



# **Accreditation guidance**

Section two:  
Collections

June 2014



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# Introduction

This document is part of a set of guidance documents aimed at supporting museums that are preparing an application or return for Accreditation, to help them understand how their application or return will be assessed.

This version of the 'Guidance – section two' dated June 2014 replaces the previously published version dated February 2013. The Accreditation guidance documents supplement the Accreditation Standard (2011) and outline how you might approach completing your return. They guidance documents will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain current and relevant. Should you have any feedback on the guidance please email [accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk) at any time. The guidance will next be re-published with revision where appropriate in February 2015. All substantive changes are contained within dated boxes for clarity.

This document provides guidance on meeting the second section of Accreditation, Collections, and should be read alongside the Accreditation Standard, the guidance introduction document, and the guidance documents for the two other sections of the standard – Organisational health, and Users and their experiences. These documents are available to download from the Arts Council's website at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/).

The Collections section has eight requirements, and each of these is listed here, along with:

- 1. General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums**
- 2. Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types (where appropriate):** The scales are explained fully in the main introduction to the guidance (see 'Scalability indicators', page 13). Scales will not apply to each requirement, and are intended as a guide only.
- 3. Documentation and information needed for this requirement and where that information may be found**
- 4. Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment:** These questions are not the ones that will be asked on your application form and are not additional requirements. However, your assessor will be using them when considering the information you provide through an application or return form. Ensure each is addressed clearly and in an appropriate way for your organisation.

Where it is relevant, questions from the Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) Quality Improvement System<sup>1</sup>, a self-assessment tool for Accredited museums and galleries, have been included.

Collections within a museum must be managed in line with the museum's statement of purpose, policies and strategic vision. Accredited museums are encouraged to work towards an integrated approach to collections management which is in proportion to their size, and aligned with their overall purpose. (In this section Accreditation requires various policies and plans relating to collections management. Policies will express the overall intentions and direction agreed by the governing body).

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<sup>1</sup> [www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/the-programmes/quality-improvement-system/](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/the-programmes/quality-improvement-system/)

# Satisfactory arrangements for the ownership of collections

'The museum must take responsibility for all the collections it manages. It must be able to provide information on the size of the collections and the proportion of the collections owned by and on loan to it. Any risks relating to collections on loan to the museum should be dealt with through forward planning.'

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

- a) Museum policy documents, such as the collections development policy (requirement 2.2) should be clear regarding ownership arrangements of the current collections, and who will own new acquisitions to the collection
- b) Often the governing body will own the majority of collections, although it may be the case that all, or a significant proportion of the collections are owned by a separate organisation or individual/s, for example a local authority or a separate collections trust.
- c) Where museums hold collections on loan, the periods must be appropriate and include regular review between the museum and the owner. The term permanent loan has no legal status and should be avoided. All loans must be subject to fixed term loan agreements meeting SPECTRUM standards (see requirement 2.4).
- d) Robust ownership and loan and/or management agreements are critical for the long-term sustainability of the museum. Museums must be aware of the risks associated with collections ownership, for example, the significance and quantity of the items owned or loaned/managed. The museum must demonstrate its awareness and management of associated risks (see requirement 1.4).

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museum types

There is no scaled assessment in this area.

## Documentation and information needed

## Where it may be found

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Information on application/return form               | Accession registers          |
| Percentage of collection owned and on loan           | Entry forms                  |
| Collections development policy (see requirement 2.2) | Object files                 |
|  | Indexed collection catalogue |
|  | Loan agreement/s             |
|  | Management agreement/s       |
|  | Constitutions                |
|  | Service Level Agreement/s    |
|  | Purchase confirmation/s      |

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- is the museum aware of the ownership of its entire collection? If there are items on loan, are there up-to-date loan agreements in place? If not, how is the ownership of legacy loans being managed?
- if the majority of the collection is on loan, has the museum provided an explanation for why this is? Is the loan secure?
- is the museum aware of associated risks, are they being managed appropriately?
- do collections with unclear ownership feature within the backlog plan (see requirement 2.5)?

# Collections management policies

The management of the collections within an Accredited museum is consistent with the statement of purpose, policies and strategic vision for the organisation. To do this effectively, and to allow for regular review and improvement, a coherent set of policy statements, plans and procedures should be put in place – a collections management framework. This will address collections development, information, access, care and conservation.

