



ACCREDITED
ARCHIVE SERVICE

Archive Service Accreditation

Statement on the Withdrawal of Accredited
Status

May 2024

Archive Service Accreditation Committee: Statement on Removal of Archive Service Accreditation

A) Routine Programme Provision for Removal of Archive Service Accreditation

Archive Service Accreditation is not awarded in perpetuity. Accredited Archive Services are required to undertake the following:

- 1.If provisional status is awarded, to complete the reporting process as specified in the award letter and within the agreed timescale.
- 2.To complete an interim return 2-3 years after accreditation is awarded, comprising updates on governance, planning and resources, to ensure that the award of Accreditation continues to reflect the archive service's current status
- 3.To complete a full re-accreditation application a further 2-3 years after the interim return
- 4.To report between these standard dates any significant changes to the service such as new premises, reductions in staffing or routine opening times
5. To complete required actions by the point of full re-accreditation

Failure to complete 1, 2 or 3 at the required timetable may lead to removal of Accredited Archive Service status. This can be re-awarded on completion of a new accreditation application.

If the changes reported under 4 are agreed by the Archive Service Accreditation Committee to be sufficiently transformational, the archive service will be required to complete a new accreditation application ahead of schedule, to allow a rounded picture of the new service to emerge.

Where a new application is the result of major positive developments such as new premises, this will be made on an agreed schedule allowing ample time for the service to settle in its new situation, as the Committee are keen to ensure such positive transitions do not lead to unnecessary pressure on services aiming to retain Accreditation.

If progress has been made towards required actions (5) but these are not complete, the Committee will take a view on whether Accreditation can be retained, on a case-by-case basis. Where no progress or limited progress has been made towards required actions and the service cannot demonstrate realistic plans to meet them, Accreditation will be removed.

B) Removal of Archive Service Accreditation Due to Becoming Ineligible

Archive Service Accreditation has six eligibility criteria and failure to meet any of these post-Accreditation may lead to removal of the award.

Specific points as follows:

1. Holding archives: if an Accredited Archive Service disposes of all its archive collections, Accreditation will be withdrawn. This may include withdrawal of one Accreditation award in the case where two organisations merge and from that point operate a joint service, applying jointly for a single Accreditation at the appropriate point for the service.

2. Holding a significant quantity of archives: if an Accredited Archive Service disposes of a substantial part of its collections, such that it falls below the quantity threshold, Accreditation may be withdrawn. In marginal cases, the advice of the Accreditation Programme Manager should be sought and Accreditation may be retained at the discretion of the Committee.
3. Offering public access: Accreditation may be withdrawn pending reapplication when an Accredited Archive Service closes its public service access for a planned period of over 3 years or more (such as for a premises move). Where a planned closure for positive development is for a period of three years or less then the archive service should notify the Archive Service Accreditation Committee with a written notice of its intention and that outlines a plan for public access to its collections. Any such closure of an accredited archive service would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Committee.
4. Staffing: if any Accredited Archive Service becomes wholly unstaffed, Accreditation will be withdrawn. If public sector archive services lose all professional staffing, Accreditation will be withdrawn. Where such a loss is relatively short (for example in a sole-professional service during a recruitment round), suspension may be waived at the discretion of the Committee. Significant staffing reductions as noted above are in any case likely to trigger a request for a new accreditation application to allow the reduced provision to be fully reviewed.
5. Storage: if any Accredited Archive Service no longer has dedicated secure and fundamentally suitable storage, Accreditation will be withdrawn.

C) Extraordinary Removal of Archive Service Accreditation

There are other circumstances under which removal of Archive Service Accreditation will be considered by the Committee, beyond the internal rules of the Accreditation Programme itself. The Committee works within the framework of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) Code of Conduct (which is based on the International Council on Archives' Code of Ethics) and takes account of this in considering withdrawal of Archive Service Accreditation.

These include:

1. Actions identified by or referred to the Committee or one of its Panels as a contravention of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) Code of Conduct, by the archive service's workforce or its parent organisation, irrespective of whether the person or persons involved are members of Archives and Records Association. Such contraventions must be clear and at an institutional level rather than individual misconduct identified and rectified within the archive service's management structures.
2. Institutional failure to maintain the service's responsibility to the integrity and condition of its archive collections and declared area of collecting interest.

Examples of this failure may include but are not limited to:

- a. Financially-motivated disposal of part or whole collections by sale;¹
- b. Disposal or destruction of materials beyond professionally-motivated appraisal and established policy, for example to obstruct criminal proceedings; to conceal practices regarded as immoral or unethical;²
- c. Falsification by the institution's workforce of material within or insertion of non-authentic material into an archive collection;
- d. Demonstrably not acquiring material on the grounds it is regarded as representing unpopular or difficult views although it fits within the service's defined collecting remit;
- e. Lack of maintenance or other avoidable prolonged exposure of the collections to risk and deterioration

This provision does not relate to managed and documented appraisal and/or disposal of collections in line with professional practice and documented policy.

3. In the case of removal of Museum Accreditation from an integrated museum and archive service, on the grounds of inappropriate disposal of collections, the Committee will seek assurances as to the integrity and security of the archive collections in accordance with the principles above. Such cases will be considered individually and if assurances are not forthcoming, Archive Service Accreditation may also be withdrawn.

Extraordinary removal of Archive Service Accreditation will usually be for a period of 5 years, at the discretion of the Committee.

¹ The loss of unique items from collections for financial gain is the subject of shared concern across heritage and cultural bodies. Examples of analogous guidance include the joint statement from museum bodies on Collections at Risk, March 2015: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/museums-association-statement-march-2015.pdf> and disposals guidance from the CILIP Rare Books and Manuscripts group, which highlights the necessity of understanding when library items are unique and therefore of particular research value, they are unsuitable for disposal: https://www.cilip.org.uk/resource/group/6b7ad90b-bf8b-4d07-8406-0d28376b41f1/disposals_policy_for_rare_b.docx. The Museums Association and partners provide a toolkit on disposal from museum collections with specific reference to ethical approaches to disposal from which financial benefits may be gained. It emphasises the necessity of basing disposal decisions on curatorial justifications: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/ethics/disposal/#>

² Further guidance on Deaccessioning and Disposal of Archive Collections is available: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/Deaccessioning-and-disposal-guide.pdf>