ACCREDITED
ARCHIVE SERVICE

Archive Service Accreditation Standard

May 2025

Introduction

Archive Service Accreditation is the UK standard for archive services. The standard defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development. Archive services within the UK may apply for Accreditation by completing an application form to demonstrate their compliance with the standard.

This document is one of a suite of documents which explain and manage the scheme, namely:

- The standard – listing the requirements services must achieve to meet Archive Service Accreditation and the outcomes which can be expected.
- Getting Started with Archive Service Accreditation – an introduction to the programme and how it works.
- Guidance – providing help in understanding and meeting the requirements of the standard and completing the application form.
- Scalability table – dividing archive services into service types to allow scalability of requirements.
- Eligibility criteria – criteria to allow services to assess their eligibility for accreditation.
- Glossary – definitions of the words and terms used in the standard and guidance.
- Application form – for archive services wishing to apply for Archive Service Accreditation.
- Assessment form – completed by assessors and validators for submission to the Archive Service Accreditation Panel.

Structure

The Archive Service Accreditation Standard is made up of three Sections:

1. Organisational Health

2. Collections

3. Access and Engagement

Each section is broken down into requirements which are further grouped into:

- Policies – describing the overall intentions and direction of an organisation as formally expressed by top management.

- Plans - forward looking documents that set out the objectives of the organisation and identify the actions needed to achieve those objectives, in line with the organisation's policies and in order to deliver its mission.

- Procedures - describe a specified way to carry out an activity or a process (a set of interrelated or interacting activities), in order to deliver a particular

output or outcome. Procedures may be documented in the form of operational guides, manuals, handbooks, instructions, flowcharts etc.

The Standard

SECTION 1: ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

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                                    │ 1.1 Mission and │
                                    │     Values      │
                                    └─────────────────┘
                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │ 1.2 Governance  │
                                    │ and Management  │
                                    │   Structures    │
                                    └─────────────────┘
                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │  1.3 Forward    │
       ┌──────────────────┐        │    Planning     │
       │  Organisational  │        └─────────────────┘
       │     Health       │        ┌─────────────────┐
       └──────────────────┘        │ 1.4 Resources:  │
                                    │    buildings    │
                                    └─────────────────┘
                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │ 1.5 Resources:  │
                                    │     finance     │
                                    └─────────────────┘
                                    ┌─────────────────┐
                                    │ 1.6 Resources:  │
                                    │    workforce    │
                                    └─────────────────┘
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1.1 Mission and Values

> **Requirement 1.1**
>
> **The archive service is guided by a mission statement that defines its purpose in relation to its collections and connects the organisation's governing document to appropriate archive service policies and plans. The operation of the archive service reflects its organisational values and takes an active approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion.**
>
> **Outcome**
>
> The purpose of the archive service is clearly communicated to and understood by all stakeholders and provides a steady steer for service decision-making and activity. The archive service has appropriate structures in place to evaluate its effectiveness in delivering inclusive practice across its collections and access functions.

1.2 Governance and Management Structures

Requirement 1.2

The relationship of the archive service to its parent body (or bodies) is clear and legally robust. Top management formally recognise and support the purpose of the archive service; lines of authority and decision-making responsibilities between the governing body and service managers are transparent and effective.

Outcome

The archive service has appropriate governance and management structures in place, to ensure the long-term collection, preservation and accessibility of its collections.

1.3 Forward Planning

Requirement 1.3

The archive service has effective forward plans and planning processes in place, which demonstrate a good understanding and an appropriate response to the organisational and wider context in which the service operates.

Outcome

The archive service plans effectively for long-term sustainability, deploying available resources to greatest effect to ensure that it remains adaptive, inclusive, relevant and resilient in a changing internal and external environment.

1.4 Resources: Spaces and storage

Requirement 1.4

Formal written terms of occupancy exist for all buildings and storage housing archives and archive services, both analogue and digital. Arrangements are sufficient to keep the collections physically secure and accessible. Arrangements also allow for effective planning for the future.

Outcome

The archive collections and services are responsibly housed. Risks associated with the accommodation of archives and archive services are recognised and actively managed through the appropriate planning processes, ensuring the long-term preservation of the collections.

