



ACCREDITED  
ARCHIVE SERVICE

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## Archive Service Accreditation Standard

June 2014

## **What is Archive Service Accreditation?**

Archive Service Accreditation is the UK standard for archive services. The standard defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development. It replaces The National Archives' *Standard for Record Repositories* and its self-assessment programme for local authority archives in England and Wales.

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.
- 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.
- Cross reference tables – indicate which sections of the Archive Service Accreditation Standard link to which sections of other standards and schemes.

## **Aims and benefits of the scheme**

Archive Service Accreditation helps archive services to demonstrate their value by externally validating and accrediting achievement and supporting improvement.

In addition it aims to be:

- Aligned with other relevant quality assurance schemes, improvement tools and data gathering processes, notably the Museums Accreditation Scheme.
- Affordable, authoritative and highly visible.
- Able to be standalone and remain relevant in a changing world.
- An integral part of the work of The National Archives and partners, seamlessly blending into work such as the appointment of Places of Deposit for Public Records and allocation of archive collections Accepted in Lieu of Inheritance Tax.

- Accessible to cross-domain organisations. The scheme should not require the achievement of museums accreditation to achieve archive service accreditation and vice versa.
- Accessible and relevant to a wide range of archive services and types of service across the UK.
- Focused on current and future community<sup>1</sup> needs and acknowledging local, regional and national priorities.
- A full acknowledgement of the collection care and conservation needs of the collections.

The scheme is expected to bring benefits across seven core areas. These may be summarised as ‘The 7 Ps’:



**Professionalism:** a mechanism to develop and strengthen the professionalism of the UK archive sector.

**Performance:** a UK-wide quality standard which offers a benchmark and stimulus for gauging performance, recognising achievement, ensuring value for money and driving continuous improvement.

**Profile:** a mechanism for raising awareness and understanding of archives, building confidence and credibility both within parent organisations and externally.

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<sup>1</sup> See definition in the Glossary

**People:** a process to help archive services adapt and respond to user needs and interests and to support workforce development.

**Partnerships:** a tool to help archives examine their offer more widely and to encourage collaborative working within and between organisations.

**Planning:** a robust framework for facilitating forward planning, improving procedures and policy, and reducing organisational risk.

**Patronage:** a badge of recognition which demonstrates quality services to supporters, donors and grant-making bodies, strengthening funding applications, attracting philanthropic giving and fostering investor trust.

## **Introduction**

How the Standard has been designed

The Archive Service Accreditation Standard has been developed to meet the needs of the UK archive sector. While sector-specific in its purpose and content, the standard aims to support the move towards integrated ways of working in the management of cultural collections. Archive Service Accreditation has therefore been designed to dovetail with other closely related frameworks and standards already in use in the archive, museum and library sectors, principally:

- Standard for Access for Archives (NCA PSQG 2008)
- PAS 197: 2009, Code of practice for cultural collections management
- Museums Accreditation (2011)

### PAS 197

Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 197 provides a non-prescriptive framework for the holistic management of cultural collections by collecting organisations such as archives, museums and libraries.

PAS 197 came into effect in January 2009. It was developed by the British Standards Institution and sponsored by the Collections Trust, with support from a steering group of sixteen organisations representing archives, libraries and museums across the UK.

The terminology used in PAS 197 seeks to avoid terms that have a different use or meaning for one or more of the archive, library and museum sectors. Archive Service Accreditation adopts PAS 197 terminology where appropriate and recognises that documents submitted as evidence will have different titles in many cases. Definitions and cross references to archive sector-specific terms are provided in the Glossary.

## **Structure**

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

1. Organisational Health
2. Collections
3. Stakeholders and their experiences

These sections correlate with the Museum Accreditation Standard. The content within each section complements the Museum Accreditation Standard, but does not mirror it exactly. The relationship and areas of cross-over between Archive Service Accreditation and other standards such as PSQG Access standard and Museum Accreditation are provided in the cross-reference tables.

The organisation of the requirements within Archive Service Accreditation uses, as a primary reference, the recommended structure for an integrated Collections Management Framework laid out in PAS 197.

