

Archive Service Accreditation and Covid-19

In response to queries, the Archive Service Accreditation programme partners and governing committee want to update award holders and applicants as to how the programme will respond to public health measures against the outbreak of Covid-19. Above all, we do not want Accreditation to be an additional concern at a time when archive service management and planning is under considerable strain.

Exceptional service reductions and closures

We recognise that Accredited Archive Services have already been required to close for periods under public health guidance, or as a result of individual institutional risk management. We have also had enquiries from services undertaking contingency planning for long-term closure scenarios. If services reopen after a closure period, it is likely they will need to reduce their offer if staff are unable to come to work due to health concerns or caring responsibilities, or are redeployed by parent organisations, and to allow for safe social distancing respecting individual service situations. We want to reassure all award-holders that we recognise the current circumstances are exceptional, and that reduced service due to the pandemic will not affect Accreditation status. As this may be prolonged, services should plan to review reduced service periodically to understand its impact on stakeholders.

Arrangements for new applications and assessments

Although the programme remains open, issues of safe travel, site closure and the business change implications of the Covid-19 situation mean that the programme has decided that no new applications will be considered at the panel meeting due in November 2020. Applications already in the system will be progressed where possible, but decisions will be postponed where essential site visits cannot be undertaken. The position will be reviewed by the end of September 2020 to decide whether new applications can be accepted at the March 2021 Panel (submission deadline 1 December 2020).

Arrangements for provisional awards, midpoint reviews and reapplication from award holders

The programme remains open for scheduled reviews and retention of awards, including full reapplications from existing award holders. The impact of the pandemic on the service will be explored as part of the assessment. If changes require a site visit, as with new applications decisions may need to be postponed.

We recognise that some archive services will have reduced staffing during the outbreak and will not have capacity to meet their scheduled submission date. Please let your assessor body know if this is the case, stating whether you need a time-limited extension or an extension for the duration of the outbreak. Your Accreditation status will not be affected if you need to postpone a review in these circumstances.

Possible future schedule changes

Some of the provisions above may mean applications come in at an irregular pace. Assessor body staff capacity will also be affected at times, so that assessment and



award schedules may have to change. We will keep you fully informed if so, and your Accreditation status will not be affected. If a backlog of cases develops during or at the end of the current restrictions, we may take some time to clear it. We hope you will bear with us in getting back to normal service.

14 May 2020