



ACCREDITED  
ARCHIVE SERVICE

---

# Archive Service Accreditation Eligibility Criteria

May 2015

## **Eligibility for Archive Service Accreditation**

Archive Service Accreditation is open to eligible archive services which are located within the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

There are six eligibility criteria for Archive Service Accreditation. Those considering an application to the scheme must confirm that they meet all six criteria or (where indicated) discuss borderline areas with their assessor body to confirm eligibility.

The eligibility criteria are designed to focus the scheme in its initial years and to support appropriate levels of access and staffing. They will be reviewed after the scheme's initial roll-out. There is a specific aspiration to review criterion 4 as standards for digital archives are further developed.

Full details on the eligibility criteria are contained in the remainder of this guidance note to support archive services uncertain of their eligibility.

## CRITERION 1- Definition of an Archive:

- To apply for Archive Service Accreditation, your organisation should hold a collection which meets the following definition of an archive:

***“Materials created or received by a person, family or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in them or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order and collective control; permanent records.” (Society of American Archivists)***

### Guidance

Archive Service Accreditation is open only to institutions holding collections which meet the definition of an archive. Further guidance can be found in the guidance document *What is an archive?* In this round of Archive Service Accreditation Records Management<sup>1</sup> Services are out of scope of the scheme.

### Sample Questions

**Q1.** *I am the archivist in a University Special Collections and our largest collection comprises photographs donated by an academic, who photographed in detail the interior and exterior of the majority of parish churches in England. A number of his photographs have been used in his books related to the architectural history of churches. We have also been given his extensive library on landscape history and English architecture. The majority of the books have been heavily annotated and include observations related to the buildings featured in the photographs. Does this meet the criterion?*

**A.** **Yes.** The photographs and the annotated books can be defined as an archive: they have been created by the academic in the course of his personal business and they contain information of enduring value. However, had the books not been annotated, they would simply be regarded as a personal library and would not meet the criterion.

**Q2.** *I am a local studies librarian and our collection contains a considerable amount of photographic material, including: photographs and negatives from a local photographic studio; photographs taken by the local photography society; a large series of photographic postcards dating 1900 – 1954; and various photographs donated by members of the public which contain images of significant places,*

---

<sup>1</sup>Defined by ISO 15489 :Field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records

*buildings and events in the area. This is a mixed archive/library collection, does it meet the criterion?*

**A. Yes.** You are not ruled out of meeting this criterion if the whole collection does not meet the requirements. The photographs of the photographic studio and photography society meet the criterion as evidence of each organisation's activities. However, the blank post-cards, which would have been produced in considerable numbers, would not meet the definition of an archive. The photographs donated by the public are a little more problematic. Where a member of the public has donated their personal photographic archive (labelled with contextual information) and kept as a discrete collection, it would meet the criterion. However, where photographs (particularly those without contextual information) from various depositors have been artificially grouped together to form one large collection, this would not meet the definition of an archive.

**Q3** *I am the curator of an art gallery. In addition to records related to the management of the gallery and its collections, we also hold a complete collection of exhibition material dating back to 1900. For each new exhibition held at the gallery, we keep a copy of the exhibition catalogue, advertising material (e.g. leaflets and posters), exhibition captions and more recently, evaluation forms. Much of this material is printed, does it still meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** When considered individually, each item may not be regarded as archival. However, the fact that these components have been brought together by the gallery as evidence of its functions, means that they form an archive.

**Q4.** *We are a voluntary group which manages a local history community archive. Do community archives meet the criterion?*

**A. Yes.** As long as the collection meets the definition of an archive your collection meets this criterion.

**Q5.** *I am a local studies librarian and we hold a complete range of Ordnance Survey maps for England and Wales, including early OS maps; a collection of historic map facsimiles; and a large collection of topographical prints from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Does this meet this criterion?*

**A. No.** The collection may be of great research value, but it does not constitute an archive collection. The OS maps, facsimiles and prints are not unique records and can be accessed elsewhere. Had the collection contained a substantial quantity of original manuscript maps, or OS maps annotated for evidential purposes (e.g. annotations made by a landowner to show land in their ownership), it would be eligible for Archive Service Accreditation.

**Q6** *I am the archivist at an accredited museum which maintains a substantial collections of records of historical interest. We have an integrated approach to*

collections management and do not maintain a distinct archive service identifiable in budgets or other management processes. Are we eligible to apply?

