



The National Archives and History UK

**A Guide to Collaboration for Archives and Higher
Education**

2018 Edition

Foreword

The National Archives collection of historical government papers and public records constitutes one of the largest and most significant archives in the world. More widely, this country's hugely rich and diverse network of more than 2,500 archives, are our collective memory, inspiring learning and research, and shaping our understanding of our past. We all have an interest in strengthening and supporting collaboration, learning and research, underpinned by our rich archival heritage.

That is why, in 2015, The National Archives worked with Research Libraries UK (RLUK) to publish guidance with the aim of improving collaboration between archives and academic institutions of all kinds. Three years on, the time is right for a refreshed approach building on all that we have learned in that time. This new edition of the guidance takes into account the impact of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the opportunities arising from the second round of the AHRC's Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs).

The National Archives has worked with History UK (which promotes history in higher education) to produce this revised guidance. Together, we have engaged with historians, researchers and archivists to shape our understanding of current practices and develop new approaches to encouraging future collaboration. The guidance has been shaped by the work of History UK and Higher Education Archive Programme (HEAP) members which provided a qualitative research base and new best practice case studies.

We are committed to encouraging cross-sector research collaboration. We hope that this refreshed guidance will help build on the successes of the past few years and inspire even greater opportunities for meaningful collaboration for the future.

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1 Introduction

This guidance has been commissioned by The National Archives and History UK to support collaboration between the archive and higher education (HE) sectors. This is a revised edition. It has been updated in recognition of the changes that have taken place within the two sectors since 2015.

The following activities have informed this revision: a survey of archivists and academics, a consultation workshop, collation of case studies and a review of current policy drivers in both sectors.

The purpose of this guidance is to highlight the range of opportunities that exist for collaboration between the archive and HE sectors. It also provides information on the practical issues associated with the formation, development and sustainability of collaborations.

As well as providing generic information about working in collaboration, the guidance highlights the distinctive characteristics and recent changes in the higher education sector.

The guidance is structured into five sections:

- What do we mean by collaboration?
- Forming a collaboration?
- Developing your collaboration
- Recording activities and capturing impact
- An appendix of key terms, concepts and resources

We would advise you to try and read through the whole guidance in order.

Whilst the main audience of this guidance is likely to be the archive sector, the guidance can be used by academics and higher education institutions to understand and develop collaborations with archive services.

Top 10 tips

1. Be confident about getting what you need from collaboration. Ask questions early and each partner should act as equals.
2. Establish good personal contacts at the early stages of forming a collaboration: do not be afraid to develop new contacts and take frequent opportunities to talk about your work.
3. Develop contacts across each sector – connect with archivists, engagement staff, university librarians, and ‘sector brokers’ who can act as champions for your professional expertise and collections.
4. Explore whether you can work in partnership with other local organisations to present a group ‘archive and special collections offer’ to local higher education institutions.
5. Make a written record of the things that you and your partner organisation agree and commit to as part of the collaboration. Make sure this is shared after each meeting or discussion so that you both have a common understanding of goals and responsibilities at all stages.
6. Identify (and put a cost against) the time that goes into collaborations, either at the outset as part of the planning process, or as part of your project monitoring so that you can articulate the value of your contribution and make the case for financial support.
7. Do not underestimate students and the value that they can bring, particularly in terms of new approaches to research and working practices.
8. Collaborative working can be demanding. Shared vision, shared commitment and strong institutional support are essential for success.
9. Don’t wait to be asked to report the successes of your work: seek out opportunities to share them widely.
10. Know your value and have a go!