1.5 Resources: finance

Requirement 1.5

The archive service can demonstrate that it is financially stable. Sufficient funds have been identified to enable the archive service to deliver its stated forward plans.

Outcome

Archive service managers have appropriate input to relevant budget setting and management processes and are able to plan for service improvements on a long-term basis, ensuring the optimum use of available resources.

## 1.6 Resources: workforce

Requirement 1.6

The archive service has an inclusive workforce appropriate in experience and numbers to carry out the service's responsibilities and plans. Employment procedures and volunteering policies are in place to support competent professional performance and wellbeing, and ongoing workforce development.

Outcome

Archive services are delivered to the professional standards demanded by the organisation's legal obligations and forward planning ambitions. The workforce is clear about its roles and responsibilities and supported to acquire the right skills and access the right expert advice to meet service delivery needs.

SECTION 2: COLLECTIONS

Overview
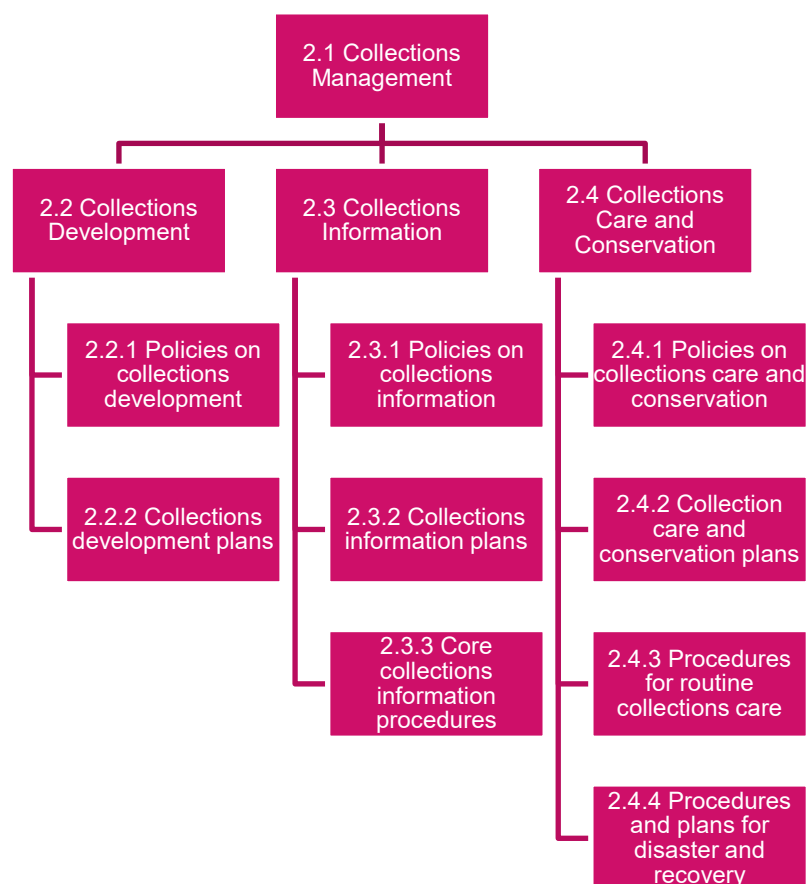
2.1 Collections Management

> **Requirement 2.1**
>
> **The archive service has a co-ordinated approach to collections management activity, guided by coherent policies, plans and procedures. Policies should cover both analogue and digital materials, where relevant, and be approved by top management, or an appropriate delegated authority.**
>
> **Outcome**
>
> The collections management activities of the archive service are holistically connected at policy level and clearly linked to the archive service mission statement. Integrated policy approaches mitigate duplication of effort and maximise the use of available resources.

2.2 Collections Development

> **Requirement 2.2**
>
> **The archive service has a co-ordinated approach to collections development activity, guided by coherent policies, plans and procedures. The approach should cover both analogue and digital materials, where relevant, and be approved by top management, or an appropriate delegated authority.**
>
> **Outcome**
>
> The collections development activities (acquisition, appraisal and deaccessioning) of the archive service are holistically connected and clearly linked to the organisation's mission statement. Integrated policy approaches mitigate duplication of effort and maximise the use of available resources.

