



Accreditation Returns Information Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

This information sheet is designed to help you to prepare your Accreditation Return. You should read this supplementary guidance alongside the main Accreditation Guidance and the Accreditation Grantium Guidance. You'll find links to these below.

In this sheet, we will talk about the following:

Contents

Key Guidance documents	2
What is an Accreditation Return and what does it involve?.....	3
What information will I need to submit?.....	3
1. Details of your progress against any Areas for Improvement / Development listed in your last Accreditation award letter.....	3
2. Evidence of approval by your governing body of relevant policies and plans. ...	3
3. Evidence to meet eight mandatory Return requirements.....	3
4. Evidence to meet other key requirements and updates to information previously submitted	5
5. If you've undergone any major change since your last Accreditation award	6
6. Applications from individual sites managed by a museum service	6
7. Additional requirements for National and nationally-styled museums	6
Next steps checklist – getting started on your Accreditation Return	8
1. Start reviewing your policies and plans as soon as possible.....	8
2. Review your last Accreditation award letter and note any Areas for Improvement / Development	8
3. Reach out for support and advice	8
4. Visit the Collections Trust website.....	9
Accreditation Returns - Frequently asked Questions	10
I'm almost ready to submit, can I send in my Accreditation Return early?	10
What if I can't make my Accreditation Return deadline?.....	10
What happens after I submit the application and when will I receive my decision?..	11
Do the clauses in my Collections Development Policy need to be exactly the same wording and order as the template?.....	11
Can we combine policies and plans for example into a collections management policy framework document?	12
Who will the Accreditation outcome decision letter be addressed to?.....	12



Contact us.....13

Key Guidance documents

Please find links to key guidance documents and webpages you will find useful as you prepare your Accreditation Return.

[Accreditation Standard](#) – an overview of the 21 requirements of the 2018 Standard. These are the requirements you need to meet to be awarded Full Accreditation.

[Accreditation Guidance 2019](#) – A step by step guide of how to apply to the scheme. Explores the importance of each requirement and outlines what evidence we'll be looking for.

See pages 20 to 41 for guidance on requirements 1.1 - 3.3 – **Organisational Health**.
See pages 42 to 59 for guidance on requirements 4.1 - 6.2 – **Managing Collections**.
See pages 60 to 78 for guidance on requirements 7.1 - 9.2 – **Users and their Experiences**.

[Accreditation Returns: How to apply](#) – advice and guidance on the Arts Council website to help you to prepare your return.

[Collection Development Policy template](#) (2014 – reprinted 2018). To meet the Accreditation Standard your policy must be in line with this template. For more information on this requirement and how to use the template, please see pages 45–48 of the Accreditation Guidance.

www.collectionstrust.org.uk/accreditation/

The Collections Trust website hosts Accreditation resources covering the three broad areas of museum activity: **organisational health; collections; and users and their experiences**. Under these main headings you'll find details of the requirements of the Standard and relevant resources.

[Accreditation - Getting Started on Grantium](#) – instructions on creating an Applicant profile and opening a blank application form

[Completing your application on Grantium](#) – systems guidance on filling in your application form in on Grantium.

[Grantium support pages](#) on the Arts Council website - guidance on using Grantium and setting up a User account and Applicant profile



What is an Accreditation Return and what does it involve?

The Accreditation Scheme sets out nationally agreed standards for museums and galleries, which inspire the confidence of the public and funding and governing bodies.

Once your museum is Accredited you'll periodically be invited to provide evidence that the museum still meets the Standard. This is called an Accreditation Return.

Preparing your Return submission provides an opportunity for self-assessment. You'll need to make sure that your policies and plans are up to date and compliant with the 21 requirements of the [Accreditation Standard](#).

On the Accreditation application form we'll ask you to provide evidence on how you meet each of the elements of the Standard. In some cases, we'll simply need a confirmation that you have the relevant policies and practices in place. In others we'll ask you to upload specific key documents.

You will submit your Accreditation Return using Grantium, the Arts Council's application portal.

What information will I need to submit?

1. Details of your progress against any Areas for Improvement / Development listed in your last Accreditation award letter.

You'll need to let us know they have been completed or provide an update on why they are no longer relevant. If you are still working on an Area for Improvement / Development please tell us about the progress you've made and the expected completion date. Please note that Areas for Improvement are now referred to as Areas for Development on Grantium.