Policies set out the intention and direction of an organisation as expressed formally by the governing body and should relate clearly to the mission or purpose of the organisation. A policy statement does not have to be a long document; the policy must fit the needs of the organisation.

A number of collections' management policies may be presented in one integrated document. Alternatively, they may be presented as individual documents with cross-references to each other, where relevant.

A museum may have developed the required policies prior to applying for Accreditation, using different terms from those used here, this is acceptable to Accreditation. However, if policies do not follow the titles or subject divisions set out in the Accreditation Standard a museum must be able to demonstrate which document/s fulfil the requirement under each section of the standard. The museum's policies must clearly link to the overall purpose of the organisation.

Accreditation intends that museums should develop their collections management framework approach over a timescale appropriate to their own working cycles. This may mean that during the rollout of the Accreditation Standard (2011), returning participants do not have all policies fully in place at the time of assessment.

**If policies specified in documentation (see requirement 2.3), care and conservation (see requirement 2.4) and access (see requirement 3.1.5) are not in place at the time of assessment, the museum must submit a statement guiding the assessor to the page in its forward plan where the development of these policies is set out with a timeframe for completion, or a clear statement of intent with dates. Additional guidance has been provided on Collections Link<sup>2</sup>.**

New applicants for Accreditation must have all elements in place to achieve Accreditation.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/1087-collections-management-framework-guidance-sheet-1](http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/1087-collections-management-framework-guidance-sheet-1)

# Collections development policy

'The museum must have an approved policy for developing collections (also known as an acquisition and disposal policy). The policy must include:

- 2.2.1 Statement of purpose
- 2.2.2 Overview of current collections
- 2.2.3 Future themes and collecting
- 2.2.4 Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal
- 2.2.5 Information on the legal framework for acquisition and disposal'

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

### a) **Template collections development policy**

Accredited museums will have an approved and in date collections development policy (or acquisition and disposal policy), based on the template policy current during its development, including all relevant clauses, or legally required equivalents, for example, as directed by an Act of Parliament. Any changes to the template clauses must not reduce the requirement. The template is available on Arts Council England's website: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/). A version in the Welsh language is available at: [www.wales.gov.uk/cymal](http://www.wales.gov.uk/cymal).

The current Accreditation requirements for collections development policies are noted in this guidance, which is supported by a separate template collections development policy. The current template was published in May 2014 and replaces the collections development policy template published by Arts Council England in December 2011 and all previous versions of the acquisitions and disposals policy template.

The template, supported by this guidance, has been provided to support museums to produce a robust and effective policy, relevant to their collections and statement of purpose. The template policy includes standard clauses which have been highlighted in bold type that all museums should include. Any changes to the template clauses must not reduce the requirement. Many template clauses relate to the legal responsibilities of museums as directed through Acts of Parliament, or International Conventions to which the UK is signatory. Legal advice has been sought in the development of the standard clauses within the template.

## b) What is a collections development policy?

A collections development policy helps to shape the museum's collections by guiding acquisition and disposal. The policy is led by the museum's statement of purpose. It describes the history of the collections and the collections as they are now, as well as giving an overview on the priorities for development. The policy references the commitment from the museum to ensure and maintain the legal and ethical development of the collections.

Collection development policies feature as part of the PAS197 Collections management framework, and encourage museums to utilise a shared language in relation to acquisition and disposal. They are useful documents to share with your stakeholders and partners to outline collecting priorities and foster public confidence in museums.

The development of collections will be guided by:

- a museum's constitution and statement of purpose
- the legal and ethical basis on which the collections are held
- the public benefit derived from the use and management of the collections
- the resources required to appropriately manage and care for them
- the collections held by other museums and organisations collecting in the same or related areas and their purpose

These requirements set out a framework for governing bodies and the museum workforce to structure the policy that guides responsible and ethical collections development.

A collections development policy is primarily about the accessioned collection and the museum's approach to developing that accessioned collection. Accessioning items into a museum collection demonstrates a very long-term commitment and should only occur when the organisation is convinced that the addition of an item or collection is appropriate and responsible. Accessioning can be a quick process, while de-accessioning is typically a longer, more complex process.

## c) Duration

Policies will have a maximum lifespan of five years.

The policy will include:

### 1. Introduction/policy statements

This element will include the museum's statement of purpose and a description of the purpose of this policy, which other policies and plans it relates to and who it is intended for. This section includes the headline policy statements of the museum's governing body that guides acquisition and disposal.