**A. Yes.** As long as you meet all the eligibility criteria, the form of management is not relevant. The definition of 'archive service' for accreditation is an inclusive one, encompassing all services which hold significant archive collections. There is no intention to exclude integrated heritage or library services, or other joint management arrangements.

## CRITERION 2 – Size of the archive collection(s):

- **Your archive collection(s) should meet, or exceed, one or more of the following:**
  - **c. 4000 items**
  - **c. 50 linear metres**
  - **c. 4.2 cubic metres**

### Guidance

This criterion uses size of collection to define eligible services and is a guideline ONLY. It seeks to limit the number of eligible services to those with significant archive holdings and to provide guidance about when mixed collections are eligible. When calculating the size of collections, you should only include archive collections.

If your archive collection does not meet the criteria outlined but you believe it is of significance please ask for advice. Assessing bodies have a scope for discretion in deciding eligibility.

### Sample Questions

**Q1.** *Our business archive comprises 65 linear metres, but the vast majority of this is in the form of large volumes (letter books, accounts, share ledgers etc). It likely that we would fall substantially short of the 4000 items. Does this still meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** You only need to meet one of the size criteria. The fact that your collection predominantly comprises volumes does not matter.

**Q2.** *We hold 35 metres of archives, but we fit 6 boxes on each 1metre shelf. Does this meet the criterion?*

**A. Yes.** For the purposes Archive Service Accreditation we propose that a linear metre would comprise of 4 boxes. As such, your holdings are the equivalent of 52.5 linear metres ( $35 \times 6 \div 4 = 52.5$ ) and are eligible for Accreditation.

**Q3.** *Our archive collection is only 28 linear metres. It is our only collection and I am not sure of the number of items within it. The papers are of national historical significance and are used regularly for research purposes. Does this meet this criterion?*

**A. Maybe.** You should contact your Assessing body for advice. In some instances, historically significant collections which do not meet the size criterion may be eligible to apply.

**Q4.** *I am the director of a museum and we hold approximately 25 metres of archival collections. However, we also hold a large collection of the museum's own institutional archives. This collection includes our financial records, exhibition material, minutes, documentation supporting objects and promotional material. If we include this collection, our archival holdings would equate to 55 linear metres. Can we include institutional archives to meet the size criteria for Archive Service Accreditation?*

**A. Yes.** The institutional archives of museums can be included in the size criteria. They are a valuable resource and document the museum's history.

**Q5.** *Our collection of advertising artwork equates to approximately 80 linear shelf metres. Each box only contains 3 -5 items and we fit 3 boxes per shelf. Given that there may only be 9 items per linear shelf metre, does it still meet this criterion?*

**A. Maybe.** You will need to contact your relevant assessing body to make your case, but in some instances, historically significant collections which do not meet the size criterion may be eligible to apply.

### **CRITERION 3 – Provision of Access:**

- **You must offer some access to your archive collections beyond members of your own institution or organisation.**

#### **Guidance**

This criterion seeks to ensure that participants in this publicly funded scheme offer some form of access to members of the general public. This access should be proportional and appropriate to the type and scale of archive service and can take many forms.

#### **Sample Questions**

**Q1.** *Our archive collection belongs to a private business. Our main users are therefore professional staff within the organisation. Public access is very limited, often we undertake the research for users and email a reply. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A.** **Yes.** Archive Service Accreditation recognises that different types of archives and organisations have different communities<sup>2</sup>. As a principle, however, Accreditation encourages all applicants to offer some form of public access, appropriate to their particular circumstances. Mediated access such as this may be appropriate for some Archive Services.

**Q2.** *We are a voluntary group which manages a community archive. Our user group is predominantly local and quite small, although we are keen to engage with a wider audience. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A.** **Yes.** Archive Service Accreditation measures how effectively you engage with your community and provides a strong framework for extending and developing your audiences.

**Q3.** *Our estate collection is owned by a landed family. We do offer access to the collection outside the family, but it is limited. We expect researchers to provide a letter of recommendation from an academic before they are allowed to access the archive. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A.** **Yes.** Your access arrangements do provide some level of access to the collection beyond your institution. However, Archive Service Accreditation encourages applicants to broaden the range of your audience, where appropriate and at a proportional level.

**Q4** *I am the archivist of a children's welfare charity. The majority of our records contain sensitive personal information that is closed to the general public. However,*

---

<sup>2</sup> The standard is based on the concept of a community which the archive service is constituted to serve, as defined in the *Standard for Access to Archives* - Public Services Quality Group



*we do allow access to a smaller group of records that is not of a sensitive nature. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** Archive Service Accreditation requires that archive holders should provide levels of public access appropriate to the nature of each organisation. Given the type of organisation in which you work, it would appear that the access levels are appropriate.