2. Evidence of approval by your governing body of relevant policies and plans.

For guidance on the type of approval we can accept please see page 17 of the Accreditation Guidance.

3. Evidence to meet eight mandatory Return requirements

The 21 requirements of the Accreditation Standard are listed on the 'Returns Checklist' page of the Accreditation application form. By ticking a requirement on the checklist you'll open up a corresponding page within the form relating to the Requirement number.

You'll see that for Return applicants eight mandatory requirements have been pre-ticked. The evidence you'll need to provide to meet these requirements will vary according to your museum's size and type. You'll find information about the different museum size and types on page 11 – 14 of the [Accreditation Guidance 2018](#)

Requirement reference	Requirement	Details on how to meet the requirement
2.1*	An approved forward or business plan which covers the current and subsequent planning year.	Accreditation Guidance , p. 30-33
2.2	Copies of accounts for the last two available financial planning years	Accreditation Guidance, p. 34-35
3.2	A risk assessment of security arrangements – confirmation that a security review has been carried out at all your museum premises in the last 5 years	Accreditation Guidance, p. 38-39
3.3	A clear, workable emergency plan. You'll need to confirm what elements the emergency plan covers and when it was last reviewed	Accreditation Guidance, p. 40-41
4.2*	An approved Collections Development Policy using the 2014 CDP template	Accreditation Guidance, p. 45-48; Collection Development Policy Template 2014
5.1*	An approved documentation policy	Accreditation Guidance, p 51-52
6.1*	A collection care & conservation policy	Accreditation Guidance, p. 55-56
7.1*	An approved access policy	Accreditation Guidance, p. 61-62

***You'll need to attach evidence of approval by the governing body for requirements 2.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1. For guidance on the type of approval we can accept please see page 17 of the Accreditation Guidance.**

4. Evidence to meet other key requirements and updates to information previously submitted

To comply with the Accreditation Scheme, your policies and plans must be reviewed every five years. **As it is likely to have been more than five years since your last Return, we expect you to tick most if not all Requirement boxes on the Returns Checklist.**

As a minimum there are four key areas which you will need to update us on in addition to the eight mandatory requirements detailed above. Ticking these on the Returns Checklist will open up corresponding pages relating to the Requirement number within the application form. **Please see these four key requirements listed below:**

Requirement reference	Requirement	Details on how to meet the requirement
1.2	<p>Indicate your type of governance. You'll be prompted to upload a copy of your up-to-date governing document to the attachments screen.</p> <p>Constitutional requirements were strengthened under the 2018 Accreditation Standard. We'll review your governing document to make sure it covers five essential constitutional criteria.</p>	Accreditation Guidance , p.23
1.3	<p>Information about your current management and workforce structure. If you operate a hybrid management model involving more than entity please provide up to date versions of any agreements outlining appropriate authorities, roles and responsibilities.</p>	Accreditation Guidance, p.26-29
3.1	<p>Tell us about all premises where you hold collections. Make sure your security reviews, emergency plans and other policies and plans cover these locations.</p>	Accreditation Guidance, p.36-37
7.2	<p>Access Plan. Tell us how your access policy is going to be put into action. This is a new requirement under the 2018 Accreditation Standard.</p>	Accreditation Guidance, p. 63-65 Access plan resources – Collections Trust website



5. If you've undergone any major change since your last Accreditation award

If you've undergone a major change since your last Accreditation award (e.g. a change in legal entity or site location) and haven't been through the Significant Change Review process, then you will need to **update us against all 21 Accreditation Standard requirements**. Please tick all boxes on the Returns Checklist screen.

6. Applications from individual sites managed by a museum service

We offer Accreditation awards to museum sites rather than services or collections. If you belong to a group of museums operated by a corporate body, such as a local authority service, then **you will need to submit a separate Return application for each individual museum**.

On Grantium, museum service applicants can choose to submit the Return applications for each site via a single Applicant profile for the main body, or they can set up an Applicant profile for each individual site.

We understand that there will be some **duplication of policy and planning documents across the service**. Where you share documents with other museums in the group, you can nominate one site as the lead museum (e.g. the largest by budget or visitor number, or whatever works best for your service), and upload the shared policy documents to that particular application form. Then when other museum sites are asked to upload a mandatory shared document again they can just cross-reference the attachment uploaded on the lead site e.g., upload a Word document saying – 'The following requirements / documents are attached to application reference ACCR-XXXX for XXX museum'.