### 2. History of the collections

Describing the key influences in the formation of the collections including influential figures, for example, particularly significant curators and donors; key acquisitions should be referenced with acquisition dates. Major changes in focus for the collections should be outlined, and key disposals (where relevant) should be described.



### 3. An overview of current collections

Describing what is in the accessioned collection, its size, coverage and significance. Museums should identify areas of strength and significant. The policy will detail how the collection meets the statement of purpose and key aims of the museum. It discusses whether there are any parts of the collection that are no longer relevant to the statement of purpose and defines a core collection, if this is helpful to your context. Museums should outline the types of collection, including whether this includes material in digital formats. It references other material held that it is not appropriate to accession if this provides useful context about the museum's collection and its development, for example surrogates or a handling collection and it explains why it is not appropriate to accession this material.

### 4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

Describing the priorities for collecting in relation to the statement of purpose and forward planning: what is the museum planning to collect and why? Is there currently a moratorium on collecting, and why? How will this new material be used? What is the organisation's vision for collection development?

### 5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

Describing the museums approach to rationalisation, and identifies which, if any, areas of the collections will be considered for rationalisation and disposal and why they are being considered.

If there is no active disposal or rationalisation the policy should explain why this is the case, for example, where rationalisation and disposal is not permitted by the museum's governance or any bequest conditions etc.

The policy could also confirm that disposal is not a priority for this current period or confirmation that disposals will only be undertaken for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons (for example, spoliation, radiation, infestation, repatriation).

### 6. Information on the legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal

Describing the legal and ethical frameworks that the museum works within. Adhering to the MA Code of Ethics is a minimum requirement. You may also cite ICOM for example or it may be appropriate for you to reference the legal requirements around holding human remains. The primary legal and ethical elements required of all Accredited museums are set out in clauses 9 to 16 within the published Collections Development Policy Template on the Arts Council England's website

### 7. Collecting policies of other museums

Describes the collecting relationships with other museums including details of where collections inter-relate and share development, for example joint purchase. Your policy should list those museums which the museum seeks to work with to avoid duplication of effort or waste of resources, or partner with in order to joint purchase. This list may include museums geographically close to the museum, or museums collecting the same subject matter.

## 8. Archival holdings

Museums that hold or intend to acquire material that may be considered archival in nature, for example documents and photographs – in paper-based or digital formats, should describe the rationale and approach to developing this collection. For material of particular size, coverage and significance it may be appropriate to be additionally guided by the requirements of the Archive Service Accreditation Scheme.

This element is optional within the template policy.

## 9. Acquisition

Describing the museum's authorisation policy for agreeing acquisitions, for example, this might include levels of delegation relating to costs of acquisition.

The template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 10. Human remains

Describes the museums policy relating to human remains. the relevant DCMS guidance will be referenced. The template includes standard clauses for this element both for where a museum does, and does not intend to collect human remains into the collection.

## 11. Biological and geological material

Describes the museums policy relating to biological and geological material, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 12. Archaeological material

Describes the museums policy relating to archaeological material, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 13. Exceptions

Outlines when exceptions to the broader collecting policy relating to exceptional circumstances might occur, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 14. Spoliation

Describes the museums policy relating to spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and Second World War, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

Describes the museums policy relating to the repatriation of objects and human remains, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

## 16. Disposal procedures

Describes the museums procedures to ensure disposal complies with the museum's stated policy. For further guidance on disposal procedures please refer to the MA Disposal toolkit, the template policy includes standard clauses for this element.

**d) Proportion**

The policy should be in proportion to resources available and the wider aims of the forward plan.

**e) Policies based on the April 2008 (2010 revision) template acquisition and disposal policy and the December 2011 template collections development policy**

From May 2014 museums are expected to comply with the 2014 template and guidance. However, where the December 2011 template has been used, this will be considered on a case-by case basis. Museums in this position will be given a timetable to comply: either at the next return, or earlier.

All new applicants are expected to provide a policy compliant with the current template policy.

**f) Identification of the required clauses**

If the policy or the required clauses are spread throughout a larger document or more than one document then identification of the required clauses must be clear and straightforward, and the internal policy references must have been altered to relate to that document. This may occur where a museum has separate policies for individual elements covered by the template, such as a spoliation policy, and due diligence policy etc, or where a policy covers the majority of clauses but additional site specific clauses are located elsewhere.

