

**Recognition Scheme**

**Applicant Guidance**

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**1. About the Recognition Scheme**

Scotland’s Recognition Scheme celebrates, promotes, and invests in Nationally Significant Collections beyond those held in our national museums and galleries. Through a formal process, the scheme identifies and awards special status to Accredited collections of such national importance and quality that they merit formal recognition and support by the Scottish Government which owns and funds the Scheme.

Museums Galleries Scotland manages the scheme on behalf of the Scottish Government, while decisions about awards and maintenance of Recognition status are made by an appointed independent Recognition Committee

Organisations which care for Recognised Collections commit to meeting the five scheme objectives, striving for excellence in collections management and public service in order that they have a greater impact on people.

Holders of Recognised Collections are eligible to apply to a designated Recognition Fund to support projects involving their Recognised Collection and delivering against the scheme objectives. Decisions about the fund are made by the Board of Museums Galleries Scotland.

**2. Aim and objectives of the Recognition Scheme**

The aim of the scheme is

to celebrate, promote and invest in the nationally significant museum and gallery collections around Scotland held in Accredited museums outside the national institutions.

The objectives for the scheme are:

1. To raise awareness and appreciation of the Nationally Significant Collections, maximising their potential to celebrate Scotland's culture - locally, nationally and internationally
2. To ensure the longevity of Nationally Significant Collections by raising standards in collections care and management
3. To strengthen resourcing for the long term sustainability of the Nationally Significant Collections
4. To inspire and deliver new forms of access to and public engagement with the Nationally Significant Collections
5. To support holders of Nationally Significant Collections to increase their leadership of and contribution to the sector through innovation, ambition, collaboration and partnership working

**3. Who can apply?**

Your museum must be accredited. Membership of the Accreditation Scheme indicates that a museum meets the basic, industry standard

of good practice. The Accreditation Scheme monitors organisational health, ensuring that potential Recognised collections are managed by effective governance structures, and are cared for in compliance with professional standards in sustainable and secure premises. The scheme also evidences that museums have adequate financial resources to ensure appropriate care public access.

The Accreditation standard sets out the minimum standards of governance, collections care and visitor access expected by the Scottish Government before a collection can be considered for the Recognition Scheme. Should this status be removed, a review of Recognised status will automatically occur due to the museum failing to meet the Accreditation standard in one of the three areas outlined above.

In addition to holding Accredited status, the applicant museum must also commit to meeting the five objectives of the Recognition Scheme.

**4. Partnership applications**

**Applicants that can clearly demonstrate that they are working closely in partnership with one or more Accredited museums or galleries in the day-to-day management, development and promotion of a particular collection, distributed across those institutions, may apply as a partnership. In this case all partners must clearly subscribe to the application. All partner organisations must have achieved Accreditation at the date of the application deadline.**

**To be successful, the partnership should evidence a shared approach to collections management and development. A joint Collections Management Policy (including Acquisition and Disposal), and Forward Plan for the collection should be submitted with the application. Details of how the partnership operates and makes strategic decisions concerning the development of the collections will also be expected. These plans must be signed by all partners at a senior level.**

1. **Changes to Partnership**

**A new partner can be added to an existing partnership, and existing Recognised Collections may also enter into a partnership.**

**In order for this to occur, the normal partnership application process should be followed. In addition, the potential partnership should include a clear statement as to how the new applicant collection augments the existing Recognised Collection.**

**Any removal of a partner should be done in accordance with the guidance on exiting the Recognition Scheme**

**6. What to apply for**

**Collections must fit the definition of collection for the purposes of the Recognition Scheme. Organisations may app**ly for recognition of all of their holding, for an identifiable collection or collections within that holding, or in a partnership for a distributed collection. There has been no cap set for the number of Recognised Collections that could be awarded status through the Recognition Scheme, however not every non-national museum in Scotland will care for a collection that would meet the criteria of *importance* and *quality*.

