COLLECTIONS TRUST ACCREDITATION GUIDANCE SHEET 1:
Collections Management Framework

This Guidance sheet explains what is meant by ‘Collections Management Framework’, provides basic information about what a full BSI Publicly Available Specification 197 Collections Management Framework contains, and highlights which elements of the framework are now required for Accreditation.

Using this guidance sheet will help you to assess whether you wish to go beyond the minimum standard for Accreditation and work towards adopting a full Collections Management Framework. Should you decide to develop the framework further than the minimum required for Accreditation, there is a list of suggested further resources at the end.

What is a Collections Management Framework?

A Collections Management Framework is a term used to describe a structured method for improving your Collections Management processes over time. At the core of an effective framework you will find:

- Clear mission, or purpose, for the organisation
- Policies
- Plans
- Procedures

All written, implemented and reviewed in an integrated way help to create a cycle of improvement.

What is the PAS197:2009?

The PAS197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management (PAS197) describes a Collections Management Framework that can be adapted and used by cultural collecting organisations of all sizes and types.

Developed by British Standards Institute (BSI) and the Collections Trust and published 2009, it was created to provide a standardised method for strategic management of collections. The Code of Practice involved the input of many Collections Management practitioners in museums, archives and libraries, ensuring that the final code reflected what many in the sector were increasingly seeing as accepted good practice.

PAS197 and UK Museum Accreditation Scheme

The UK Accreditation Standard (2011) - Section 2.0 – Collections states:

‘Accredited museums manage collections effectively and make them and the information they hold about them available to everyone

Collections within a museum must be managed in line with the museum’s statement of purpose, policies and strategic vision’

The Accreditation Standard (2011) requires museums to develop policies to guide their Collections Management work and the Accreditation Assessor Guidance encourages museums to develop a Collections Management Framework approach.
Implementation of a full Collections Management Framework as set out in the PAS197 is, therefore, above the minimum standard required for an Accredited museum. However, many museums will find that understanding the PAS197 and working towards implementation of the Code of Practice will be beneficial and bring increased efficiency to their Collections Management work.

PAS 197 definition of Collections Management Framework

‘set of components that provide the foundations and organisational arrangements for designing, implementing, monitoring, reviewing and improving Collections Management processes throughout the organisation’

Figure 1. The PAS 197 Collections Management Framework
MISSION

PAS 197 definition of Mission

‘Top management should prepare, document and be guided by a mission statement setting out the collecting organisation’s purpose in relation to the collection’

Why is strong collections-focused mission essential for effective Collections Management Framework?

For museums, galleries, archives, libraries and other collecting institutions the holding of a collection is at the core of their purpose and identity.

The mission of any organisation is intended to guide strategic decisions. So, for collecting organisations, the mission needs to reflect this core purpose in order to ensure that collections priorities are not lost amongst all the other strands of policy.

This is particularly true in larger organisations within which holding collections may not be the primary purpose. In these situations it is sometimes necessary to develop a collections specific mission statement at an appropriate level within the organisation to feed up into the overall strategic vision for the organisation and also to guide the work within the collecting department or section.

An effective mission is usually one that is simple and that has been devised with input from as many staff, volunteers and stakeholders as possible. As a result it is an area where small organisations may find it easier to achieve a strong focused mission than large ones.

Accreditation 2011

Accreditation requires museums to have an appropriate statement of purpose and for this to be included and referred to in key documents such as the Forward Plan, and the Collections Management policies. The statement of purpose for independent museums charitable is usually the founding purpose as stated in the governing document. Although not strictly required by Accreditation, many museums will benefit from supplementing this statement of purpose with a shorter, more focused mission statement that is reviewed on a regular basis.

See Accreditation Standard 1.1

POLICY

PAS 197 Definition of Policy

‘Overall intentions and direction of an organisation as formally expressed by top management’

Why do you need Policies in a Collections Management Framework?

Policies are sometimes described as the ‘what’ and ‘why’. They set out the principles and rules for guiding decisions and achieving desired outcomes, or delivering the mission and strategic aims of an organisation. Policies should not contain information about ‘how’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ these outcomes will be achieved (see plans and procedures below).
The PAS197 framework advocates developing integrated Collections Management policies. This means developing your individual Collections Management policies with close reference to each other to ensure that they reference and complement each other.

When the policies are written they may be linked together in, either in one master document with an overarching Collections Management policy statement that covers information common to all, or simply by cross-referencing the policies to each other. This idea is illustrated in figure 1. above.

The four policy areas defined by PAS197 are:

- Collections Development (also known as Acquisition and Disposal)
- Collections Information (also known as Documentation)
- Collections Access
- Collections Care and Conservation

Accreditation 2011

Accreditation requires museums to have in place the following policies:

- Development Policy (acquisition and disposal) 2.2
- Documentation Policy 2.3
- Care and Conservation Policy 2.4
- ‘policy statement setting out a commitment to give everyone access to collections and associated information’ 3.1.5

PLANNING AND PLANS, PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

A definition of Planning

‘The process of setting goals, developing strategies, and outlining tasks and schedules to accomplish the goals. Planning also involves implementing plans and monitoring their progress.’