Requirements are grouped into:

- Policies
- Plans
- Procedures

*Definitions:*<sup>2</sup>

**Policies** describe the overall intentions and direction of an organisation as formally expressed by top management. Policies:

- provide a framework for organisational planning and action
- can be written in the form of a statement
- require the endorsement of the organisation's governing body

**Plans** are 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. Plans may be tiered from high level and long term, to detailed and short term, e.g.:

- strategies (3-5 years)
- business plans (annual)
- departmental/individual action plans (often related to projects or reporting cycles)

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<sup>2</sup> Based on definitions provided by PAS 197: 2009 and Museum Accreditation

**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.

## **Guidance**

Each requirement in the Archive Service Accreditation Standard is accompanied by guidance, designed to help applicants:

- understand the purpose of the requirement and the desired outcomes that come from its achievement
- understand the expectations of the requirement, as it relates to their particular archive type and scale
- identify possible supporting evidence
- find tools and resources that might assist with meeting the requirement

The guidance is organised into:

- General guidance: relevant to all applicants
- Scaled guidance: relevant to specific archive types and scale
- Information and supporting documentation needed
- Where evidence may be found
- Questions to consider when formulating responses
- Tools and resources

## **Glossary**

Each of the main terms in the Archive Service Accreditation Standard is defined in the Glossary. This glossary has been created using definitions in existing standards and guidance documents used in the archive sector.

# The Standard

## SECTION 1: ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH



## 1.1 Mission Statement

### 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.**

#### 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.

## 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, relevant and resilient in a changing internal and external environment.

## 1.4 Resources: buildings and storage

### Requirement 1.4

**Formal written terms of occupancy exist for all buildings and premises housing archives and archive services. Arrangements are sufficient to keep the collections physically secure and accessible. Arrangements also allow for effective forward planning, including the future expansion of collections.**

#### Outcome

The archive collections and services are responsibly housed. Risks associated with the physical 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

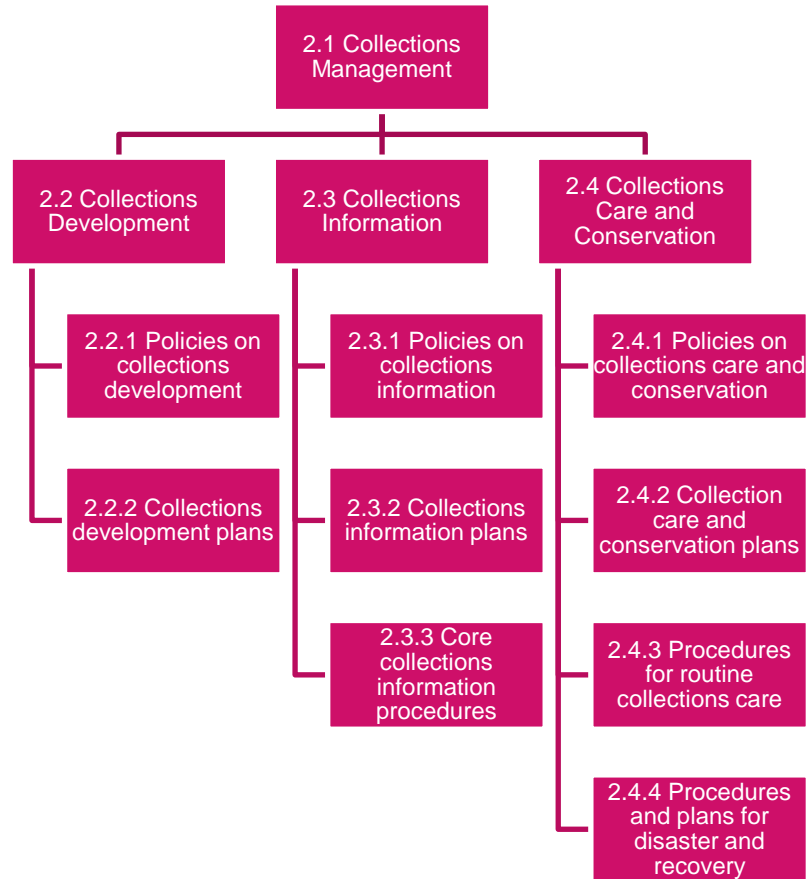
**The archive service has a workforce appropriate in experience and numbers to carry out the service's responsibilities and plans. Employment procedures and volunteering policies are in place to support competent professional performance and ongoing workforce development.**

#### 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



## **SECTION 2: COLLECTIONS**

### **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 collection 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 collection 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 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