Potential applicants must review their options and come to their own decision on what will make their strongest case for becoming a Nationally Significant Collection. This internal review should be a rigorous and realistic appraisal of the collection against the criteria of the scheme and of the evidence available to the applicant (see 6.7). Applicants should note that, while many collections make a substantial contribution to the national picture of a particular subject, the collection in question must be demonstrably nationally important in its own right. A Nationally Significant Collection is one that is of such importance and quality that it merits formal recognition and support by national government.

Please note that regardless of the nature or size of the collection the application is made for, the assessment and the Committee decision will apply to the entire collection described. The Committee will not ‘cherry-pick’ collections which may have individual merit from a wider application.

**7. The Recognition Committee**

The Recognition Committee has been convened specifically for the scheme and is an independent advisory body. Its principal role is to recommend the award of Recognised status to the Scottish Government. The Committee will also review a collection’s Recognised status at five-year intervals and will recommend areas for further development, which can be supported by Museums Galleries Scotland through the Recognition Scheme grants process. The Committee has a Chair and up to fourteen members, who are appropriately skilled and experienced professionals, appointed for (once-renewable) four-year terms.

Museums Galleries Scotland provides the Committee’s secretariat and is responsible for the administration of the scheme and will publish decisions and relevant reports on its website.

The Committee will normally meet two times a year.

*Please note that members of the Committee are not at liberty to discuss individual applications. Applicants should not approach any member of the Committee to solicit information or canvas on behalf of any application.*

1. **The Recognition Process**

The Recognition Process requires an organisation to submit an application for the collection they wish to be considered (see Section 6 below). The application is required to demonstrate that the collection is of such importance and quality that it is worthy of formal recognition as a Nationally Significant Collection. As a secondary requirement, the application must also demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to collections management and public services; there is an expectation that those holding such collections will aim for excellence in these areas and that these collections will have a greater impact on people (see 6.9).

For a potential applicant, the process begins with self-assessment of their holding and the available evidence against the Recognition Criteria (see 6.2 & 6.7). The first formal engagement with the process is the submission of an initial Note of Interest (see 6.4).

Potential applicants who submit Notes of Interest are invited to attend a workshop before they complete an application. This workshop focuses on the requirements of the application based on the Recognition Criteria and assists in identifying the evidence and supporting information needed to complete the application (see 6.8).

Applicants then assemble the body of evidence and supporting information that will make their case for recognition and submit it on an application form. The application must be submitted to a deadline set for each round of the scheme (see 6.5).

Assessment is a three-stage process. Following the closing date, Museums Galleries Scotland staff will conduct a rapid assessment of the application’s content on behalf of the Committee. At this stage the Committee Chair may confirm that an application is ‘un-assessable’ and it would then be referred back to the applicant.

Next, expert advisers are commissioned on behalf of the Committee to review the case made for the collection. They comment on the quality and importance of the collection, based upon the evidence in the application and supporting information provided, in relation to the Recognition Criteria and make recommendations to the Committee. This is a desk-based exercise based on the evidence submitted, though the adviser may request a visit to the applicant. Expert advisers draw upon their own professional knowledge and expertise, referring to comparable collections both within the UK and overseas, as appropriate.

Simultaneously Museums Galleries Scotland consults the Accreditation records and examines information submitted about governance arrangements, finances, collections management and public engagement Museums Galleries Scotland then makes recommendations to the Committee.

At its next meeting, the Committee considers the recommendations. It examines which applications meet the Recognition Criteria and considers commitment to collections management; including the applicant’s vision and aspirations to care for, engage with and celebrate the collection under consideration. It will also consider the other elements of Accreditation records as above.

**Decisions**

There are 3 possible outcomes from the Recognition Committee:

* **Application is successful**: The application demonstrates that the collection fully meets the criteria.
* **Application is deferred**: The application does not fully demonstrate that the collection meets the criteria, but may be able to do so if enhanced by supplementary information. **An application will ordinarily only be deferred once.**
* **Application is unsuccessful**: The application does not demonstrate that the collection meets the criteria.

