

Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom

Summary:

Arts Council England and the UK Accreditation partners, the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and Northern Ireland Museums Council, recognise that museums have closed their sites due to the impact of Covid-19 and in response to Government advice.

In order to support the sector during these unprecedented times **all Accredited museums in the UK** will have their **current award status extended for an additional 12 months**.

We are postponing all future Accreditation Panel meetings, including the upcoming 28 April 2020 meeting.

FAQs:

When does this come into effect?

Immediately, until 1 April 2021.

Is our organisation Accredited?

You can check if your organisation is Accredited here:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-4>

Whether your organisation holds a Full or a Provisional award you're still formally Accredited and have access to the benefits of the Scheme for example funding opportunities and support from Museum Development organisations.

Does Accreditation status affect funding opportunities?

All UK Accreditation Partners will have individual funding programmes available. Please contact the organisation who assessed your application to discover funding opportunities and eligibility criteria.

All museums who hold an Accreditation award (Full or Provisional) are still able to apply for funding which uses Accreditation status as an eligibility criterion.

Temporary closures due to Covid-19

Will our museum status be affected if we've had to close to the public?

No. Please be reassured that museums which are temporarily closed will continue with their current status.

Current award status will automatically rollover for 12 months regardless of whether you've had to close temporarily or were already closed for example as part of planned redevelopment works.

What if we have to close permanently?

We realise this is an unprecedented situation and that there may be a risk that some organisations close permanently. Museums, galleries and historic sites must be a physical site/space/building which is open regularly with access to the collection for a minimum of least 20 days per year. If an organisation closes permanently it cannot maintain its Accredited status.

Museums experiencing difficulties should contact Museum Development organisations to access additional support packages such as emergency support packages. If you are an NPO in England, please contact your Relationship Manager who will also be able to offer advice.

If your organisation does close permanently please let us know and we will process a withdrawal from the Scheme once we reopen on 1 April 2021.

Can we withdraw from the Scheme?

Museum Accreditation is a voluntary scheme and a governing body can make the decision to withdraw from the Accreditation Scheme. Any request will be processed from 1 April 2021. Accreditation status will remain with the expectation that the Standard will be maintained in line with your individual museums' policies.

Eligibility

Will the eligibility process remain open?

Eligibility questionnaires can still be submitted and assessed during this period. Museums can access Museum Development support. Eligible applicants will have up to three years to submit a full application with new applications processed from 1 April 2021.

Future applications

The first stage is to complete an eligibility questionnaire and return it to accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk. Please refer to the published guidance and talk to the Museum Development team first. Arts Council will make final decisions on eligibility working closely with Museum Development teams.

You'll find more information here: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/accreditation-how-apply>

Eligibility criteria for the Scheme remains the same. There have been some temporary adjustments in response to the UK Government's announcement of a 'Shutdown' period where cultural venues must close and travel to work is only permitted if 'essential':

Museum Accreditation eligibility criteria includes providing opportunities for public access and engagement with your assets and collection. This can still be shown in a range of ways including digital content or online learning.

At eligibility your organisation must be a physical site/space/building which is open to the public regularly and include your opening arrangements. During this closure period for museums, galleries and historic sites this expectation is waived. Previous and future opening arrangements will be sufficient. The museum will need to be reopened at your full application.

For museums who are currently removed and excluded due to deliberate non-compliance, the eligibility process remains open at the end of the five-year exclusion period.

New applications

If you have submitted a new application

You will have received an automatic notification from Grantium or an email from an assessor, informing where in the process the application has reached. If no correspondence has been received please email accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk or contact the relevant Accreditation assessing organisation.

Unfortunately, no new awards will be made until the Scheme reopens from 1 April 2021. Museums will be unable to meet all the requirements of the Accreditation Standard while closed. This situation will have a big impact on both short- and long-term planning, and it will offer time to allow organisations to re-focus priorities.

Once the scheme reopens there will be no requirement to restart your Accreditation application. Assessors may request updated information, for example an up-to-date forward/business plan. Please be assured current application information will remain valid. Access to Museum Development support will remain during this time.

As a new applicant to the Scheme should we still expect an Accreditation site visit?

Site visits to all new applicants will remain as part of the assessment process. Under the current government restrictions, no site visits will take place, with all new applications paused.

Working Towards Accreditation

Do museums currently Working Towards Accreditation have extensions?

Museums formally recognised as Working Towards Accreditation normally provide an application within three years of the date eligibility is confirmed. Flexibility will

be offered to those actively working on Accreditation and accessing Museum Development advice and support.

All applications expected before April 2021 or with a deadline during 2020 will be offered an additional 12 months to do so, this extension is automatic and does not need to be requested.

Can we submit a new application?

The Scheme is closed to new applications until 1 April 2021.

If you wish to submit an application sooner, this will not be assessed or awarded while the Scheme is closed. You should apply when your museum is open again.

If you are already Working Towards Accreditation, but plans have now changed

Accreditation may no longer be a priority, or you may not have the capacity to complete the application. Please inform us and Museum Development.

Should the governance model or museum offer change during the Working Towards Accreditation period, please check it meets eligibility criteria for the Scheme. Advice can be offered by the relevant Museum Development provider. You may be required to complete an updated eligibility questionnaire if a significant change has taken place.