**g) When collections are owned by a separate organisation**

Where a loan or management agreement specifies that the collection owner needs to approve or ratify this policy, evidence of signed approval or ratification from both parties, i.e. the collection owning body and the collection managing body, will be required for Accreditation.

**h) Approval of the policy**

Museums should provide appropriate **signed** evidence of approval for the collections development policy which must explicitly state approval has been given. Appropriate evidence may take several forms, such as:

- a signed copy of a full set of minutes
- a signed copy of a redacted set of minutes
- a signed copy of an extract from the minutes that includes the date of the meeting the item number (the extract should include the full item discussion minus any redactions)
- a published (internet) decision document (typically Local Authorities) - these might not actually be signed but publication to be deemed evidence of approval
- a signed but unpublished decision document (typically Local Authorities and universities)

Within Accreditation 'signed' may be defined as any of the following:

- an actual signature from the appropriate individual on a paper document
- a photocopy or scan of a document on which an actual signature exists
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual with unsigned minutes attached that states that those minutes, or those redacted minutes, or the attached extract from the minutes was approved on a particular date.
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the relevant minutes, redacted minutes, or extract from the minutes was approved on a particular date.
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the document (plan, policy etc.) has been approved by the governing body.

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

### National museums

Disposal process and requirements for many national museums will be directed by their governing constitution. This should guide the collections development policy. Accreditation clauses should not contradict the governing constitution. National museums may publish the elements of the collections development policy separately, such as a spoliation statement, a due diligence policy, an acquisition strategy or policy, a disposal policy etc.

### Nationally styled museums

Must have a substantial collection in relation to its stated objectives. 'Substantial collection' means that the collection is a significant and fully representative collection of national importance and international interest. It should directly reflect the existing status of the museum and provide substantial evidence to support its use of the word 'national' or equivalent. The policy and practice of the museum must be to collect a range of objects of national scope and importance and associated information in its particular fields.

| Documentation and information needed      | Where it may be found                              |
|---|--|
| Information on application/return form    | Collections development policy with any appendices |
| Collections development policy            |  |
| Governance document (see requirement 1.2) |  |
| Evidence of signed approval               |  |

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- has the policy been approved by the correct body or bodies, committee or individual with evidenced powers of approval? Is the approval signed?
- 2014
- does the policy fit with the statement of purpose for the museum and is it proportionate?
  - is the policy compliant with the required clauses stated within the template? Do any additional (non-required) elements alter or reduce the meaning of the required clauses?
  - if constitutional make up does not permit the inclusion of all required clauses, are sufficient safeguards in place to ensure the long-term preservation and use of the collection, and responsibility for acquisition and disposal procedures as outlined within the template?
  - does the description of collections provide a clear overview to guide future acquisitions and/or disposal as appropriate? It is rigorous? How well does the museum develop its collections?
  - how have collecting remits of other museums, local record offices, archives been defined?
  - is the approach to collecting sustainable?
  - is the policy publicly available? If so, how?

# Documentation policy

'The museum must be guided by a documentation policy statement. This may be part of a wider collections information policy.'

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

a) The aim of a documentation policy is to ensure that the museum fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of collections. The policy should aim to:

- improve accountability for collections
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information
- extend access to collection information
- strengthen the security of the collections

b) The policy must be approved by the governing body or under appropriately evidenced delegated powers and will be in proportion to resources available and the wider forward plan (see requirement 1.4).

Museums should provide appropriate **signed** evidence of approval for the collections documentation policy which must explicitly state approval has been given. Appropriate evidence may take several forms, such as:

- a signed copy of a full set of minutes
- a signed copy of a redacted set of minutes
- a signed copy of an extract from the minutes that includes the date of the meeting the item number (the extract should include the full item discussion minus any redactions)
- a published (internet) decision document (typically Local Authorities) - these might not actually be signed but publication to be deemed evidence of approval
- a signed but unpublished decision document (typically Local Authorities and universities)

Within Accreditation 'signed' may be defined as any of the following:

- an actual signature from the appropriate individual on a paper document
- a photocopy or scan of a document on which an actual signature exists
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual with unsigned minutes attached that states that those minutes, or those redacted minutes, or the attached extract from the minutes was approved on a particular date.
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the relevant minutes, redacted minutes, or extract from the minutes was approved on a particular date.
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the document (plan, policy etc.) has been approved by the governing body.

