

## Top ten assessor hints and tips

1) The following are referred to as the 'key areas'. If you don't know where to begin, these are good jumping off points! Numbers in brackets refer to their reference numbers in the 2011 Accreditation Standard:

- **(1.2) Constitution**
  - if you've updated or amended your constitution then send us the most up-to-date version
- **(1.4) An in-date forward plan with signed approval**
  - The forward plan guidance outlines nine requirements. The key ones for us are:
    - Statement of purpose
    - Key aims
    - Objectives
    - Review date
- **(1.6) Two previous years of accounts**
- **(1.8) Appointment of museum mentor**
  - This won't be relevant for museums who employ a professional with five years of experience
- **(1.9) An emergency plan that has been reviewed within the last 5 years**
- **(2.2) An in-date collections development policy with signed approval**
  - This is the only requirement we have a template for
  - Occasionally the template will be updated in line with sector developments – it's always worth double-checking our website to make sure you have the most up to date version
- **(2.5) Documentation backlog, if relevant**
  - Provide an update on progress and estimated completion dates
  - This is a standard rolling action point, and the most common
- **(2.8) Confirm that a security assessment has been completed within the last 5 years**
  - This is usually through your local police service, but can be from other experts if this isn't possible – contact your regional Museum Development team if this is proving problematic
- **(3.1.5) Confirm that an access assessment has been completed within the last 5 years**
  - This does not need to be a formal audit and your regional Museum Development team can suggest templates

## 2) You have support at every stage!

- a. Pre-submission: ask us anything through the centralised inbox ([accreditation@arts council.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@arts council.org.uk))
- b. Once the assessment is underway your assessor will be more than happy to help with any queries or concerns you may have.
- c. Talk to your Museum Mentor (if you have one)

- d. Your regional Museum Development network will be able to provide support and advice, and signpost you to helpful resources. Some regions have a dedicated Accreditation Advisor on their team, others spread this function across their officers – find out who to talk to.
  - e. If you have a verification visit then invite your Mentor/Adviser/regional Museum Development representative along too – the more the merrier!
- 3) Don't wait until your return invitation to review all your plans and policies – this makes it a huge rush to get everything completed!**
- a. Consider scheduling reviews of plans and policies throughout the lifetime of the award
  - b. We don't expect every policy to have the same review date, you could review a few each year to spread out the workload
  - c. This is especially important when your governing body have few meetings throughout the year. Your assessor will ask for signed evidence of approval
- 4) For returning applicants: dig out your award letter from the last assessment. This letter will outline any 'areas for improvement'.**
- a. Our Accreditation Panel will ask assessors for updates against the previous areas for improvement, so we will be asking about these
  - b. Provide an update against each, either in the free text of the online form or as a separate attachment (whichever is easiest for you!)
- 5) Spread the burden!**
- a. Accreditation is a 360 degree look at an organisation – that's a lot for one person
  - b. Assessors will usually have one or two contacts at the museum, but that doesn't mean they must do everything
  - c. This goes for volunteer museums and larger museums too – don't just lump it onto the collections officer!
  - d. Spread the workload out and make it a team effort
- 6) We don't expect perfection.**
- a. No museum is 100% perfect – and we don't expect that!
  - b. Every museum has weaknesses; we just want to see you have identified these and have plans in place to strengthen them
  - c. Acknowledge issues/risks and let us know what you plan to do about them
- 7) Assessors are your advocates at panel.**
- a. We gather information so we are able to present confidently to our Accreditation Panel as they will make the decision – we present on your behalf and then the panel can ask us *anything*.  
If we come back to you with questions it's because we don't feel like we have all the information we need in case the panel ask us about it

- b. Remember: no one knows your museum better than you. Assessors must get to know your museum inside out in a very short amount of time and usually have 30+ other assessments at the same time. Something might seem obvious to you but remember we'll be behind a desk and can't visit every museum (if only we could!)
- c. Consider getting an outsider to read your plans/policies to get their perspective

**8) Don't go quiet!**

- a. You've received a long list of queries from your assessor and have no idea how you'll provide the information in time. Don't go quiet – tell us!
- b. We have flexibility with timescales, and we're human! Talk to us and share your concerns; we can find a way forward that works for both of us

**9) Provisional Accreditation is not a punishment.**

- a. If you received Provisional Accreditation your museum is still Accredited – provisional is not a downgrade or Accreditation 'lite'
- b. You are still eligible for the same funding streams and benefits as museums with Full Accreditation – you just have a 'check-in' date sooner
- c. Museums receive Provisional Accreditation for dozens of reasons, e.g. if they close for a redevelopment, or if the return invitation comes during a period of staff restructuring/governance change
- d. Provisional Accreditation is not the 'naughty step'; it's designed to provide breathing space and extra time to resolve any outstanding issues or provide additional documentation