Applicants will be notified as soon as possible after the meeting of the outcome of their application.

A public announcement of the collections to be Recognised will be made at the end of each round of applications.

**Appeals**

Appeals against the Committee’s decision will be allowed if the applicant can show that the published assessment process has not been followed or relevant information has not been considered. The Appeal Process is outlined in more detail in Appendix 1.

1. **Status Review**

Recognised collections are required to submit a review of their collections, activities and progress against their Forward Plan (including the Recognition Committee’s recommendations) every five years. Significant disposals from a Recognised Collection will trigger an immediate review of the collection’s Recognised status.

**The timetable of when each Recognised Collection is required submit a status review report and the associated guidance is available on the MGS website,** [**http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/accreditation-recognition/recognition-scheme/**](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/accreditation-recognition/recognition-scheme/)**.**

**Exiting the Recognition Scheme**

**Recognition as a nationally significant collection is awarded on the basis of:**

* **Being an Accredited Museum;**
* **The significance of the collection to the life and culture of Scotland;**
* **The organisation’s plans to care for and celebrate the collection.**

**Should the organisation be unable to meet these criteria, or unable to provide evidence that these criteria are being met through the five-year review process, the Committee will review the status of the Collection as nationally significant.**

**Museums Galleries Scotland will engage with the museum or other governing organisations to support them to meet the standard. Should these efforts fail, Recognised status will be removed from the collection. This decision may be reviewed using the Appeals Process (see Appendix 1).**

**Voluntary exiting of the Recognition Scheme**

**A museum may choose for a collection they care for to be removed from the Recognition Scheme voluntarily. In order to do so, the museum’s governing body must write to the Recognition Committee and set out their reasons for wishing to leave the Recognition Scheme.**

**If the Recognition Committee have concerns for the future of the collection(s) following the removal of Recognised status, this will be formally raised with the Accreditation Committee for monitoring and consideration at the museum’s next Accreditation return. Museums Galleries Scotland will also seek to engage with the museum’s governing body to offer support and guidance, and share with partners, including the Museum Association’s Ethics Committee and national funders through the UK Museums at Risk protocol.**

**Part Two**

1. **Making an application**

An application is made by assembling a body of evidence and supporting information that will make the case for the collection’s inclusion among other nationally significant collections. The application form is included in the Applicant Pack or can be found at <http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/accreditation-recognition/recognition-scheme/>.

A bound hard copy of the entire completed application and an electronic version must be included as part of the application. The printed copy of the application (including the application form, supplementary sheets and supplementary information) should not exceed one standard A4 box file in volume. This is regardless of whether you are applying for an entire collection holding or collection groups within it. It is preferred that the electronic copy of the application is submitted as one pdf.

Only one application per round should be submitted, regardless of whether the application is for recognition of the entire holding as one collection, applying to have a part or parts of the holding recognised as individual collections, or applying in partnership.

Potential applicants should not underestimate the time and effort needed to make the case and to assemble the body of evidence necessary to support a successful application.

**11.1 Notes of Interest**

Potential applicants must complete and submit a Note of Interest form prior to submitting a formal application. Notes of Interest deadlines are set for each round and are specific to that round. The Note of Interest is non-binding; an applicant may decide not to submit an application after a Note of Interest has been submitted.

The Note of Interest is a requirement, although not part of the formal assessment process. To complete it, you should have already decided whether to apply for your entire holding, for groups within it, or in a partnership. You should also have considered the merit of the collection against the Recognition Criteria and whether you have enough hard evidence and supporting information to make a case (see also 6.2 above). Where evidence is found to be lacking, you should postpone application to a future round to allow time to build the necessary body of evidence and supporting information. Small-scale funding through Museums Galleries Scotland’s investment streams maybe able to assist you in this work.