**Q5.** *Our archive belongs to a long-established private school. At present we do not provide access to the general public. Ex pupils are entitled to use the archives and occasionally we allow access to academics, However, I feel the collection is of great historical value and should be made available to the public. Unfortunately, decisions such as these have to go to committee and it may take a while before a judgment is given. Do we still meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** Your access arrangements do provide a limited amount of access to users beyond your institution. However, Archive Service Accreditation encourages applicants to offer a level of access to a broad range of users. The fact that you are planning to extend your access arrangements is certainly a positive step towards achieving that goal. In addition, Archive Service Accreditation will provide you with a persuasive advocacy tool to present to your governing body in relation to broadening access; and will provide you with a strong framework for extending and developing your audience.

**Q6.** *I am a part-time university archivist and records manager. At the moment, access is provided to the public, but it is limited to only one day a week. Unfortunately, the records management element of my role means that I am unable to offer more access at the moment. When I am on leave no cover is provided and I am unable to offer a public service during these periods. Do we still meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** Archive Service Accreditation requires that archive holders should provide levels of public access appropriate to the nature of each organisation. Given the type of organisation in which you work, it would appear that the access levels are appropriate. However, Accreditation measures how effectively you engage with your users and provides a strong framework for extending audience through a variety of means, including remote access and digitisation.

## CRITERION 4 Digital records:

- **Repositories of solely digital materials<sup>3</sup> are currently not eligible for this Accreditation Scheme.**

### Guidance

This criterion excludes archive services holding solely digital collections from the scope of the Archive Service Accreditation scheme. These are defined as:

Digital materials: A broad term encompassing digital surrogates created as a result of converting analogue materials to digital form (digitisation), and "born digital" for which there has never been and is never intended to be an analogue equivalent, and digital records.

This criterion will be reviewed in future. It is an acknowledgement that best practice in digital repository management is an emerging area and it is not yet possible to set an agreed standard for delivery of digital-only archive services.

### Sample Questions

**Q1.** *I am the Chair of a local history group and our collection was created by digitising items brought in by the public during open days. The material is only available through the project website. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. No.** Remote access is certainly a commendable means of enabling access to your collection and is supported by Archive Service Accreditation. However, for the purposes of Accreditation, your service should hold some physical collections.

**Q2.** *I am an archivist at a local authority archive service. We hold some digital-only collections and several hybrid collections. Does this criterion mean these collections are not considered under accreditation?*

**A. No.** Archive Service Accreditation expects services collecting modern material increasingly to acquire digital and hybrid collections and asks applicants to discuss the management of and access to such collections alongside analogue holdings.

---

<sup>3</sup> As defined in *Preservation Management of Digital Materials: The Handbook*. Digital Preservation Coalition [www.dpconline.org/graphics/handbook/](http://www.dpconline.org/graphics/handbook/)

## CRITERION 5 - Staffing:

- **Your archive service must be managed by competent staff<sup>4</sup>, with access to professional archival expertise appropriate to the type and nature of the organisation and collection.**

### Guidance

The Archive Service Accreditation Standard provides further guidance on the expected levels of staffing required i.e. it is expected that all publicly funded archive services will employ one or more professionally qualified staff. Levels of staffing will be evaluated as part of the assessment process.

### Sample Questions

**Q1.** *We are examining future models for the delivery of our local authority archive service. One of the options is to deliver the service using only volunteers. Would we be eligible for Archive Service Accreditation under this criterion?*

**A. No.** Archive Service Accreditation recognises that in some cases a well managed volunteer workforce, with appropriate professional archival expertise can meet the definition of competent staff. However to achieve the Archive Service Accreditation Standard local authorities are required to meet the requirements of the Archive Service Accreditation Standard for the staffing of public sector archive services as described in Requirement 1.6 and supporting guidance. A volunteer-only model would not comply.

**Q2.** *I am the records manager for a university. Care of the archive is undertaken by me. However, it is not part of my job description and there is no official staff member dedicated to the task. I undertake the work because I feel it is an important that the collection should be managed, but I am not able to dedicate as much time to it as I would like. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Maybe.** If you contact your relevant assessing body, they will be able to assess your situation on an individual case basis. Archive Service Accreditation will provide an effective advocacy tool to help your governing body understand the importance of this criterion.