- c) The policy will be reviewed and reapproved by the Governing body at least every five years.
- d) Where the operation of a museum has been outsourced to a third party, there should be a clear relationship between the management agreement and the collections documentation policy. Mechanisms for audit of collections documentation and condition (see requirement 2.4) against the required standards set by the management agreement should be explicit in the management agreement.
- e) The policy statement will include a commitment to record sufficient information about the objects in the care of the museum so that each object that it is legally responsible for (including loans), can be identified and located. A commitment to back up records and to store them securely should also be included.
- f) Measures should be in place to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. Computerised records should be backed up regularly.
- g) The policy must consider the potential obsolescence of electronic systems to ensure long term accessibility of the information held. For example, will the system currently used remain accessible in 10 years' time?

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

There is no scaled assessment in this area.

### Documentation and information needed

### Where it may be found

Information on application/return form

Collections management framework

Documentation or information policy

Documentation or information policy

Signed approval of policy

2014

Digital assessment management system

### Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- is it appropriate?
- is it SPECTRUM compliant? Is SPECTRUM referenced?
- does the policy reflect the requirements of a management agreement (where museum operations are outsourced)?



# Care and conservation policy

'The museum must have an approved policy statement to guide its approach to collections care and conservation.'

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

a) Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. Policies for the care of the collection should be based on a combination of preventative and remedial conservation, both designed to ensure long-term preservation. Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures. Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

h) The policy must be approved by the governing body or under appropriately evidenced delegated powers and will be in proportion to resources available and the wider forward plan (see requirement 1.4).

Museums should provide appropriate **signed** evidence of approval for the collections care and conservation policy which must explicitly state approval has been given. Appropriate evidence may take several forms, such as:

- a signed copy of a full set of minutes
- a signed copy of a redacted set of minutes
- a signed copy of an extract from the minutes that includes the date of the meeting the item number (the extract should include the full item discussion minus any redactions)
- a published (internet) decision document (typically Local Authorities) - these might not actually be signed but publication to be deemed evidence of approval
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- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the relevant minutes, redacted minutes, or extract from the minutes was approved on a particular date.
- an identifiable email from the appropriate individual that states that the document (plan, policy etc.) has been approved by the governing body.



- b) The policy will be reviewed and reapproved by the Governing body at least every five years.
- c) Where the operation of a museum has been outsourced to a third party, there should be a clear relationship between the management agreement and the collections care and conservation policy. Mechanisms for audit of collections condition against the required standards set by the agreement should be explicit in the agreement.
- d) The policy should make reference to plans and policies that impact on care and conservation, for example, forward planning, emergency planning etc.
- e) Areas of the collection that require separate policies, for example, working historic machinery, should be identified and policies written.
- f) Policies should take into consideration other relevant standards and frameworks, for example BSI PD5454 'Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents', [Benchmarks in Collection Care](#), [SPECTRUM](#), BSI PAS 198 'Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections' etc.
- g) The museum should receive regular advice from a conservator or collection care adviser, or other appropriately qualified/experienced person on the museum's approach to collection care activities. Remedial conservation work should be carried out by or under the supervision of a conservator.
- h) The policy should state the criteria it will adopt in selecting freelance conservators. Where a museum employs a professional conservator, the policy should make reference to how their skills are utilised. Any conservator or conservation practice that is contracted to provide advice or services should be included on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation (ICON) and, where available, a professionally accredited conservator should be used.
- i) All workforce members and freelance staff working to support the care and conservation of the collection must be aware and follow all policies and procedures.

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

There is no scaled assessment in this area.

| Documentation and information needed | Where it may be found |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Information on application or return form | Collections management framework |
| Collections care and conservation policy  | Care and conservation policy     |
| Signed approval of policy                 |                                  |

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- does the policy fit with the statement of purpose and key aims of the museum?
  - does the policy reflect the requirements of a management agreement (where museum operations are outsourced)?
- 2014
- is the policy appropriate for the type of material in the museum's collections?
  - does the museum have access to appropriate collections care or conservation advice?
  - is the policy consistent with its occupancy of premises?
  - does the policy link effectively with the museum's approach to environmental sustainability (see guidance – section one: 1.10)?
  - does the museum have access to appropriate collections care or conservation advice?

# Collections management plans

## Documentation plan

'The museum must have plans to improve its collections documentation and documentation systems.'

