

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

between the UK's strategic and professional organisations for archives, for the delivery of an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme

1. Purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding

1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the principles and high-level arrangements by which the partner organisations, detailed below, work together to deliver an Accreditation Scheme for the UK archives sector.

1.2 This document is not legally binding and is not intended to confer legal rights on any body. The MoU will be subject to review at regular intervals and may be revisited at any time at the request of one or more of the scheme's partners.

1.3 This document is accompanied by a delivery model for the scheme which will also be subject to regular review and may be revisited at the request of one or more of the scheme's partners.

2. The Partners

2.1 The successful delivery of an Accreditation Scheme for UK archives depends on the alliance of seven key organisations who share a collective responsibility to support the strategic and professional development of archives across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES (TNA)

2.2 TNA is the UK government's national archive for England, Wales and the United Kingdom. Its collection, spanning over 1000 years and containing over 11 million historical government and public records, is one of the largest in the world.

2.3 A UK government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, TNA incorporates the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. It also performs the functions of its predecessor body the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (HMC) in relation to private records.

2.4 TNA has a leadership responsibility for the archives sector in England, and supports the archives sector more generally by developing standards and providing expert guidance to public and private archives across England and Wales. TNA's Archives Sector Development (ASD) department has operational responsibility within TNA for the development and delivery of an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme.

WELSH GOVERNMENT

2.5 CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales is a division of the Welsh Government. It operates as part of the Culture and Sport directorate within the Sustainable Futures Director General Group.

2.6 CyMAL provides the Minister for Culture and Sport with authoritative policy advice; gives advice and financial support to local museums, archives and libraries, including supporting and developing professional standards, expertise and skills; and develops and implements policies appropriate to Wales. CyMAL is also the Sponsorship Division for the National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales and People's Collection Wales.

2.7 The National Archives currently provides support as the national archive service for Wales unless and until the Welsh Government takes up its powers under the Government of Wales Act 1999. CyMAL works closely with TNA to exercise the statutory responsibilities relating to Welsh archive provision.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND (PRONI)

2.8 PRONI is the official archive for Northern Ireland. A government organisation founded in 1923, shortly after partition, it operates as a division within the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

2.9 PRONI holds public records dating mainly from the seventeenth century to the present day. It also collects a wide range of archives from private sources. PRONI's remit includes promoting best practice in archives and records management and contributing to archival policy making and the improvement of archival services in Northern Ireland and the UK.

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND (NRS)

2.10 NRS is a non-ministerial department of the Scottish Government, responsible to the Minister for Culture and External Affairs.

2.11 NRS was designated as one of Scotland's five National Collections in 2006 (as the former National Archives of Scotland). It exists to select, preserve, and make available the national archives of Scotland in whatever medium, to the highest standards; to promote the growth and maintenance of proper archive provision throughout the country; and to lead the development of archival practice in Scotland.

ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ASSOCIATION (UK and Ireland) (ARA)

2.12 ARA is the lead professional body for archivists, archive conservators and records managers in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

2.13 ARA is an independent membership body. Established in June 2010, it merges the former Society of Archivists, the National Council on Archives and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government.

2.14 ARA aims to support its membership through training, continued professional development, identification of employment opportunities and professional help. It provides a forum for open discussion and debate and serves as an advocate for the sector in its widest sense.

ARCHIVES AND RECORDS COUNCIL WALES - CYNGOR ARCHIFAU A CHOFNODION CYMRU (ARCW)

2.15 ARCW is the representative body for national and local institutions and organisations across Wales involved with the administration of archives.

2.16 As a strategic partnership body ARCW aims to influence policy on archives in Wales through sector advocacy, delivers all-Wales developmental projects, provides a forum for knowledge exchange and a voice for the sector in Wales.

SCOTTISH COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES (SCA)

2.17 SCA is the lead body for the advocacy and development of archive services in Scotland.

2.18 SCA is an independent membership organisation, grant-funded by the Scottish Government through NRS. SCA offers advice and provides a voice of consensus on all matters affecting the Scottish archives community. It acts both as a strategic agency and a

facilitator of activity on the ground, with a focus on knowledge exchange and collaborative working practices.

3. Background

3.1 The creation of an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme responds to recommendations set out in the UK government policy *Archives for the 21st Century*, published in parallel English and Welsh versions in November 2009 following extensive consultation with the archive sector in England and Wales.

3.2 In March 2010, MLA and TNA published *Archives for the 21st Century in action*, to help English services develop the five recommendations set out in the policy. In parallel, CyMAL and TNA developed actions in response to help Welsh services to develop. In both England and Wales, accreditation for archives was an identified priority action.

3.3 Between April 2010 and March 2013, through a series of stages, a UK-wide accreditation scheme was developed by the partners. The standard itself was developed through a co-creation process with the archives sector and piloting with 20 diverse archive services across the UK. The shape of the programme, methods of assessment and verification and the timetable for implementing a UK scheme have been agreed among the partners.