Requirement 2.2.1

The archive service has a clear policy on collections development, covering the acquisition (passive and proactive accruals), appraisal and deaccessioning of material.

Requirement 2.2.2

The archive service can provide a plan which details the actions that are being taken to appraise and rationalise existing holdings and to identify gaps and priorities for future collecting, in line with its policy on collections development.

2.3 Collections Information

> **Requirement 2.3**
>
> **The archive service has a co-ordinated and documented approach to collections information activity, guided by coherent policies, plans and procedures. This approach should cover both analogue and digital materials, where relevant, and be approved by top management, or an appropriate delegated authority.**
>
> **Outcome**
>
> The collections information activities (accessioning, cataloguing and legacy issues) of the archive service are holistically connected and clearly linked to the organisation's mission statement. Integrated policy approaches mitigate duplication of effort and maximise the use of available resources.

Requirement 2.3.1

The archive service has a policy on collections information, which specifies how collections information is recorded and enhanced and the standards and procedures which must apply.

Requirement 2.3.2

The archive service can provide a plan which specifies the actions that are being taken to enhance or revisit existing catalogue records and address cataloguing backlogs, in line with its policy on collections information.

Requirement 2.3.3

Clear, documented procedures for core collections information processes are in place and understood and applied by the relevant workforce.

2.4 Collections Care and Conservation

> **Requirement 2.4**
>
> **The archive service has a co-ordinated and documented approach to collections care and conservation activity, guided by coherent policies, plans and procedures. This approach should cover both analogue and digital materials, where relevant, and be approved by top management, or an appropriate delegated authority.**
>
> **Outcome**
>
> The collections care and conservation activities (building management and remedial and preventive conservation) of the archive service are holistically connected and clearly linked to the organisation's mission statement. Integrated policy approaches mitigate duplication of effort and maximise the use of available resources.

Requirement 2.4.1

The archive service has a policy on collections care and conservation, which guides the organisation's approach to preventive and remedial conservation, to ensure the long-term preservation of and access to the collection.

Requirement 2.4.2

The archive service can provide a plan which details the actions that are being taken to address preventive and remedial conservation priorities, in line with its policy on collections care and conservation.
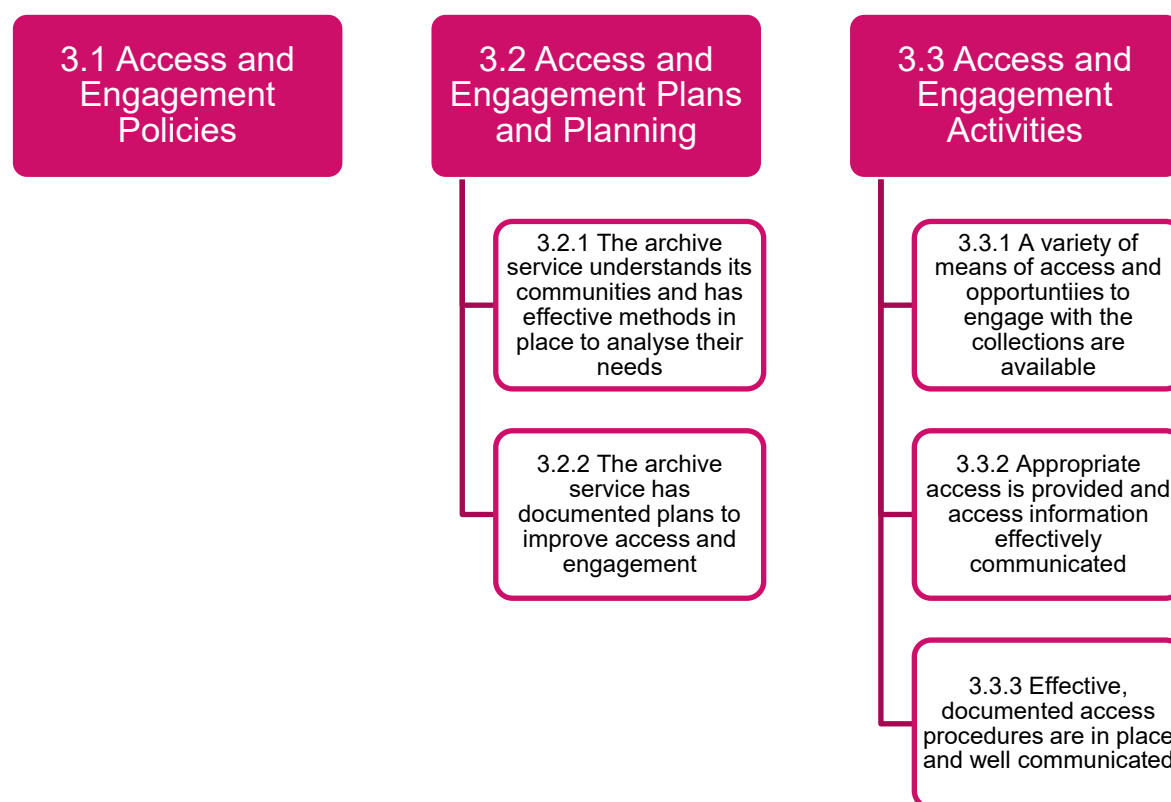
Requirement 2.4.3

