

The Museum Accreditation Scheme

MLA's Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums around caring for and documenting collections, governance and management, and information and services for users.



MUSEUMS LIBRARIES ARCHIVES
COUNCIL

Setting the standard

The Museum Registration Scheme was established in 1988. Since then it has helped over 1,800 museums across the UK to focus on standards and to identify areas for further work and development.

In 2004, the Scheme was renamed Accreditation to better reflect its purpose and the achievements of those museums which meet the standards it sets out.

The Scheme is regarded as one of the most innovative and effective developments in the museum sector. It has led the way in raising museum standards in the UK, and has been used as a model and source of inspiration for museums overseas.

MLA administers the Scheme in collaboration with the regional agencies for museums, libraries and archives in England, Museums Galleries Scotland, the Northern Ireland Museum Council and CyMAL in Wales.

“Our museum has come along in leaps and bounds in recent years, and this recognition of our enthusiasm, efforts and achievements is a tremendous boost to our morale.”

Independent museum

“The single most effective initiative in the last ten years... It is inclusive, empowering and positive.”

Independent museum

Innovation and improvement

People expect more of museums today. Accreditation has been developed by MLA and the museum community to keep pace with these expectations. It now gives greater emphasis to the needs and interests of those who use museums – or who might be encouraged to do so in the future.

Accredited museums must adhere to published minimum standards in how they care for and document their collections, how they are governed and managed, and on the information and services they offer to their users.

The Scheme encourages innovation and improvement through the use of other materials and resources produced by MLA and its partners relating to the care of collections, access, learning, inclusion and diversity. These materials provide support and guidance in meeting and exceeding the current standards.



Above: Staff preparing for a learning session at York Art Gallery

“The principal benefit has been in helping us to set out and work to clear, coherent professional standards.”

Armed forces museum

“This will open exciting new windows of opportunity for the museum service in future.”

Local authority museum

Preserving the past for the future

Accreditation recognises the importance of collections and effective collections management as the foundation for everything that museums strive to do. Without adequate collections care and documentation, the potential of museums to extend access to new audiences, encourage learning and inspire people's creativity would, eventually, be lost.



Above: Senior Curator examines a Saxon urn at Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester

Accreditation also addresses the needs of museum visitors. It requires that all museums provide:

- opportunities to use, enjoy and learn from collections
- an assurance that collections, including donated items, are held in trust for society
- information about the museum, its collections and its services
- a commitment to consultation with users, to ensure that future developments and changes take account of their needs and interests
- appropriate visitor facilities or details about facilities nearby.

In this way, Accreditation helps museums to meet the needs of today's visitors, while at the same time safeguarding their collections for future generations.

Benefits of the Scheme

Accreditation enables museums and governing bodies to assess their current performance, and it supports them in planning and developing their services. The Scheme:

- encourages museums to reach minimum levels in museum management, user services, visitor facilities and collections care
- offers a shared ethical basis for all bodies that meet the definition of a museum
- fosters public confidence in museums as institutions which hold collections in trust for society and which manage public resources responsibly, for both present and future generations
- provides a benchmark for grant-making bodies, sponsors and donors wishing to support museums.



Above: Staff advising a visitor at Museum in Docklands

“Accreditation provided a powerful spur to review staff training programmes.”

University museum

“Adherence to an agreed ‘industry standard’ sends out the right messages to our stakeholders.”

National museum

The standards embodied in the Scheme have been developed by the museum community working across a wide range of organisations, whether large or small, urban or rural, publicly-funded or run by volunteers. The Accreditation Standard is available to download from www.mla.gov.uk

MLA is government's agency for museums, galleries, libraries and archives. We deliver strategic leadership in England and in each of its regions and we collaborate with partners across the UK. Our research identifies good practice, which we use to promote improvement.

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We offer advice, support and resources to funding bodies and other groups to incentivise innovation. Our aim is to raise professional standards and champion better services for users and readers of all ages and backgrounds, whether residents or visitors.

Current news, developments and information on our activities are available to view or download from our website www.mla.gov.uk

Copies of this publication can be provided in alternative formats. Please contact MLA Publications on 020 7273 1428

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