4. Agreement on operating principles for Archive Service Accreditation

4.1 In the context of this partnership, each partner organisation is considered equal. However, it is recognised that roles and financial contributions will be apportioned between partners, in line with their statutory and national responsibilities and their relative resource and capacity.

UK Co-ordination

4.2 TNA is the largest organisation in the partnership with a remit covering the UK, including responsibility for UK public records. Co-ordination of the scheme and maintenance of the essential central record-keeping, application system and core resources for applicants lie with TNA.

Applicant support

4.3 Each nation assumes primary responsibility for providing support to applicants from their own nations. The detailed structures and processes for delivering in-nation support will differ between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Such arrangements are for discussion and agreement between the relevant partner bodies and lie outside this MoU.

Assessment and validation

4.4 Each nation assumes responsibility for managing the invitation process and for prioritising applicants for assessment within their own nation.

4.5 Each nation assumes responsibility for the desk assessment and validation of applications from within their own nations and for recommending a level of award to the UK Archive Service Accreditation Panels. All assessments and validation visits are conducted according to a shared UK protocol. The operational arrangements for conducting assessments differ in detail between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Such arrangements are for discussion and agreement between the relevant partner bodies and lie outside this MoU.

Scheme governance and funding

4.6 The Archive Service Accreditation scheme is governed by a Committee comprising members openly recruited from the archives sector, and members nominated by each of the

partner bodies representing the continued involvement of the partner organisations in the scheme. The Panels which act as de facto awarding bodies are composed of Committee members operating with delegated authority.

4.7 Each nation assumes responsibility for the costs of Accreditation of Archive Services within their nation.

4.8 Central costs for the administration of the Committee, the online resources and application system are borne by TNA.

Review

4.9 This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed after 5 years, as part of a full review of the scheme's operation.

Signed: The National Archives

National Records of Scotland

**CyMAL: Museums Archives and
Libraries Wales**

Scottish Council on Archives

**Archives and Records Council Wales
(Cyngor Archifau a Chofnodion
Cymru)**

**Archives and Records Association (UK
and Ireland)**

**Public Record Office of Northern
Ireland**

Delivery Model

The partners who developed the scheme are committed to working together to deliver an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme:

KEY PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES OF THE DELIVERY MODEL

The scheme will become embedded in partners' day-to-day work by creating a shared framework for providing sector support. This demands alignment and integration with:

- Existing processes:** e.g. inspection visits for Places of Deposit (England and Wales) and Charge and Superintendence Terms (Scotland), CIPFA returns, PSQG Survey of Visitors to British Archives; and
- New processes, as they appear:** e.g. Public Records (Scotland) Act, 2011 - Model Records Management Plan and Quality Improvement Framework for Archives and Records Management in Scotland (ARMS).

The scheme is co-ordinated by a UK Archive Service Accreditation Manager based at The National Archives, who is responsible for its strategic management and for ensuring that it operates consistently and fairly across the four nations.

1. Application

1.1 Each nation operates an open application process, whereby archive-holding organisations are invited to identify the point at which they aim to apply for accredited status. Each nation will set its own rules and targets for prioritising applicants and the number to be assessed annually, in line with national priorities and concerns.

1.2 A common online application process has been developed. Core published support material is created in agreement with all partners and disseminated from a central online resource. Nation-specific material including bilingual material will be linked to and signposted from the central resource, as appropriate.

2. Assessment

2.1 All applications are assessed according to a shared UK protocol. Assessments are carried out by staff or representatives of those partners acting as assessor bodies (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, National Records of Scotland, Scottish Council on Archives, The National Archives, the Welsh Government). Assessors receive core training and support to familiarise themselves with the principles of Archive Service Accreditation and to ensure a consistent approach. All applications are desk-assessed. A proportion of applications (determined by available resources and priorities but not less than 25%) are validated by a site visit.

2.2 Assessment and validation teams may include peer reviewers to help embed sector ownership of the scheme. It is recognised that the involvement of peer reviewers may be limited in the scheme's early years due to sector capacity.

2.3 Archive services which are part of the partnership (TNA, NRS and PRONI) will lead the sector by submitting themselves to the Accreditation process and assessment. Assessment of national archive services will not be undertaken by assessors from the organisation concerned, but will instead be conducted by two of the other assessor bodies (that is to say: NRS, PRONI, SCA, TNA or the Welsh Government).

3. Sector Support

3.1 ARA, ARCW and SCA will assume a lead role in:

- 3.1.1 developing Accreditation-specific peer support networks and online forums;
- 3.1.2 developing training and CPD opportunities focussed around the Accreditation standard; and
- 3.1.3 facilitating a co-ordinated approach to Accreditation support through the involvement of other professional archive groups, e.g. Regional Archive Councils (England), Welsh County Archivists' Group, Archivists of Scottish Local Authorities Working Group (ASLAWG), Chief Archivists in Local Government Group (CALGG), Scottish Universities Special Collections Archives Group (SUSCAG), Business Archives Council (BAC), Business Archives Council of Scotland (BACS), Section for Specialist Repositories and others.