Clear, documented procedures for routine collections care are in place and understood and applied by the workforce.

Requirement 2.4.4

The archive service has a tested disaster recovery plan and procedures, which enables it to respond effectively to emergency situations and ensure business continuity. Emergency planning relates to all buildings that house archive collections and services.

SECTION 3: Access and Engagement

Overview

3.1 Access and Engagement Policies	3.2 Access and Engagement Plans and Planning	3.3 Access and Engagement Activities
	3.2.1 The archive service understands its communities and has effective methods in place to analyse their needs	3.3.1 A variety of means of access and opportuntiies to engage with the collections are available
	3.2.2 The archive service has documented plans to improve access and engagement	3.3.2 Appropriate access is provided and access information effectively communicated
		3.3.3 Effective, documented access procedures are in place and well communicated

3.1   Access and Engagement Policies

Requirement 3.1

The archive service has a clear policy on access and engagement, which specifies the ways in which access is provided and communities are engaged in ways which are appropriate to the organisation's mission statement and the nature and scale of its collection. The policy should be approved by top management, or an appropriate delegated authority.

Outcome

The archive service is guided by an agreed policy on access and engagement, which communicates clearly rights of access to the collection and the service's engagement offer. The policy forms part of an integrated collections management framework enabling effective planning and best application of available resources.

3.2   Access and Engagement Plans and Planning

Requirement 3.2

The archive service demonstrates a good understanding of its communities. It has plans in place which detail the actions being taken to meet the communities' needs and access requirements and to continuously improve service provision. Plans are appropriate to the organisation's mission statement and the nature and scale of its collections.

Outcome

The archive service has a planned approach to access and engagement that is based on the evidence of need.

Requirement 3.2.1

The archive service has effective methods in place to gather information on its communities, to analyse and evaluate their needs and interests and include those not directly using the service.

Requirement 3.2.2

The archive service has documented plans to continuously improve access and engagement in response to the identified needs and interests of its communities. The plans are actively implemented and reviewed.

3.3   Access and Engagement Activities

Requirement 3.3

The archive service provides access to its holdings and a variety of methods to access and engage with the collections. It communicates clear, practical information on its access and engagement offer and ensures that these comply with relevant legislation.

Outcome

The archive service provides good access and opportunities to engage people with its collections. Communities are supported to access and engage with collections efficiently and with confidence, responsibility and care.

Requirement 3.3.1

A variety of means of access and opportunities to engage with the collections are available, appropriate to the organisation's mission statement and the nature and scale of its collections.

Requirement 3.3.2

Appropriate access is provided to collections both on-site and off-site, and practical information on how to access the service is communicated effectively to all.

Requirement 3.3.3

Effective documented user access procedures are in place and are well communicated.