### General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

- a) Accreditation requirements relating to documentation planning are applicable only where the museum has a retrospective documentation backlog. The procedure for resolving any documentation backlogs will be present with the museum's documentation procedural manual (see requirement 2.7).
- 2014** b) Retrospective documentation is about tackling basic documentation backlogs to ensure that an organisation knows the identity and location of all items for which it is responsible and can match objects with the information the museum holds about them.<sup>3</sup>
- c) The plan for backlogs must be appropriate to the museum, the scale of the backlogs, and the resources available. The documentation plan should clearly support the collections development policy (see requirement 2.2), to support effective growth and/or rationalisation of the collection.
- d) A retrospective documentation backlog refers to that group of items without secure ownership or information records, and that may not be recorded within the museum's accession register. Retrospective documentation plans for Accreditation should be split into four sequential stages based on SPECTRUM:

**Documentation stage one:** ensuring all documentation procedures are in place and used (see requirement 2.7). Development and implementation of effective documentation procedures must have been completed at point of application or return for museums to achieve full Accreditation.

**Documentation stage two:** producing an inventory of appropriate detail of the material identified as a potential backlog; this could be to item or group level. Completion of an inventory of those items that may form a backlog should be undertaken within a reasonable period, which normally means a maximum of two years.

**Documentation stage three:** a discrepancy checking stage, using the stage two inventory, to check whether any items identified as part of the backlog have previously been accessioned and subsequently lost/misplaced/mis-assigned. Completion of this stage will permit the actual backlog volume to be clarified.

<sup>3</sup> Collections Trust: Factsheet - Retrospective Documentation  
Accreditation guidance – section two

**Documentation stage four:** undertaking SPECTRUM procedures for those items within the backlog selected for long-term retention within the accessioned collection. Once the inventory and discrepancy stages have been completed robustly and effectively, items within the backlog which are not appropriate for accessioning and long-term retention may be considered for disposal. Records for those items within the backlog selected for accessioning should be noted as ‘found within the museum’ or similar if research into ownership is not completed, or not possible. Museums should resolve the backlog within five years following the completion of stage two.

Where backlogs exist, museums will receive ‘areas for improvement’ based on this section. Museums should aim to resolve their identified backlogs within the timescales given, which will be based on the museum’s own documentation plan. Where timescales are not met, museums must be able to demonstrate through a forward planning process why this is the case, and how the backlog will be addressed.

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

There is no scalability in this section.

| Documentation and information needed | Where it may be found |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|

Information on application/return form

Documentation plan

Documentation plan

Collections management framework

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- is the plan coherent?
- are the timescales appropriate?
- does the plan include general collections audit and/or documentation enrichment activity? If so, these elements should be separate to the primary documentation backlog plan.

2014

- do timescales for completion follow in a sequential order through the different stages?
- if applicable have original target completion deadlines to address the documentation backlog changed since the last return? If so, why?
- how is this activity being resourced (i.e. workforce)?

# Care and conservation plan

'The museum must have plans to help deliver improvements to collections care and conservation in line with the collections care and conservation policy.'

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

- a) The collections care and conservation plan may be part of a wider document within the collections management framework adopted by the museum.
- b) Museums will have a planned programme to institute improvements in collection care, ensuring that necessary improvements are made over time, on the basis of priority. Periodic reviews are held to evaluate the condition of the collection and summarise priorities for improvements. Recommendations for action are produced and an action plan is formulated for carrying out the priorities identified as necessary within a specified time period.
- c) The plan will include planned action relating to the following elements:

1. **Collections condition overview:** to ensure that awareness of the condition and needs of all items in the collection is maintained.

An appropriate programme is in place to ensure that a visual inspection of all the collections is carried out. Sensitive or vulnerable items are identified, and action planned.

2. **Environmental monitoring:** to alert staff to potentially damaging environmental conditions and take into account the accumulative impact of different materials; an appropriate programme is in place to measure relative humidity, temperature and light levels (visible and ultraviolet), in galleries and stores.

Any environmental data collected, such as spot measures of temperature and humidity or light levels, is recorded, analysed and retained. Monitoring can be carried out using simple as well as sophisticated instruments. Monitoring equipment is stored and calibrated as recommended by the manufacturer.

3. **Environmental control:** to ensure that collections are not at risk of damage from unsuitable environmental conditions.

The collection is housed so that it is protected from potentially harmful environmental conditions. The museum has determined the level of control of the environment (temperature, relative humidity, light and pollutants), which it wishes to achieve, and measures are taken to control the environment to these levels. Control can be achieved using simple as well as sophisticated measures; simple measures to be taken are closing doors, moving lights, providing entrance mats to reduce dust levels within the buildings and controlling temperature and light levels.