4. Peer Review

4.1 Where peer review is used within a nation, that nation is responsible for developing a roster of peer reviewers to support the assessment and validation processes within their own nations. Peer Review guidance will be developed in consultation with all partners and made available as a central resource. Each nation is responsible for providing any additional training and support for peer reviewers within their own nations.

5. Central Support

5.1 The delivery model outlines that TNA takes lead responsibility for:

- 5.1.1 UK co-ordination of an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme, including the appointment of a UK Archive Service Accreditation Manager;
- 5.1.2 developing and maintaining the online application process and central online resource material;
- 5.1.3 overall management of the UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee; and
- 5.1.4 fostering an effective partnership between the Archive Service Accreditation Scheme and the Museum Accreditation Scheme through sustained dialogue with Arts Council England (ACE).

6. Awards

6.1 The final award of Accreditation is subject to moderation and ratification by a UK Archive Service Accreditation Panel, drawn from the membership of a governing Archive Service Accreditation Committee, whose composition, recruitment and terms of reference are described below. Assessment schedules across the four nations will be agreed in discussion with the UK Archive Service Accreditation Manager, in order to manage Panel meetings and capacity.

7. Archive Service Accreditation Committee

7.1 The UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee includes representation from all four nations and a balance between government agency representatives, archive sector practitioners and other key stakeholders.

7.2 The Committee meets annually and has oversight of the process and content of Archive Service Accreditation. It 'owns' the standard and the assessment process. Awards of accredited status are on behalf of the Committee and thus of the sector.

7.3 The Committee is composed of:

- 7.3.1 Members nominated by each of the Archive Service Accreditation workstream partners (7) (TNA, the Welsh Government, NRS, PRONI, ARCW, SCA, ARA)

These nominees must meet the recruitment criteria for open recruitment.

7.3.2 Recruited members (7) – recruited by open competition against the criteria below.

7.3.3 A nominated Chair, whose signature may be used on Accreditation awards. The Chair will be the nominee of the Archives and Records Association.

And supported by:

7.3.4 Representatives of the assessors, including representation from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as appropriate, to introduce recommendations for applications.

7.3.5 An observer from Arts Council England as appropriate, provisionally agreed to be the Museum Accreditation Manager

7.3.6 A Secretary, to be appointed by The National Archives. The Secretary is responsible for preparing agendas and minutes of the Committee.

7.4 Members of the Committee serve for an initial term of three years, renewable for a further three years.

7.5 Members of the Committee, whether nominated or recruited through open competition, should be of high standing and respected by their peers. They should be able to demonstrate sound and balanced judgement. They should be sufficiently senior to give weight to the work of the Committee.

7.6 Prospective members of the Accreditation Committee should be currently employed in archive services, recently retired or working as consultants to archive services. Those acting in a senior capacity in other ways within the archives sector are also eligible. (Archive professionals who have ceased to work in the sector for more than three years should not normally be appointed to the Committee unless they remain involved in some way.)

7.7 Assessors for the Archive Service Accreditation scheme cannot also be Committee members.

8. Panels for Archive Service Accreditation

8.1 The Panels are the de facto awarding bodies on behalf of the Committee, considering assessed applications on a quarterly basis. They are composed of 5 members of the Committee, quorate with 3 members. They refer broader policy issues to the annual full Committee for consideration.

8.2 When a case is discussed in which a Panel member has a potential conflict of interest, the member must declare their interest and leave the Panel for that case only.

8.3 Panels will appoint a Moderator, to advise the Panel, record its proceedings and arrange for matters/policy which require wider consideration to be referred to the full Committee.

9. Cost model

9.1 Each nation is responsible for covering all costs associated with the Accreditation of organisations within their own nations, in relation to:

9.1.1 developing nation-specific guidance and support material including where appropriate translation into home nations' languages

9.1.2 developing and maintaining nation-specific peer support networks and online forums

- 9.1.3 developing and delivering Accreditation training and CPD opportunities
- 9.1.4 managing the open application process
- 9.1.5 delivering desk assessments
- 9.1.6 conducting validation site visits
- 9.1.7 developing, training and supporting peer reviewers
- 9.1.8 national representation on the UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee/Panels

9.2 Costs associated with the central administration of an Archive Service Accreditation Scheme are covered by The National Archives and include:

- 9.2.1 UK Archive Service Accreditation Manager salary
- 9.2.2 maintaining and developing the online application process
- 9.2.3 maintaining and developing a central online resource of support material
- 9.2.4 administration of the UK Archive Service Accreditation Panels and Committee

10. Review

10.1 The scheme will be subject to full review after five years including a review of the Memorandum of Understanding, in which all partners will be required to participate. An earlier review of initial rollout will be conducted after two years to ensure delivery lessons are learned.