

Archive Service Accreditation Committee 2021

Venue: Microsoft Teams, 11-3 19 May 2021

Geoff Pick	Committee Chair (ARA)
Sarah Aitchison	Committee Member
Caroline Brown	Committee Member (SCA)
Alison Cullingford	Committee Member
Mary Ellis	Committee Member (Welsh Government)
Gillian Mapstone	Committee Member (NRS)
Emma Markiewicz	Committee Member (TNA)
Karen Sampson	Committee Member
Stephen Scarth	Committee Member (PRONI)
Jeannette Strickland	Committee Member
Catherine Taylor	Committee Member
Janice Tullock	Committee Member

Invited Observers: Isabel Wilson (Arts Council England)

Programme Team: Melinda Haunton, Jane Shillaker (The National Archives)

Agenda

		Papers
1	Welcome and apologies	
	Hayden Burns and Joanna Terry had sent apologies. GP welcomed IW to her first meeting as an observer from ACE.	
2	Minutes and matters arising	
2.1	Minutes of Committee meetings 14 May 2020 and 4 November 2020 were agreed. Matters arising: only item 2.3 20200514 (updating review stage form) needed to be addressed. This was taken under 8.1.	
3	Reflection on Archive Service Accreditation during the first year of the pandemic and matters arising	
3.1	GP updated the Committee on a series of meetings with partners, reflecting on how the programme had delivered during the pandemic and its potential for delivery during the coming months. Key themes included:	

		Papers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Areas of pressure: for partners and for archive services</i> These were real and also unequally felt across home nations, making a consistent approach challenging. • <i>Foreseeable future changes</i> There are clear threats to the sustainability/viability of some archive services, and also great potential for access patterns to change, both soon and in the future. • <i>Different paths of the pandemic in the home nations</i> This had similarly created differences in the delivery of the programme but there was overall ongoing support for the value of the programme UK-wide and for keeping the programme open, albeit with limitations. Archive services with the capacity to engage with Accreditation, found it reassuring to have the programme open, and were able to work towards future applications. • The impact of the pandemic and associated capacity issues for some assessor bodies would continue to be a significant issue for the foreseeable future; these challenges were noted in Scotland and Wales specifically • <i>Impact of the pandemic:</i> It was recognised that many archive services have suffered financially because of the pandemic and services have dealt with continuing challenges and uncertainty during this time. It would be inappropriate to increase pressure on archive services by demanding returns on a tight schedule at this time. Some archive services have been effectively 'mothballed' with staff furloughed for much of the period. <p>Comments were invited on these issues and the wider sector picture, Key emerging points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for a return to onsite validation visits when possible, albeit retaining some elements of remote contact where useful • Agreement that keeping the programme open through the first year of the pandemic, albeit with modifications, had been of benefit to the sector, and had contributed to conversations at high level with vulnerable services and their parent organisations 	

		Papers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that the nature of the pandemic is affecting subsectors differently, for example university services are able to redefine themselves and offer outstanding student support while other sectors such as historic houses are hard hit and unlikely to have capacity to engage with the programme for some time. A subsector communications approach is likely to help to address this. • A strong recognition of the emotional as well as practical impacts of the pandemic and the vital need for flexibility and a supportive approach throughout. This means checking in with services them about their plans for reporting rather than allowing reporting to drift. • Concern about the potential for a two-tier approach becoming embedded over time – at some point there needs to be a return to pre pandemic expectations around the standard and assessments, • An expectation to respond more quickly to emerging crises in the sector as financial impacts escalate. • Concerns about submissions in particular areas such as statistics (not assessed) and forward planning – but as ever a need to reiterate that Accreditation is not looking for perfection, but is about development and awareness. • Thanks were expressed to assessors and assessor bodies for working through the unprecedented challenges of 2020-21. It was also noted that there is potential for a backlog to build up particularly relating to site visits and assessor bodies will need to plan for capacity here. 	
3.2	To note for transparency: assessor experience of remote assessment.	
3.3	To agree: future Panel and Committee meetings: online or in person	
4	Roadmap to increasing inclusive content in Archive Service Accreditation	

		Papers
4.1	<p>The Committee considered a revised roadmap designed in response to Committee feedback in November 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple vision statement had been adopted to meet the differences in equalities law in the home nations and to emphasise that equality, diversity and inclusion apply across the areas of Accreditation • A revised approach to implementation and testing which immediately incorporated into guidance and updates to questions practice that is already underway in the sector and seen/welcomed by panels in recent years, such as effective approaches to access planning, collection development and collection information policies and plans. This left a smaller group of completely new questions for wider testing, reducing the burden of feedback on the archive sector at this time. • A draft question on workforce composition had been rolled into a bigger question on inclusive approaches, to recognise that small services would be unable to answer it given data protection implications; it would instead be part of scaled expectations for bigger services. • In addition to testing the limited number of new questions widely, the package of updated questions and guidance could be presented collectively as an offer to services looking to review their approach. This would still allow for the reflective feedback on where phase 1 (working within the existing Archive Service Accreditation structure) does not allow archive services to include in their application. • As part of phase 1, TNA is looking to start an external challenge process in 2021-22 as an opportunity for the programme, the sector, and wider interested groups to engage in reflection about inclusive practise. <p>The Committee was pleased to see an iterative and phased approach recognising the current sector challenges. Amendments to reflect the realities of smaller archive services were welcomed. This remained a critical area to make progress on, so starting immediately and setting a marker for future development was also welcomed.</p>	