Material is displayed and stored away from sources of heating, air conditioning vents and windows, or otherwise protected from their damaging effects.

The overall exposure of all light-sensitive material to light is reduced as much as possible. Blinds, shutters, curtains and/or ultraviolet filters are used to reduce visible and ultraviolet light in all areas housing such collections. Sunlight does not fall directly on any light-sensitive material while on display.

Vulnerable items in the collection are protected from excessive dust by being housed in appropriate enclosures such as cupboards or cases.

Windows and doors can be closed so that the building provides some protection from airborne pollutants, both gaseous and particulate.

4. **Provision of suitable building:** to ensure that the building contributes towards providing appropriate environmental conditions for the different elements of the collection.

Buildings used to house collections are sufficiently robust and well-constructed to be fit for the purpose of housing the collections. They therefore provide sufficient protection from the elements and are of appropriate strength and quality of construction. Floors, particularly in storage areas are capable of safely supporting the load. Buildings used to house collections are regularly inspected; potential threats to collections from, for example, leaky roofs, poor wiring, internal pipe work, blocked gutters and ill-fitting windows or doors, are identified and assessed during these inspections, and a programme is put in place to remedy identified faults. Plant and equipment is inspected periodically. Buildings that are unoccupied for parts of the year are visited and inspected regularly.

Accreditation recognises that for open air, industrial, transport and social history museums, where an historic or replica building is used as an exhibit or for housing exhibits, not all the requirements above may be achievable, however, the care and long-term preservation of any collections located within the buildings must be appropriately considered.

5. **Housekeeping:** to reduce the likelihood of pest infestation and damage to material from mould or from abrasive or acidic particles, by careful cleaning of collections and the areas in which they are housed.

All display and storage areas and storage furniture are cleaned and inspected regularly. Advice has been sought as to the appropriate techniques, materials and equipment used for display and storage and for cleaning storage areas, for example, in avoiding the potential damage to photographic images from chlorine or peroxides released by some commercial cleaning products, or ozone from photocopiers and printers.

All incoming material and acquisitions are examined for signs of infestation, dampness or mould. Advice is sought on appropriate remedial action and action is taken to deal with any problems identified. All items which show signs of pest infestation are kept isolated from the rest of the collection until treated. Advice is sought and action is taken on appropriate treatments.

Display and storage areas are monitored for the presence of insects and rodents, and traps are regularly checked. Trapped insects are identified.

# Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

## Independent museums, types one and two

A basic conservation plan should explain the arrangements for: frequency of monitoring, resources, review periods, access to professional conservation advice, building maintenance, housekeeping, environmental monitoring and control and equipment maintenance.

## Independent, type three, local authority and university museums

The conservation plan should explain the arrangements for: frequency of monitoring, resources, review periods, access to professional conservation advice, building maintenance, housekeeping, environmental monitoring and equipment maintenance, surveying the collections and establishing a planned programme of remedial and preventive conservation work (for example, regular condition surveys).

## National museums

The conservation plan should outline the procedures that are followed by professional conservators within the staff complement in the following areas: frequency of monitoring, resources, review periods, access to professional conservation advice, building maintenance, housekeeping, environmental monitoring and equipment maintenance, surveying the collections and establishing a planned programme of remedial and preventive conservation work (for example, regular condition surveys). It should also indicate the arrangements for engaging freelance/contract conservators; it should also reference the arrangements for maintaining the building(s).

## Nationally styled museums

Refer to independent type three, local authority and university museums

| Documentation and information needed   | Where it may be found   |
|--|---|
| Information on application/return form | Collections management framework documents (see requirement 2.1)      |
| Care and conservation plan or plans    | Collections care and conservation policy (see requirement 2.4)        |
|  | Collections care and conservation plan or plans (see requirement 2.6) |
|  | Forward plan (see requirement 1.4)                                    |

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- is the plan appropriate to the organisations and collections size?
- does the plan include an overview of current collections care and conservation?
- does the plan include timescales?
- is the plan realistic?
- what is the plan based on? Has a Benchmarks or similar survey been undertaken to guide its development?
- are resources in place to support this approach?
- what maintenance and cleaning schedules are in place at the museum both internally and externally?
- do staff have mechanisms in place to deal with 'on the spot' issues regarding maintenance and cleaning? Does the museum's cleaning schedule link to collection care and conservation policy and plan? What maintenance schedules for displays, interactive and other interpretative tools are in place at the museum?
- are all workforce members and freelance staff involved in the care and conservation of the collection aware and trained to adhere to the plan?