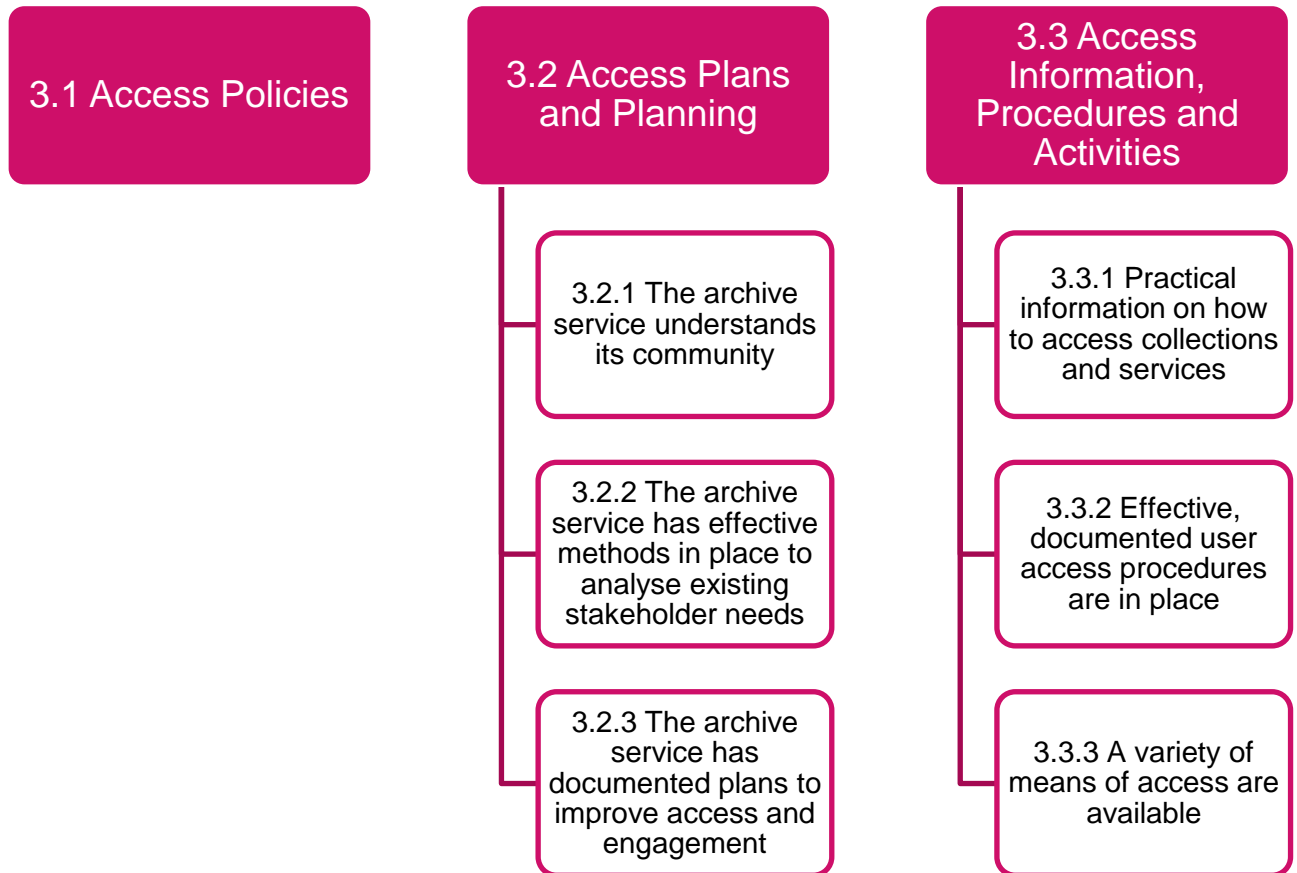
**Clear, documented procedures for routine collections care are in place and understood and applied by the workforce.**

#### 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: Stakeholders and their Experiences

### Overview



## **SECTION 3: Stakeholders and their Experiences**

### **3.1 Access 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 enhanced for all stakeholders, 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, which communicates clearly rights of access to the collection, optimising its use. The policy forms part of an integrated collections management framework enabling effective planning and best application of available resources.

### **3.2 Access Plans and Planning**

#### **Requirement 3.2**

**The archive service demonstrates a good understanding of the needs and interests of the community it is established to serve. It has plans in place which detail the actions that are being taken to meet stakeholders’ 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 3.2**

The archive service provides good access to its collections for its whole community and can evidence high quality user experiences. It has a planned, customer-focused approach to improving access and engagement that enables it to respond continuously to the needs and interests of all stakeholders.



#### **Requirement 3.2.1**

**The archive service understands the community it is established to serve and has effective methods in place for gathering information about and consulting stakeholders, including existing and potential users.**

#### **Requirement 3.2.2**

**The archive service has effective methods in place to analyse and evaluate existing and potential stakeholder needs and interests.**

#### **Requirement 3.2.3**

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

### **3.3 Access Information, Procedures and 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 how to access services and collections, which responds to the needs and interests of its community and protects the rights of copyright owners and data subjects.**

#### **Outcome**

Users and potential users are able to locate the archive service easily and are supported to access and engage with collections efficiently and with confidence, responsibility and care.

#### **Requirement 3.3.1**

**Practical information on how to access collections and archive services, both on-site and off-site, is communicated effectively to all stakeholders.**

**Requirement 3.3.2**

**Effective documented user access procedures are in place and are well communicated to all stakeholders.**

**Requirement 3.3.3**

**A variety of means access to the collections and archive services are available, appropriate to the organisation’s mission statement and the nature and scale of its collections.**

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