poorly. The Museum Accreditation Scheme is all about supporting and sustaining good practice, making sure museums are governed appropriately, manage their collections properly and engage with visitors.

Some museums may achieve highly across most or all requirements of the Accreditation Standard. Many, however, will have areas that need to be developed, in order to meet the Standard and secure Accreditation.

### Here are some techniques you can use to deliver honest, yet sensitive feedback:

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- **Build trust:** Show genuine interest in the museum and its team. Give plenty of positive feedback on things that are going well.
- **Encourage self-appraisal in the first instance:** 'Rank rather than Rate' can be a good way to take the emotion out of self-appraisal. For example, rather than asking the governing body if they are doing well or poorly against each requirement, ask them to rank the requirements in order, from the one they think the museum is doing best at to the one where they are doing least well.

- **Be constructive:** after highlighting an area for improvement, offer a practicable suggestion of how the museum could start making things better. Consider sharing an example of a similar-sized museum's good practice. Or signpost them to a relevant toolkit.
- **Connect the feedback to the relevant section of the Standard and guidance** and re-emphasise the benefits of Accreditation.

**For instance, show section 3.3 of 'How to Meet the Standard' and say:**

'to achieve the standard, the emergency plan must cover all of the museum buildings. The museum's current emergency plan covers the museum itself but not the reserve store around the corner. A section needs to be added covering that building.'

- **Sidestep drama:** If an improvement suggestion is met with a conversation about who's to blame, you can helpfully remind the museum that accountability typically sits with all the members of the governing body collectively. Be dispassionate, remain neutral and avoid getting drawn into tensions between members of the museum's team.

Note: Areas for Development were previously called Areas for Improvement and may be described as that in the last assessment outcome letter.

## **Providing ad hoc and remote support**

You are likely to offer some ad hoc support to the museum between the 'core' visits and meetings. This will typically involve responding to requests for professional advice on a range of areas of practice. You should make best efforts within the four days per year expected time available to your role.

You are not expected to provide detailed advice in response to every query the museum may have. It is equally important to introduce or signpost the museum to other sources of relevant support or resources. For example, sending the direct link to a particularly relevant guidance resource or template. Don't underestimate your own familiarity (compared to that of your museum contact) with what each sector support body offers, or where a useful document can be found. Accreditation Mentors are by definition embedded in the museum profession, so often find it much easier to track down sector resources than volunteers.

Your mentored museum may ask for additional site visits when a telephone call, digital exchange of documents or other remote support will do just as well and be more time-efficient. Some smaller, volunteer-run museums might have less experience with technology compared to larger institutions. By gradually introducing and encouraging the use of digital tools for communication and support, you can help build their confidence and skills. This approach not only makes the best use of your time but also empowers the museum to navigate an increasingly digital world more effectively.

## **A year in the life of an Accreditation Mentor**

### **Start of mentoring relationship**

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- Visit to museum including behind the scenes.
- Initial meeting with representatives of the governing body.
- Relationship building.
- Assess the museum's Accreditation readiness using checklist.
- Work up Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement using the template.
- Accreditation Mentor appointment formalised by governing body.

## **Typical year**

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- Attend at least one meeting of the governing body.
- Visit the museum at least once.
- Offer professional guidance through the requirements and the steps of the Museum Accreditation process.
- Signpost to and broker relationships with other sources of professional expertise, help and resources.
- Read Board papers.
- Log interactions.
- Engage in relevant professional development to keep skills and knowledge up to date.
- Reflect on and review mentoring relationship.

## **Additionally in a year when an application or return is made**

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- Accreditation Mentor report.

## **Close of mentoring relationship**

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- Consider the reasons for the end of the relationship (e.g. museum's evolving support needs, or mentor can no longer maintain the commitment.)
- Final review/reflection meeting.
- Support museum to find a new Accreditation Mentor if required.
- Notify relevant assessing organisation.



## What support do I get as an Accreditation Mentor and who from?

There is a variety of support for Accreditation Mentors, depending on where you are in the UK. This typically includes online guidance, development sessions or a knowledgeable advisor who can act as a sounding board for you. To find out more:

In Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland contact the assessing organisation:

Scotland  
Museum Galleries Scotland  
[accreditation@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk)

Wales  
The Welsh Government  
[MuseumDevelopment@gov.wales](mailto:MuseumDevelopment@gov.wales)

Northern Ireland  
Northern Ireland Museums Council  
[devofficer@nimc.co.uk](mailto:devofficer@nimc.co.uk)

In England, contact the applicable Museum Development provider. Regional providers are listed **here** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme>).

