MUSEUM
ACCREDITATION

Accreditation Scheme for Museums
and Galleries in the United Kingdom

Accreditation Standard

November 2018

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Introduction

The Museum Accreditation Scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries.

It tells everyone involved with a museum that they're doing the right things to help people to engage with collections and protect them for the future.

The Museum Accreditation Scheme does this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors, and are governed appropriately.

The scheme works for museums of all sizes: from the smallest volunteer-run museums to national museums. It's not a one-size-fits-all scheme, though: we'll assess your application according to your museum's size and type, and we'll give you clear guidance on what you need to give us to do that.

What is the Museum Accreditation Scheme for?

To encourage all museums and galleries to meet an agreed standard in:

- how they're run
- how they manage their collections
- how they engage with their users

To build people's confidence in how museums manage collections in trust for society, and how they manage public resources.

To reinforce a shared, ethical way of doing things for everyone involved in running a museum.

1 Have appropriate governance and management

To meet the standard, you'll need:

1.1 A clear statement of purpose

Your museum must have a statement of purpose that defines why it exists and who it's for.

1.2 An appropriate constitution

The museum must be a long-term organisation that exists to benefit the public and protect its assets, including collections. It must have an appropriate and acceptable constitutional structure and documentation for the governing body.

1.3 A satisfactory structure for your governance and management

That involves showing us:

- an organisation chart that shows us all the people that work at the museum, including volunteers and paid staff, covering the front of house through to the governing body, and the relationships between them. If a separate organisation runs the museum, we need to see any approved agreements between that organisation and the governing body
- who has the authority and responsibility to approve decisions. This might include decisions you delegate to sub-committees, staff or volunteers
- clear agreements with your staff and volunteers setting out their roles and responsibilities
- evidence that your governing body has access to museum professional advice.

2 Plan ahead and have the resources to deliver your plan

To meet the standard, you'll need:

2.1
A forward or business plan which covers the current and subsequent planning year

Your museum must plan effectively for the long-term and be able to adapt in a changing environment. Your forward or business plan should be approved by your governing body and should:

- include a statement of purpose for your museum
- be explicit about the period the plan covers
- state the key aims you want to achieve over the plan's duration
- explain how you'll achieve these aims
- explain what you'll need to achieve these aims, including people, equipment and money
- include budgets for the current and subsequent planning year
- include the plan's next review date

2.2
Financial Sustainability

Your museum should provide accounts for the last two available financial planning years showing income and expenditure.

3 Assess and manage risk to your organisation

To meet the standard, you'll need:

3.1
Secure occupancy of all premises containing collections

You should have formal occupancy arrangements for your buildings and sites. These arrangements should be sufficient to keep your displayed and stored collections secure and allow effective forward planning. These arrangements should be long- term, which normally means for at least 12 months.

3.2
A risk assessment of security arrangements

You should get security advice for all the buildings and sites that the museum occupies. You should do this at least every five years, and the advice should cover:

- arrangements for your staff, volunteers and visitors
- your stored and displayed collections
- your buildings and sites

The advice should be proportionate to the size, scope, vulnerability and value of your museum and collections. You should show what changes you've made or planned as a result of the advice.

3.3
A clear, workable emergency plan

Your museum must be able to respond effectively to emergency or disaster situations. This means having an emergency plan. It should cover all buildings and sites that house collections and services, and should include:

- arrangements for staff and volunteers, visitors, collections and collections information
- a risk assessment of threats
- how you authorise, maintain, communicate, and test your emergency plan, and how you share it with your staff and volunteers, and the emergency services
- how your museum works with the emergency services, and any other relevant emergency plans
- a priority salvage list - a record of any priority collections you would save first in an emergency
- when you'll review your emergency plan

4 Hold and develop collections

To meet the standard, you'll need:

4.1
To take responsibility for all the collections you manage

You must be able to tell us the size of your collections, the proportion the museum owns, and the proportion on loan to it. If a significant proportion of the collection is on loan you'll need to explain the loan arrangements in place and assess any risks.

4.2
A policy, approved by the governing body, for developing collections, including acquisitions and disposals

Your collections development policy must include:

- the museum's statement of purpose
- an overview of current collections
- themes and priorities for future collecting
- themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal
- information about the legal and ethical framework for acquiring and disposing of items
- the date you'll next review the policy

5 Hold useful and useable information on collections

To meet the standard, you'll need:

5.1
An approved documentation policy

Your museum must follow a collections documentation policy approved by your governing body.

This policy may be a separate documentation policy or statement, or it may be part of a wider collections management or documentation plan.

5.2
To follow the primary Spectrum documentation procedures

The primary Spectrum procedures are essential for managing collections effectively and making them accessible. You need to show that your museum follows these procedures or has a plan to do so. The primary Spectrum procedures are:

- object entry
- acquisition and accessioning
- location and movement control
- inventory
- cataloguing
- object exit
- loans in (borrowing objects)
- loans out (lending objects)
- documentation planning

You'll need to show us how you implement the primary Spectrum procedures and how you intend to develop your collection documentation with a written plan showing priorities and timescales.

If we ask, you'll need to be able to show us your documentation procedures manual which should include step-by-step instructions for completing the primary Spectrum procedures at your museum.

6 Care for and conserve collections

To meet the standard, you'll need:

6.1
An approved collections care and conservation policy

Your museum must have a care and conservation policy approved by your governing body.

It should show how the collection care and conservation activities of your museum link to your statement of core purpose. It should meet ethical commitments and legal requirements.

This policy may be a separate care and conservation policy or statement or may be part of a wider collections management framework, care and conservation plan, or in your forward or business plan.

6.2
A collections care and conservation plan

Your museum must have a plan to maintain and, where possible, improve the way you care for and conserve your collections.

This plan may be a separate collections care and conservation plan, part of an overall collections management framework or in your forward or business plan.

7 Be accessible to the public

To meet the standard, you'll need:

7.1
An approved access policy

Your museum must have an access policy or statement approved by your governing body. It should cover 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. This should include:

- using a variety of interpretative methods to exhibit the collections
- enabling public access to the collections, buildings and sites, and associated information
- the date you'll next review the policy

7.2
An access plan

Your museum must have 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

This might be in a separate access plan, or as part of your forward or business plan or in an audience development plan.

8 Understand and develop your audiences

To meet the standard, you'll need:

8.1
To understand who uses your museum, and who doesn't

Your museum must be able to identify who uses the museum and the collection. You should also be able to tell who doesn't use it. You should have identified ways to gather this information, as well as finding out about people's needs and expectations for your museum.

8.2
To use information to assess your users' needs

Your museum should use feedback from users to inform the development of the museum and its programmes.

8.3
To have a plan for developing your range of users

You'll need a plan for developing your range of users. You should look at who does and who doesn't use your museum and how to provide an experience to meet expectations. These might be part of a separate audience development plan, or in your forward or business plan.

Users and their Experiences

9 Engage with your users, and improve their experience

To meet the standard, you'll need:

9.1
To provide stimulating learning and discovery activities, including exhibitions and programmes based on your collections

You should have a variety of ways for people to learn. These should help a broad range of people to access your museum and collections, bearing in mind that you'll need different approaches to engage with different groups.

9.2
To communicate effectively with users and potential users through a range of access, marketing and promotional activities

You should encourage people to access your collections and collections information through promotion of your activities. You'll need to give them the information they need to make the most of a visit to your museum or find out about your collections and services by using a range of appropriate media.

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