A definition of a plan

‘A written account of an intended future course of action aimed at achieving specific goals or objectives within a specific timeframe. It explains in detail what needs to be done, when, how, and by whom.’

ie - a plan is the documentation of planning activity

PAS 197 definition of a process

‘Set of interrelated or interacting activities which transform inputs into outputs’

PAS197 definition of procedure

‘Specified way to carry out an activity or a process’

ie – a procedure is a written, or recorded, description of a process.
What are the roles of planning and processes within a Collections Management Framework?

Plans are used to deliver specific outputs against the policies and strategic goals of the organisation. They outline the tasks and time frames for achieving those goals.

The processes in a Collections Management Framework are all the hands-on activities involved in looking after and managing collections. Just as it makes sense to record planning activity into a number of written plans, it also helps to record regular processes into recorded procedures.

Written plans are essential to direct work, allocate resources, and allow for monitoring progress. Likewise, written procedures can give staff confidence, allow for monitoring and audit and increase consistency. All planning activity and development of procedures should be carried out with reference to the overall mission or purpose of the organisation.

Accreditation 2011

Accreditation requires museums to have in place the following plans and procedures:

- Forward Plan 1.4
- Collections Documentation Plan 2.5
- Collections Care and Conservation Plan 2.6
- Collections Documentation procedures 2.7

Go to Collections Trust Guidance Sheet – Collections Management Planning and Processes

INTERNAL AUDIT

PAS197 definition of Internal Audit

‘Internal audit is conducted at defined intervals to determine if elements of the Collections Management Framework has been properly implemented and is maintained.’

What is the role of the Internal Audit within a Collections Management Framework?

Internal audit forms an important part of the internal review of a Collections Management Framework. For example: A schedule of internal audits might carry out spot checks to test whether documentation procedures have been implemented correctly. How often audits are carried out, or what elements of the framework are checked are up to each individual organisation and should be in proportion to their capacity to run such audits. The results of audits would be fed into the regular management review of the framework and used to improve the framework.

Accreditation 2011

Accreditation does not require internal audit. However, the Accreditation assessment may at times involve inspection of Collections Management procedures and will certainly include scrutiny of plans and policies. Internal audit can be a useful tool for museums to test themselves and iron out any issues that might be picked up by an assessor.
MANAGEMENT REVIEW

PAS 197 defines Management Review

‘Top management should ensure that it reviews the organisation’s Collections Management policy and processes to ensure continued effectiveness. Reviews should take place at defined intervals......Top management should review the organisation’s Collections Management Framework at defined intervals to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness.’

What is the role of the Management Review within a Collections Management Framework?

Management review is nothing neither new, nor unique to a Collections Management Framework. It simply means that an organisation should have scheduled reviews of its operation on a regular basis to: check the effectiveness of its procedures, assess how well planning objectives are being met, review feedback from staff and clients, and to consider updates in legislation etc.

Management review can be as in-depth or wide-ranging as needed and will vary from organisation to organisation. What is important is that the findings of a review are acted upon and result in changes to policy, plans, or procedures where needed. By carrying out regular and meaningful reviews and acting on the outcome of the reviews, an organisation will improve over time.

Accreditation 2011

Accreditation 2011 requirement 1.4 Forward Plan includes:

1.4.2 a review of the previous forward plan
1.4.9 the date the plan will be reviewed

As the forward plan is intended to cover the overall operation of the museum this encapsulate the Collections Management Framework concept of management review. Reviewing your Collections Management activity and the entire activity of your museum at the end of the forward planning cycle is therefore, the minimum requirement for management review but for many museums there will be benefit in reviewing activity on a more frequent basis as well.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

By providing a framework of mission, integrated policy, planning and processes, internal audit and management review, the PAS197 Code of Practice helps museums, libraries and archives to achieve ongoing improvements to their Collections Management practice and overall management of their organisations.

Museums can use the PAS197 in a number of ways from working gradually towards full compliance, to using the checklists for improving or writing new policies. Much of the PAS197 methodology is common sense and all of it can be used in a proportionate way to the benefit of any collecting organisation.
Accreditation 2011 –

Implementation of a fully-integrated Collections Management Framework is regarded as above the minimum standard required of Accredited museums in the UK, but a framework approach is encouraged in the applicant guidance. Many museums will find this approach useful to them, especially as it can be adapted and adopted to a level of detail, and at a pace, that suits them.

Resources:


Accreditation: The UK Standard for Museums and Galleries – Assessment Guidance, MLA (2011)


Collections Management – a practical guide, Hillhouse, S. (2009), Collections Trust
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/shop/product/view/2/9

Sources of Help and Advice: SPECTRUM 4.0, Collections Trust (2011)

Collections Link - http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/

Who is this Guidance Sheet for?

This guidance sheet is written for museums aiming to meet the standard set out in the UK Accreditation Scheme for Museums. Along with the linked guidance sheets listed below, it provides a basic guide to the PAS197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management and to key elements of the Section 2.0 Collections, Accreditation 2011.

This guidance sheet is accompanied by two other related guidance sheets which are also available on Collections Link:

   Guidance Sheet 2 - Collections Management: Policies
   Guidance Sheet 3 - Collections Management: Planning and Procedures.

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