Because of the breadth of practice covered by the Accreditation scheme, this document doesn't try to include specific advice on every area that a museum might need your help with. That would mean duplicating the abundant Accreditation resources that have been published for museums and relevant guidance about non-profit governance. Here are some recommended tools and links:

- **ACE Accreditation guidance library**  
(<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-guidance-library#t-in-page-nav-2>)
- **Collections Trust Accreditation pages**  
(<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/accreditation/>)
- **NCVO Help and Guidance: Governance**  
(<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/governance/>)
- **SCVO Guidance: Good Governance**
- **Charity Commission guidance**  
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance>)
- **Subject Specialist Networks**  
(<https://www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk/category/find-a-specialist-network>)
- **AIM Success Guides**  
(<https://aim-museums.co.uk/museum-101-success-guides/>)

## Managing change

Be prepared for a variety of changes to take place during your time as Accreditation Mentor to any museum. Accreditation development areas may be successfully addressed and new ones arise. Turnover on the governing body may mean you have a new point of contact at the museum. Some changes will require a restart of the relationship and resetting of expectations. In such circumstances it will be helpful to review and update the Museum Accreditation Mentoring Agreement.

A museum is required to let the relevant assessing organisation know of any major changes that may impact on its compliance with the Accreditation Standard. Examples include major governance changes or imminent closure. The responsibility to notify sits with the museum. However, in some extreme circumstances you may become aware of a situation when the

museum is not in a position to notify the assessing organisation. Perhaps Trustees are refusing to notify or the entire governing body has resigned. If possible, try to encourage the museum to self-report. Give reassurance that the assessing organisation is there to help and advise on next steps. If this does not work, you should reach out to the assessing body yourself.

## **Mentor relationship challenges**

Your Accreditation Mentor Agreement has a vital role in setting the mentoring relationship up for success. Revisit it with the museum periodically. This will help make sure that mutual expectations are still current and misunderstandings avoided.

However, in mentoring, from time to time, issues may arise. Typically, these stem from differences in expectations, personalities or communication styles. It is not uncommon for museums to resist some of the advice their Accreditation Mentor offers. Founders or longstanding volunteers may be particularly sensitive to perceived criticism of their work if they have given years of dedication to creating and sustaining the museum.

Trustee or volunteer turnover at the museum may mean that tasks such as inviting the Accreditation Mentor to meetings or sending them newsletters get forgotten.

Both you and the museum have a responsibility to contribute to keeping the relationship constructive. In many cases, challenges can be overcome through joint effort in keeping communication lines open, providing constructive feedback, and being adaptable.

You can contribute to resolving tensions by sensitively mentioning them to your lead contact at the museum. Sometimes naming a situation and being curious about it is enough to get a useful discussion started. For example, you may say that you have noticed that your advice on a professional matter has not been acted on and ask why that is. Leave space for your museum contact to explain what is happening on their side. As a next step, you can usefully suggest reviewing the Mentoring agreement together, to refresh both sides' understanding of the goals and parameters of the relationship.

Where frictions in the relationship remain insurmountable despite best efforts, you may need to involve the local support or assessing organisation. They may be able to help facilitate a conversation that puts things on a better footing.

## **Bringing the relationship to a close**

Even the most mutually rewarding mentor relationship will eventually come to an end. This is expected and should not be approached as a personal slight or a failure.

### **Typically, Accreditation mentoring relationships come to an end because:**

- The museum's support needs have evolved so the mentor's expertise is no longer a good fit.
- The mentor's skills have developed and a different museum is a better match for them.
- The mentor's work or personal circumstances have changed and they can no longer maintain the commitment. A museum professional has joined the museum's staff or governing body, so a mentor is no longer needed.

- Very occasionally a relationship may come to an end because of a serious disagreement or communication breakdown.

Either party can call an end to the relationship. Rather than just let it peter out, a well-managed closure is usually helpful to both mentor and museum. The museum will in most circumstances need to appoint another Accreditation Mentor in order to stay Accreditation compliant. It's recommended that you hold a final meeting to:

- Review what has been achieved during the time the mentor and museum have been working together.
- Reflect on what each party both found useful about the relationship and what could have been different.
- Agree any follow up e.g. who will notify the local support or assessing organisation.
- Explore whether there are ways that you and the museum can continue to support each other. For example, you may be able to suggest a colleague to take on the Accreditation Mentor role. The museum may offer to provide you with a testimonial.

**Thank you for supporting museums through your work as an Accreditation mentor. The insight and expertise that you bring will help a small museum to thrive.**

## Contact us

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