# Collections management procedures

## Documentation procedures

The primary SPECTRUM procedures must be in place in the form of a documentation procedural manual that is available for inspection on request.

### General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

- a) The primary SPECTRUM procedures are:
- object entry
  - acquisition
    - (a) accession register
    - (b) security copy of accession register
    - (c) marking and/or labelling
  - location and movement control
  - cataloguing
  - object exit
  - loans out
  - loans in
  - retrospective documentation
- b) The form of the museum's Accession registers should comply with SPECTRUM.
- c) Museums must have a security copy of their accession register. This is an important document crucial for the following reasons:
- emergency situations: should the museum suffer a catastrophic incident, such as flood or fire, a security copy will allow the museum to identify what has been lost, or what needs to be searched for, replaced or restored.
  - theft and fraud: a security copy will ensure that the governing body has a secure record of its collection and associated information should any items go missing; the security copy will be static and non-changeable.
  - liquidation: in the event of liquidation the primary accession register may be held as a record relating to an asset and no longer accessible by researchers and the public<sup>4</sup>.
- d) Museums with an electronic security copy of the accession register must evidence appropriate digital security with auditable change logs. A regular but non-auditable back up of your collections database will not be accepted; further information available through SPECTRUM.

<sup>4</sup> [www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c1/a222/f6/AcquisitionFactsheet.pdf](http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a222/f6/AcquisitionFactsheet.pdf)

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

There is no scalability in this section.

### Documentation and information needed      Where it may be found

Information on application or return form

Documentation procedural manual

### Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- is the manual up to date? Does it set out the museum's documentation practices and procedures? What is the review cycle?
- does the manual include:
  - object entry
  - acquisition:
    - (a) an accession register
    - (b) security copy of the accession register
    - (c) marking and/or labelling
  - location and movement control
  - cataloguing (a) provision of appropriate indexing
  - object exit
  - loans in
  - loans out
  - retrospective documentation (where a backlog exists, requirement 2.5)
- are the procedures being implemented?
- how is the manual communicated to the workforce?

# Expert assessment of security arrangements

‘The museum must obtain expert security advice for stored and exhibited collections at least every five years, and earlier if needed. It must plan to act on the advice over time.’

## General guidance on this requirement, relevant to all museums

- a) The appropriate source of advice will vary according to the size of the organisation and composition of its collection.
- b) Security advice must be sought for all premises containing collections including collections on display and in store, offices and off-site at least once every five years.
- c) Security advice must consider arrangements for the workforce and visitors, as well as collections.
- d) Advice from the National Security Adviser at Arts Council England in respect of the Government Indemnity Scheme is accepted as evidence of external experts; however, museums must be clear for what building or section of a building the advice has been provided. Those areas not considered by the national security team should receive security reviews through alternate means.

## Scaled guidance on this requirement, relevant to specific museum types

### Independent museums

Requests for a visit from your local police liaison or community officer, and any ensuing recommendations will be sufficient evidence. Where police officers are not able to write a formal report, the museum should take notes of verbal recommendations during the visit, taking appropriate action.

### Local authority museums

May utilise the support of local police liaison or community officers, and may also benefit from council-appointed security teams. Regular expert advice and security reviews should be evidenced.

### University museums

May benefit from the support of university security teams, in addition to police liaison officers. Security reviews should be evidenced.

## National and nationally styled museums

Will likely hold significant or valuable collections in greater numbers and concentrations than smaller museums. It is therefore expected that they will employ expert security advice, either as a member of the workforce, or through regular external consultant advice.

| Documentation and information needed | Where it may be found |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Information on application or return form                    | Security report  |
| Evidence of a security review within the previous five years | Notes from security report<br>Forward plan (actions arising) |

## Questions about this requirement that will be considered as part of the assessment

- does the review consider all premises containing collections?
- did the review look at security of workforce and visitors, as well as collections on display and in store?
- is the timescale for reviewing the security review reflected in the forward plan?
- are actions arising from recommendations referenced in the forward and resource plans?
- how are any recommendations being implemented?
- is the timescale for implementing recommendations appropriate?
- where shared occupancy or building access arrangements are in place how is this reflected in review and action planning?