		Papers
4.2	<p>Decision on implementation</p> <p>The Committee agreed to implement the roadmap on increasing inclusive content in Archive Service Accreditation and for the Roadmap to be published as part of the Committee's governance papers.</p>	
5.1	Statistical return and programme matters arising	
5.1	<p>To note: the annual statistical return and to discuss its future form</p> <p>JS presented the return and asked for feedback on how useful it is to the Committee in terms of understanding the programme. The Committee was content to see the report format revised for future years.</p>	
5.2	<p>Update on application system replacement spring 2021</p> <p>MH and JS briefly reported the successful transfer to SMAApply from Fluidreview in the first quarter of 2021.</p> <p>MH also thanked MALD colleagues for their support in ensuring a bilingual interface was created speedily and to an appropriate standard.</p>	
5.3	<p>The Committee expressed thanks to peer reviewers who supported assessments during this difficult year (2020-2021): Natalie Adams, Lizzy Baker, Andrew George, Kate Jarman, Heidi McIntosh, Paul Sillitoe, Katy Thornton, Matti Watton.</p>	
6	Policy and precedent arising from 2020-21 Panels	
6.1	<p>Decisions not to award – basis reviewed:</p> <p>There were no decisions not to award for 2020-21. This was noted.</p>	

<p>6.2</p>	<p>Policy and precedent</p> <p>There were no new precedents, but four policy issues were escalated by Panels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Forward planning as impacted by the pandemic</i> This had been raised by the March 2021 Panel as a specific issue around the pandemic. The Committee discussed expectations in this area and felt that there was potential for a partner event to discuss forward planning particularly in the current context. There was a clear case for flexibility in approaches at present; IW noted that Museum Accreditation is looking more at indicative planning and priorities than long-term plans at present. 2. <i>A watching brief on financially-motivated disposals</i> This was raised as a concern in November 2020. The issue had not escalated since, but it remained a possibility as pandemic support programmes are reduced. 3. <i>A watching brief on management-level broadening of roles</i> This was raised in March 2021 with a note that management-level roles were increasingly being broadened to the point where leadership of individual archive services was greatly reduced. A similar process was noted in smaller services where a single archivist role was being expected to take on broader and broader responsibilities. Over time, this needed to be understood as a capacity reduction. 4. <i>Consideration of when reduced staffing should move 1.6 Workforce assessment to partially met (or not met)</i> Discussion focused on the impact of reductions in delivering the service's plans, raw numbers being hard to assess. It was emphasised that there was value in noting reductions at review stage in the report as this might be the first sign of concern at reducing capacity. 	
<p>7</p>	<p>Assessor meeting feedback</p>	

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<p>7.1</p>	<p>There had not been an assessor meeting in 2020-21. The Committee noted plans for a meeting summer/autumn 2021 to take account of Committee decisions.</p>	

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7.2	<p>The Committee expressed thanks to the assessors for all their work in the past year, whether this had been undertaking assessments or discussions and support in keeping the programme under review during the pandemic.</p>	

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8	Updates to programme documentation	
8.1	The committee agreed updated documentation incorporating Stakeholders module changes agreed November 2020 and	

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	<p>step 1A of the roadmap at item 4, as well as routine updates to URLs. This covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme guidance • Application form 	

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	<p>MH noted that there was also an update required per matters arising from May 2020, to the Review stage form, to ask for more specificity on changed risk profiles for digital materials.</p>	

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	<p>The Committee agreed that this could be approved by email with the circulation of the minutes, since the wording had not been seen before the meeting</p>	

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9	Update from museum accreditation	
9.1	IW gave a verbal update on how the Museum Accreditation programme has addressed the pandemic and other updates.	

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	<p>The Committee thanked IW for the update, which raised a number of interesting contrasts and points of convergence. In particular, the definition of a museum (as an institution with a</p>	



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	physical home and onsite access) was noted. The gap in standards around rare book collections was noted and an area of interest to both sides.	

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10	<p>Date of next meeting</p>	
	<p>The next Accreditation Panel meetings will be:</p>	

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	<p>Panel meeting 1 July 2021:11-3.30 (online)</p> <p>Panel meeting 4 November 2021:11-3.30 (online)</p>	

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