Representatives from each organisation that submit a Note of Interest are invited to attend a workshop, which will focus on what is required to meet the Recognition Criteria and will give assistance in developing a final application. At the workshop, potential applicants will have the opportunity to reflect on whether submitting an application for the current round is appropriate for their collection and organisation and may decide not to peruse further. Potential applicants are strongly advised to start work on the application before attending the workshop, and to commence the assembly of evidence and supporting information at the same time as preparing the Note of Interest.

A Note of Interest from a partnership should be submitted by the coordinating partner and should list the other members of the partnership. All members of the partnership will be invited to attend the applicant workshop although the final application must be submitted by the coordinating partner (see Section 6.6 below). The coordinating partner will be the main point of contact for the application.

Application deadlines for future rounds will be subject to confirmation and will appear on the Museums Galleries Scotland website.

**11.2 Completing the application form**

The structure of the application form supports an organisation or partnership in presenting their evidence in support for Recognition of their Collection.

The case for recognising the collection will be made by submitting a mix of descriptions and citations entered as text in the application form (continued where appropriate on supplementary sheets) and supplementary information provided as appendices that are clearly referenced from the text.

The form also includes questions to prompt a demonstration of commitment to operating above the baseline of the Accreditation Standard and towards meeting the additional Accreditation criteria for nationally-styled museums.

Applicants should not underestimate the amount of time required to complete the application form and collate the supporting documents. We would strongly advise that the guidance is read thoroughly before any attempt is made on the application form.

The application form is divided into four sections each of which is divided into numbered points. You must respond to all questions except those indicated as optional. Incomplete application forms will be considered ineligible.

**Section A** is for **Applicant Details** and asks for basic information about you, your partners (if applicable) and your application, and includes the necessary declarations and signature that authorise the information you have submitted. It will be used by Museums Galleries Scotland to make the necessary checks on your application in order to advise the Recognition Committee of your eligibility to apply.

In the case of partnership applications, one organisation should act as the coordinator and will be the first point of contact during the assessment process. All members of the partnership should complete a copy of section A for their own organisation and sign the necessary declarations. The coordinating partner should include these signed copies with the completed application. The remaining sections of the application should present a single case for recognition submitted by the coordinating partner on behalf of the partnership.

**Section B** is the **Application Summary**, which should provide a succinct overview of your application. It asks for a brief description of your collection; a summary of the key points of your case and what you consider will be the benefits of the collection being recognised to your collection, public and organisation. You are advised to complete Section B after completing the rest of the application. All members of the Committee will read section B.

**Section C** and **Section D** together form the **Main Application.**

**Section C** should provide the detail of your case for recognition. It requires you to prepare a written testimony which will demonstrate how your collection meets the Recognition Criteria, backed up by hard evidence and supporting information.

**Section D** asks you to provide the information that the Committee will take into consideration about current performance and forward plans towards meeting the objectives of the Recognition Scheme, specifically in the areas of collections management and public services.

**Section E** is for **Supporting Information**.It lists the contents of all appended material which supports your case. Any appendices must be referenced in the text and be both concise and directly relevant.

Notes on completing Sections A-E are provided on the application form. When completing Sections C and D of the Main Application, you should also refer to the guidance set out below on meeting the Recognition Criteria; providing evidence and supporting information; and meeting the objectives of the Recognition Scheme. We would strongly advise you to complete section E as you develop your application; retrospective completion can be difficult and very time consuming.

**11.3 Meeting the Recognition Criteria**

The Recognition Criteria will be used by the Committee to determine whether a collection is deemed of such importance and quality that it merits formal recognition as a Nationally Significant Collection.

The criteria are a derivation of those used in the 2002 National Audit expanded into two dimensions of *importance* and *quality.* Applicants may wish to cite their National Audit information as part of the evidence they submit to make the case for recognition but they should note that the definition of collection is more prescriptive than for the National Audit, and that it includes the information that binds individual items into a collection. The Recognition Scheme is not about iconic objects or star items, although the presence of these may contribute to the case for Recognition.

