

# Resource: Accreditation Mentors – Frequently Asked questions

This resource aims to answer any questions you may have about becoming an Accreditation Mentor or the relationship between mentors and museums.

## What is an Accreditation Mentor?

Accreditation Mentors are experienced museum professionals who support museums to work towards and maintain the Accreditation Standard. Being an Accreditation Mentor is a voluntary role based on a formal agreement between the individual and the museum requiring support.

## Why do some museums require an Accreditation Mentor?

The Museum Accreditation Scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. The scheme requires that the Governing Body of museums who do not employ professionally qualified staff have the input of an appropriately skilled Accreditation Mentor when working towards and maintaining the Accreditation Standard.

## What does an Accreditation Mentor do?

The mentor is often regarded as a critical friend to the museum. They provide advice and support on a wide range of museum issues. They act as an advocate for the museum and help them to connect with the wider museum profession. As well as providing telephone and email support, they are required to:

- Attend at least one meeting of the governing body during the year
- Receive all the papers for every governing body meeting (including financial reports)
- Visit the museum at least once during the year
- Conduct an annual review with a trustee and senior manager at the museum
- Write a report to accompany the museum's Accreditation return to Arts Council England

## Why become an Accreditation Mentor?

Volunteering as an Accreditation Mentor is great for Continuing Professional Development. You can become a valued source of support for a smaller museum and share your professional expertise.

Being a mentor enables you to:

- share your skills and experience with another museum and affect positive change;
- widen your knowledge of museum management and enhance your skills in communication and influencing;
- build your professional network and be an active part of the nation's museums sector;
- develop a useful addition to your CV and demonstrate commitment to continuing personal development.

## Top tips: Where can I find out more?

- South West Museum Development [Accreditation information](#)
- Arts Council England Accreditation [Mentoring Handbook and templates](#)
- [What are Coaching and Mentoring?](#) from the Coaching and Mentoring Network.

## Is an Accreditation Mentor paid?

It is generally an unpaid role. It is expected that the mentored museum will pay your travel expenses, although if your mentoring is part of your museum service's role in the community, this might be paid by your employer.

Though unpaid, it is essential for the Accreditation Mentor/Museum relationship to be established on a formal basis, set out in a contract which is reviewed by both parties annually. A sample agreement can be found [in our archive of resources](#).

## How do I become an Accreditation Mentor?

To apply to be a mentor you must have:

- A minimum of three years' experience working professionally in museums, with experience at curator/manager level.
- A commitment to career-long CPD.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, you'll need to fill in an [expression of interest form](#) and send it to the Accreditation team at Arts Council England. They'll check to see that you have at least three years' relevant professional experience and that you can demonstrate a commitment to continuing personal development.

Accreditation Mentors are now able to serve on a museum's governing body as a voting member, so if a museum has a trustee with suitable skills and experience, they can also be its Accreditation Mentor.



## How do I find a museum to mentor?

Get in touch with the Accreditation team at South West Museum Development ([museum.accreditation@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:museum.accreditation@bristol.gov.uk)) for current opportunities. Vacancies are also advertised in the South West Museum Development monthly newsletter, social media channels and through the County Museum network.

## What's changed with revised 2018 Accreditation Standard?

In 2018 Arts Council reviewed the Accreditation Standard. As part of the review they renamed *museum mentors* to *Accreditation Mentors* to make it clearer what they do. They also removed the need for Accreditation Mentors to have a professional qualification and ruled that professional experience can be demonstrated over three years, not five as previously.

## What support is there for Accreditation Mentors?

South West Museum Development provide support and guidance for Accreditation Mentors across the South West. Alongside [useful resources on our website](#) we also provide tailored skills sessions and networking opportunities for Accreditation Mentors.

As a Sector Support Organisation we help connect museum professionals to suitable museums looking for Accreditation mentors and guide both parties through the mentoring process.

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Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
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