For further guidance on setting up or accessing an existing Grantium Applicant profile, please see our 'Accreditation Returns – Grantium guidance' sheet.

7. Additional requirements for National and nationally-styled museums

UK National museums are governed by national legislation and directly receive Government funding. They are usually governed by an Act of Parliament or Royal Charter. National museums must complete additional questions. These open up on the Returns application form if you select your museum type as 'national'. If you are a National museum and require advice and support whilst preparing your Accreditation Return please contact accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk in the first instance.



Nationally-styled is a marketing approach which claims nationally significant reach and meaning and uses one of the nationally styled names: International, World, Nation, National, Europe, European, Empire, Great Britain, British, England, English, Wales, Welsh, Cymru, Cymreig, Scotland, Scottish, na h-Alba, Ulster, Northern Ireland, and Northern Irish.

The public have expectations of museums with a nationally-styled name in terms of their scale, scope and public offer. Nationally-styled museums must complete additional questions. These open up on the Returns application form if you select 'yes' when asked whether your museum has a nationally-styled name.

You can download a reference copy of the additional questions for National and nationally-styled museum [here](#).



Next steps checklist – getting started on your Accreditation Return

Below is a list of suggested next steps to help you plan and start to prepare your Accreditation Return.

1. Start reviewing your policies and plans as soon as possible

Although you have six months to submit your Return we recommend you start pulling together the various documents as soon as possible. This is to ensure everything is in-date and approved by your board where required. Please note that we cannot accept draft versions of documents.

The information you'll need to provide will vary according to your museum's size and type. You'll find information about museum size and type on page 11 – 14 of the [Accreditation Guidance 2018](#)

Check which of your policies and plans have been updated since your last Accreditation application. You will need to submit the most up to date versions along with signed approvals as appropriate.

Please make sure your security reviews, emergency plans and other policies and plans cover all premises (including off-site ones) that hold collections.

2. Review your last Accreditation award letter and note any Areas for Improvement / Development

If you need help finding out what your Areas for Improvement / Development are, please email us at accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk

Check whether the Areas for Improvement / Development have been completed, or whether they are no longer relevant. If you are still working on an area for development, you will need to tell us about any progress you have made and the expected completion date.

Please note that Areas for Improvement are now referred to as Areas for Development on Grantium.

3. Reach out for support and advice

Arts Council England funds a programme of Museum Development to directly support the delivery of the UK Accreditation Scheme for museums and galleries in England. **If you**



have any questions while preparing your Return, please contact your local Museum Development provider.

You'll find links to Museum Development websites here: [Museum Development programme | Arts Council England](#)

Please contact your local partner as soon as possible, and well before your Return due date deadline.

If you have an **Accreditation mentor** (previously called a museum mentor) now is also a good time to get in touch. Accreditation mentors provide support for smaller museums without access to paid professional advice. Their role is to give advice or signpost where to find help and guidance.

UK National museums (governed by national legislation and directly receiving central or devolved Government funding) - if you require advice and support whilst preparing your Accreditation Return please contact accreditation@arts council.org.uk in the first instance.

4. Visit the Collections Trust website

The Collections Trust website hosts recommended Accreditation resources that support each of the 21 requirements of the Accreditation Standard. You can access these resources via the following link: www.collectionstrust.org.uk/accreditation/

5. Get set up on Grantium, our application portal

You'll submit your Accreditation Return using Grantium, our application portal. **You can access the Grantium home page here:** <https://applications.arts council.org.uk/frontOffice.jsf>

It's a good idea to get familiar with Grantium well before your Accreditation return deadline. You can work on your submission and begin uploading things as early as you like – nothing will come to us until you press 'submit' on the final screen of the application form.

Once you've set up your application form in Grantium, **make a note of your Project Number beginning ACCR-** . This will help you locate the form in the 'Submissions' area of Grantium once you log off and log on again. If you need to contact us with a query about your application, please reference your Project Number.

You'll access Grantium using a **personal User account**. This is unique to each individual user and log on details should not be shared with anyone. You'll need to ensure your personal User account is linked to your organisation Applicant profile.



If there is an existing organisation **Applicant profile** for your site, please ensure it is up to date with the correct governing document uploaded. To do this please see page 16 of our information sheet: [How to Create and Manage your Account and Applicant profile](#)

Please note that you need to **fill the Accreditation application form in page-by-page order**. The responses you give to questions early in the form dictate which questions and prompts open up later in the application form workflow.