Whilst there is no direct relationship between Recognition and collection size, it is unlikely that a collection of a few significant items will have sufficient breadth and depth or be sufficiently representative of its subject to meet the Recognition Criteria.

The Recognition Criteria are the most important aspect of the scheme. Potential applicants are strongly recommended to test how well their collection meets these criteria before developing other parts of their application (see requirements for submitting a Note of Interest and 6.2 above).

Applicants must demonstrate the Recognition of their collection in terms of both its importance AND its quality, using the criteria to frame their case for recognition. The case will be made through a mix of hard evidence and supporting information.

**Importance**

Applicants must demonstrate that their collection is of sufficient importance to the appreciation, study, and understanding of its subject to be recognised as of national stature. In the context of this scheme, national stature means it is central to the life and culture of Scotland. As such, the collection will be a material record of one or more of the following:

* social, economic, political, or cultural life (including world culture, spiritual, and/or religious life)
* developments in science, technology, agriculture, or industry
* the natural environment
* the history of art or design
* the life and works of a person or group.

The Collection should be important to Scotland, although UK and international importance, where appropriate, should be illustrated. For example, in the case of fine art, it may be helpful to describe it in an international context, whereas for other collections, the Scottish context only may be more relevant.

**Quality**

A significant collection will demonstrate most or all of the following attributes:

* comprehensiveness: of sufficient size and richness of relevant material to enable it to be regarded as representative
* depth: artefacts and/or specimens are supported by strong associated or contextual information
* uniqueness and authenticity: demonstrating rarity, intactness or integrity of individual items or groups of items
* reputation: an acknowledged key source for study of a given subject; an acknowledged source of public enjoyment.

**11.4 Providing evidence and supporting information**

The case for Recognition will be made by providing hard evidence through the descriptions, information, and citations made in the application form and through any supporting information provided as appendices to the application.

Applicants are advised that to meet the Recognition Criteria will require submitting a mix of both evidence and supporting information. A successful application will present the evidence in a way that is authoritative and has external endorsement.

Applicants are asked to provide the evidence that makes the case for the collection against the Recognition Criteria in their own words and are allowed up to 20 sides of A4 in 12pt single line-spaced text to do this.

Supplementary information provided as appendices must be kept to a minimum, since each copy of the complete application must be no greater in volume than that which will fit in one standard A4 box file. Applicants must list and cross-reference any appendices to the evidence and the exact locations of relevant sections in Section E of the application.

Partnership applications are expected to make a single case in exactly the same way, and must also clearly demonstrate:

* that the collection is acknowledged as a coherent unit by all the partners and key stakeholders;
* that, as such, the collection is managed and in a coordinated manner across all the partners; and
* it is acknowledged by the partners as a single distributed unit in relevant policy documents, e.g. collections development policy (acquisition and disposal), conservation plan, documentation plan, etc.

The range of evidence and supporting information that it is expected all applicants will need to submit to show that they meet the Recognition Criteria is set out below.

**A.** Description of the collection including reference, as appropriate, to:

* the subject covered, and assessment of the importance of the collection for the study of this subject;
* assessment of importance in an international, UK or Scottish context
* its size, and key categories of material held;
* strengths and weaknesses;
* associated or contextual information, e.g. archives, field records, photographs;
* provenance, where this is a key factor in importance;
* reference to rare or unique items, or groups of items reference, in the case of natural science collections, to the presence of type, figured or cited specimens; and
* comparison with related collections elsewhere, whether international, UK or Scottish.

**B.** Copy of published Collections Development Policy (acquisitions and disposal policy) or policies, and where relevant, information about acquisitions made during, for example, the past 5 years. If applying as a partnership, these should be joint policies, focussing on the distributed collection in its own right, rather than focussing on the individual museums caring for the collection.