**Q3** *I am a records manager for a private limited company. Until 2 years ago there was an archivist in place to manage the archive collection. However, after our archivist left, a freeze was placed on all new posts. We now have no dedicated member of staff managing the collection and may not have one for the foreseeable future. I occasionally provide internal access to the collection, but all external access has ceased. Do we meet this criterion?*

---

<sup>4</sup> As described in PAS 197 “Competent person - someone who has the necessary and sufficient training, knowledge, experience, expertise, skills, and/or other qualities to complete their allotted task safely and effectively “

**A. No.** For the purposes of Archive Service Accreditation, a person with officially delegated responsibilities (whether paid or unpaid), needs to be in place. Should your company decide to allocate some of your time, or the time of other staff members, to the management of the collection, you would meet the criterion.

**Q4.** *I am a university librarian and I also have responsibility for the university archives. However, the day to day management of the collection is undertaken by a library assistant, who dedicates half her time to the collection (1 day a week). Neither the library assistant nor I have any professional archival training. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Maybe.** Archive Service Accreditation understands that some archive holding organisations will not have professionally qualified archival staff managing their collections. You would be eligible if you had some form of professional archival advice and support. If you contact your relevant assessing body, they will be able to assess your situation on an individual case basis and inform you of your eligibility.

**Q5.** *I am a curator in a local authority museum and we sought funding to have our main archival collection catalogued and packaged 5 years ago. The work was undertaken by professional archivists and a thorough catalogue was produced. Since then, the archive has not been assigned a dedicated member of staff to manage it. The excellent catalogue means that any member of staff can retrieve documents or answer enquiries, so the need to assign responsibility has not arisen. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Maybe.** If you contact your relevant assessing body, they will be able to assess your situation on an individual case basis and inform you of your eligibility.

## **CRITERION 6 - Storage:**

- **Your archive service must be equipped with dedicated secure storage for the records that you hold.**

### **Guidance**

This criterion seeks to ensure that applicant services have a secure basis for collection care. Secure storage of records should include dedicated lockable storage, fitted with shelving, for analogue collections. Digital collections should be preserved securely from unauthorised access.

The Archive Service Accreditation Standard and guidance provides further guidance on the expected quality of storage including the control of environment and exclusion of risks to long term preservation. Quality of storage provision will be evaluated as part of the assessment process.

### **Sample Questions**

**Q1.** *I am the archivist in a specialist library. We hold archive collections as part of the library, on open shelving in our reading room. The reading room is staffed at all times when readers are present. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. No.** This storage provision is not sufficiently secure to protect the unique records you hold. As a mixed use space, it is unlikely that you would be able to develop other areas of collection care such as protection from fire, light, inappropriate levels of temperature and humidity, and potentially other risk factors to the long term preservation of archives.

**Q2.** *I am an archivist in a local authority service. We have a number of digital collections on removable media such as CD ROMs which are securely kept in our strongroom, but we do not yet have secure server storage for long term digital preservation. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** As you are aware, this is not ideal provision for long term storage and preservation of digital materials. Archive Service Accreditation requires all archive services holding digital material to develop a strategy for adequate digital storage within 5 years, and we would encourage you to consider how this can be started. However, your current situation is not a barrier to applying for Archive Service Accreditation.

**Q3.** *I am Chair of a local history society. We hold a collection of records relating to our local area. However, we do not have a dedicated store. The governing committee members store records in their homes in the best storage we can manage. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. No.** This level of provision does not offer a dedicated storage space in which to provide a suitable level of collection care.

**Q4.** *I am the archivist at an accredited museum. Our stores hold mixed collections of objects – including textiles, metal and wooden objects – and archives. We manage the environment according to a specification which reflects our mixed collections. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** Archive Service Accreditation recognises that in some institutions integrated collections management is an appropriate solution. Dedicated secure storage for mixed collections can provide highly effective collection care if the needs of all collections are adequately planned for.

**Q5.** *I am the archivist at a small local authority archive. We have two secure strongrooms, neither of which meets PD5454:2012 in all respects. We have a full risk assessment and management programme, have packaged all materials and are seeking to improve environmental controls. Do we meet this criterion?*

**A. Yes.** You are eligible for the scheme. Archive Service Accreditation seeks to support archive services in improving the care of their collections. As part of applying for accredited status, the quality of storage and adequacy of risk management will be assessed, and feedback will be offered. If at the point of making your application a significant part of storage falls well short of PD5454: 2012 and the risks this causes are not effectively managed, it is unlikely that your service could be accredited. However, you are welcome to work towards improving your collection care with the aim of seeking accreditation.