For information on how to get started on Grantium, and tips on creating and filling in your Accreditation application form please read our [Accreditation Returns - Grantium guidance](#).

There is also more detailed systems guidance available in the online guidance: [Accreditation - Getting Started on Grantium](#) and [Completing your application on Grantium](#).

Please also visit the [Completing your Accreditation Return on Grantium](#) page on our website.

Accreditation Returns - Frequently asked Questions

I'm almost ready to submit, can I send in my Accreditation Return early?

Yes – you can submit your Return as soon as you are ready, and we encourage you to do so. If you can submit before your return due date, we're more likely to be able to get your outcome confirmed sooner than if you wait until closer to the deadline.

What if I can't make my Accreditation Return deadline?

The Return represents a snapshot of how your museum is currently operating. Ultimately it's important that the information you submit is an accurate reflection of the policies and plans you are currently using.

Providing an Accreditation return is a condition of your Accreditation award. If you don't submit your Return when required we will contact you to discuss what action we may take, and this may include changing your status to 'provisional' or removal from the scheme.

If you are unable to meet your Return due date deadline, you should let us know as soon as possible by emailing accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk



We understand that there may be occasions where a museum is unable to submit their Return by the deadline as a result of major changes or temporary challenges, e.g. workforce or governance changes and restructures, a capital redevelopment. In these exceptional cases we may be able to offer an extension on the due date.

What happens after I submit the application and when will I receive my decision?

When you submit your Return application, you'll receive an **automatic email notification** via Grantium confirming we've received it. If you don't receive a notification please check your junk mail folder.

From the date you submit your Return application **it can take up to 6 months to reach a decision.**

An initial assessment is undertaken based on the published Standard and the associated guidance documents.

We may contact you to discuss any queries or request additional information. We'll send email queries via Grantium. These will go to anyone **with a personal User account linked to your organisation Applicant profile.**

Once complete, the assessment recommendation goes to the Accreditation panel for consideration. Decision panels are generally held every two months. The Accreditation panel decides the award outcome and your award is then confirmed as appropriate.

Please note that if your Return application is incomplete, and we need to ask you for more information, it may take us longer than six months to reach a decision.

You can find out more about the decision process on our website: [Accreditation: How to apply | Arts Council England](#)

Do the clauses in my Collections Development Policy need to be exactly the same wording and order as the template?

The [Collections Development Policy template \(2014\)](#) contains standard clauses that all museums should include. Many of these relate to the legal responsibilities of museums and the wording has been checked so museums don't have to seek separate legal advice. Using the Accreditation template as the basis for your policy also means museums have a shared language in relation to acquisition and disposal.



The clauses in your policy don't have to be in the same order as the template, you can arrange them in a way that makes sense for your organisation. We'll read your policy to carefully check that any changes to the template clauses don't dilute the meaning of the wording. **Where you have made changes to the wording or order please be prepared to demonstrate where the relevant clauses are represented in your policy, as the assessor may ask for clarification.**

We can apply flexibility with the wording where a museum has updated clauses within their policy to align with the [updated MA Disposal Toolkit](#)

For further guidance on the Collection Development Policy, please see pages 45-49 of [Accreditation Guidance 2018](#)

Can we combine policies and plans for example into a collections management policy framework document?

Yes you can combine policies and plans in a way that suits your organisation. For example you may have brought together all your collections management policies into a single document; or your plans might appear in a separate collections management plan or within your forward/business plan.

As you work through the various Requirements screens you will tick boxes to confirm that you will attach a policy or plan. Then when you get to the Required Attachments screen you will see a bespoke list of the documents you need to upload.

If you have combined policies and plans into a single document you'd need to upload that same document multiple times on the Required Attachments screen, once for each requirement number.

Please provide a cover document or explanation for the assessor to indicate where they can find a particular required policy within a combined document (page numbers / section).

Who will the Accreditation outcome decision letter be addressed to?

When the outcome decision letter is ready for review Grantium will issue an email notification to **anyone with a personal User account linked to your organisation Applicant profile.**

The decision letter itself will be **addressed to the person listed as the 'Main contact' within your organisation Applicant profile** on the Contact Information screen.



For guidance on editing the main contact within application profile please see the [Accreditation Returns Grantium Guidance](#)

Contact us

Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk

Telephone: 0161 934 4317 (10am-4pm)

You can also Livechat with us by visiting our website: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact>

Web: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/>