**C.** A list of catalogues or other publications that describe or cite the collection.

**D.** Written confirmation or testimony of the quality of the collection from other museums and independent experts who are acknowledged authorities in their field. Applicants are encouraged to aim for ten to twenty testimonies in support of the collection dating from the previous 24 months, with exceptions to this timescale being considered (dependent on individual circumstances).

**E.** Information about:

* research use of the collection
* use of the collection in the context of the museum’s life-long learning
* programmes and activities loans made from the collection.

**11.5 Meeting the objectives of the Recognition Scheme**

Once recognised, organisations that hold collections of national significance will be expected to commit to meeting the Recognition Scheme’s objectives. As an indication of this commitment, the Committee will take into consideration current performance and future plans which meet the two of these objectives that are already requirements of Accredited museums:

* To ensure the longevity of Nationally Significant Collections by raising standards in collections care and management
* To inspire and deliver new forms of access to and public engagement with the Nationally Significant Collections

An organisation’s commitment to collections management and public services will be assessed in three ways.

1. Accreditation records will be consulted by Museums Galleries Scotland staff and reported on to the Committee.
2. Applicants must demonstrate in their applications how their current performance and forward plans are working towards meeting the additional criteria that for the purposes of Accreditation, only apply to the nationally-styled museums (see the Accreditation Standard and Question 11 on the application form).
3. Applicants are invited to provide any additional information against the three sections of the Accreditation Standard that they wish the Committee to consider which updates or enhances that already submitted for Accreditation purposes (Question 12 on the application form).

Finally, in Section D, applicants are asked to demonstrate current performance and forward plans against the remaining three objectives of the Recognition Scheme (Question 13 on the application form) to show commitment to:

* To raise awareness and appreciation of the Nationally Significant Collections, maximising their potential to celebrate Scotland's culture - locally, nationally, and internationally
* To strengthen resourcing for the long-term sustainability of the Nationally Significant Collections
* To support holders of Nationally Significant Collections to increase their leadership of and contribution to the sector through innovation, ambition, collaboration, and partnership working

**11.6 Submitting the application**

You must provide one bound hard copy of the entire completed application including the supplementary information, plus an electronic version.

Applications should be sent to the Quality Assurance Manager, Museums Galleries Scotland, Waverley Gate, 2 – 4 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG and emailed to [recognition@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](mailto:recognition@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk).

Receipt of all applications will be acknowledged.

# Appendix 1 The Appeals Process

*Please note, an appeal may only be made if the published process set out in this document has not been followed.*

* 1. Within ten working days of written notification of the outcome of the Recognition process, a written statement of Intention to Appeal should be submitted to the Recognition Committee Chair via the Scheme Manager.
  2. Within ten working days from acknowledgement of the receipt of the Intention to Appeal, a copy of the Recognition Scheme guidance and a copy of the Assessment Report, with relevant minutes to your initial application, will be provided. Notes relating to other applicants and any expert advice, which is submitted in confidence, will be omitted from these papers.
  3. Should the decision to appeal progress, a written statement for the grounds of the appeal should be submitted to the Committee Chair via the Scheme Manager.
  4. Following this, and within twenty working days, the Appeals Committee will be convened. This will comprise the CEO of Museums Galleries Scotland, the Chair of the Recognition Committee (or a representative from MGS staff) and three Board Members of Museums Galleries Scotland. Written confirmation of the date and time will be provided to the appellant.

Outcomes of Appeal

* + 1. The Appeals Committee will consider whether the Recognition Committee complied with Recognition Scheme procedures, including full consideration of all facts available.

ii If no procedural error is found, the appeal will be rejected.

iii If a procedural error is found to have occurred, the Recognition Application will be returned to the next full Committee hearing where the procedural error will be discussed

**iv** **The Committee’**s decision on the Recognition application will be communicated in the standard way

The Committee’s decision on the application will be final at this stage and cannot be subject to further appeal