Return invitations

If you are expecting to receive an invitation to make an Accreditation return this year.

You will not receive this nor be expected to submit a return even if the return is overdue. You will be contacted when the scheme re-opens.

We'll issue a revised timetable for returns in England by 31 January 2021.

Significant change reviews

You'll all be making important and often difficult decisions about your sites and services. There will be no significant change reviews until the Scheme reopens on 1 April 2021.

Compliance

Do we still have to follow Accreditation requirements during this time?

The expectation remains that Accredited museums meet the requirements of the Scheme in line with the museum's policies.

One of the main priorities is the health and safety of staff and visitors. Government advice must be followed.

In difficult financial situations can we consider selling items for financial reasons?

There has been no change to the published guidance and process around disposals.

You'll find more information here:

- <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-collections-and-cultural-property>
- <https://www.museumsassociation.org/collections/disposal-toolkit>
- <https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>

Provisionals

Provisional award deadlines

Those with a Provisional Accreditation award, will be offered the same extension as organisations currently holding a Full Accreditation award.

The deadline to report against Required Actions and Areas for Development will be delayed by 12 months. The original return deadline is on the award outcome letter.

Site visits

Pre-arranged site visits during closure periods

All visits have been postponed and will be rearranged when it is safe to do so.

An assessor will contact you directly.

Accreditation assessments

Can you continue to work on an Accreditation assessment?

If individuals are able to work on elements of Accreditation remotely please continue. It may be helpful to spread the work across the team and across the next year while the Scheme is paused as this will avoid a rush to complete Accreditation work once the Scheme reopens.

If you've submitted a return but not heard from an assessor. What happens now?

You will not be required to submit a new return once the Scheme reopens in April 2021.

The current return will remain on the system until the Scheme reopens; at this point an assessor will be assigned and will contact you to progress the assessment.

Where possible the information submitted with the original return will be used. Updated documents may be required (such as forward plans). Information will be

checked for relevance, for example, workforce changes (1.3), that forward/business plans have been updated and approved (2.1) and financial position (2.2). Such requests will be kept to a minimum.

Current museums return under assessment, will this assessment still happen?

All return assessments are now paused until the Scheme reopens from 1 April 2021. Assessments will not take place and regular award panels have been postponed.

All current returns will remain in the system until the Scheme reopens; at this point an assessor will be assigned and will contact you to progress the assessment. Due to the current circumstances the Grantium timeframe will be amended. As the situation becomes clearer, new timeframes will be communicated to respond to queries.

Where possible the information submitted with the original return will be used. Updated documents may be required (such as forward plans). Information will be checked for relevance, for example, workforce changes (1.3), that forward/business plans have been updated and approved (2.1) and financial information (2.2). Such requests will be kept to a minimum.

Does the museum need to respond to assessor queries by the timeframe stated on Grantium?

If you have received a further information request, you will not be expected to respond to the original deadline.

If it is possible to respond, please do so – they will remain on the system until the Scheme reopens. At that stage, an assessor will contact you to progress the assessment.

If you are unable to submit responses these queries will remain on the system when the Scheme reopens. An assessor will contact you to discuss the progression of the assessment.

Assessment scheduled to an awards panel

Regular award decision making panels meetings for Accreditation have been suspended for 12 months.

The reason for this is that we recognise all museums will need to revise their forward/business plans in response to this difficult situation. Decisions cannot be made on earlier recommendations, because the information assessed to make recommendations will have changed.

You will not be asked to re-submit your Accreditation return, the assessment will continue when the Scheme re-opens. Some updates will be required including core documents.

Can I still use Grantium to make Accreditation applications or returns during this time?

Grantium, the online application form, remains open enabling you to continue to access and work on applications and returns. No assessments or awards for applications and returns will be made for 12 months.

Will an assessor contact us on 1 April 2021?

The Scheme will reopen on that date, but it will take time to restart the processes. A member of the team will contact you about your return or application as soon as possible and revised timescales will be communicated.

Award decision-making

Will award panels still meet?

All future Accreditation Panel meetings, including the scheduled meeting for 28 April 2020 are postponed.

If in exceptional circumstances we need to convene any panel meetings these will be held remotely.

Can I still get a copy of my award certificate?

Hard copy certificates for museums awarded at the panel meeting on Thursday 27 February will not be issued in England until Arts Council England offices re-open. Temporary alternative certificates (e-versions) can issued by email.

Advice and support

How can we get Accreditation advice during this period?

The relevant Museum Development team will continue to provide Accreditation advice and support.

Accreditation guidance documents are on our website.

Who can we contact?

If you have any questions, our Customer Services team are available via email: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact-us>

If you have any questions specifically on Accreditation, please do get in touch at: accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk

What financial support is available to museums during this period?

On 24 March, Arts Council England announced a number of emergency response packages to help support organisations and individuals during the Covid-19 outbreak. Details of this emergency support can be found here:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19>

On 31 March, guidance for the fund for organisations outside of the National Portfolio (which all Accredited Museums are eligible for) and the fund for individuals was issued:

- <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/financial-support-organisations-outside-national-portfolio>
- <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/financial-support-artists-creative-practitioners-and-freelancers>

Please also contact the relevant Museum Development team who may be aware of additional funding streams.