

SANDFORD AWARD



*THE QUALITY MARK FOR
HERITAGE LEARNING*

Guidance for Applicants

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Object of the Heritage Education Trust

To enable the public in general and young people in particular to learn about history, art, architecture and other subjects through engagement with historic buildings and sites, museums, landscapes, parks and gardens, cultures and traditions. In particular, the Trust seeks to achieve this through assessment for the Sandford Award and the dissemination of good practice in heritage education.



A framework for success in developing your learning programmes

About the Sandford Award

Sandford Award supports the sector in achieving high quality, inclusive and accessible learning and promotes continuous provision.

The main focus of the award scheme is on formal, curriculum-aligned, learning programmes that take place in the historic setting or natural environment and use the history and collections or natural resources to engage, inform and inspire visitors. Recognition is also given to informal learning such as family programmes and self-guided provision.

Sandford Award is an opportunity for services large and small to shout loud and proud about their offer!

Image: Learning at English Heritage Education



Why apply?

Amongst the many testimonies we receive from Sandford Award holders, the feedback highlights how valuable they find the process.

'We have very much valued the assessment process, the criteria is a useful 'checklist' for what quality provision looks like. The opportunity to have someone independent come and give feedback is incredibly valuable. The reports have been motivating, good for morale and good for internal and external advocacy and fundraising.'

Sandford Award holder



The benefits of applying and achieving a Sandford Award

- National recognition of you and your team and your contribution to high quality learning at your site.
- An independent endorsement and quality mark that you can use in your marketing.
- An expert, personal consultancy that looks at an education service in action.
- A detailed report and site-specific recommendations which you can use to advocate with your governing body and funders.

Image: Sandford Award recipients 2023



Before you start your application, please check that you are eligible and meet the basic criteria.

- Organisations would normally have a site or a collection, but consideration will be given to organisations which work in other ways.
- Learning programmes must focus on the site and/or the collection.
- Learning programmes must be site led by core staff and/or through freelance staff and/or volunteers.
- Learning experiences must be substantially different from any experience that could be replicated, for example, by a teacher in a classroom.
- Organisations must offer a formal schools' programme and this programme must support the relevant curriculum across the home countries.
- Details of any informal learning programme, for example, for families, community or self-guided groups should be included.
- Organisations must provide some pre and post visit resources to support the visit, as hard copy and/or online.

- Staff must have carried out a reflective self-assessment of the programme and its impact on learners, consulted with service users and presented evidence of achievement against the six criteria.
- Organisations must have in place a system to evaluate their learning programmes and to act on lessons learned.
- Organisations must have in place workforce development for all those delivering learning programmes.
- Organisations must have in place up to date statutory policies.
- Organisations must have in place appropriate toilet and lunch/bag storage facilities or arrangements for learners.
- Organisations that manage more than one site should submit a separate application and entry fee for each. However, we are willing to accept similar information in the application.
- Quinquennial assessments should demonstrate progress made against the previous report recommendations. However, assessors are aware that provision and situations may change significantly within a five year period and will take this into account.

To apply for a Sandford Award you need to complete an application form and submit it by email. You can find the entry form on our website from early December. You can also request a copy by contacting sandford@bishopg.ac.uk

The deadline for entries is mid February

The six criteria underpinning the Sandford Award assessment provide a framework for success whether you are looking to gain the recognition your learning programmes deserve or seeking to develop the quality of your learning provision.

Our objective is to deliver an assessment of the learning services and facilities provided and recommendations that are clear, concise and constructive. We aim to be fair and without prejudice, basing our professional assessment on the criteria laid down by the Heritage Education Trust.

Your site and your services will be measured against the following six criteria.

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Criterion 1



The learning programmes are delivered in a way that engages, informs and inspires visitors.

What the assessors are looking for:

- Introduction provides context and establishes levels of learners' prior knowledge
- Teaching approaches maximise opportunities for active, experiential and sensory learning, including use of open-ended questioning, observation and discussion
- Varied teaching approaches are used, demonstrating engagement of learners across the spectrum of learning styles, access needs, ability, concentration, culture and gender
- Programme stimulates curiosity, sustains learners' interest and offers memorable experiences
- Key points are summarised to consolidate the learning

Hints and tips....

Make your learning programmes relatable to the learners in front of you.

Make sure you meet everyone's needs by using hands on and experiential opportunities.

Criterion 2



The learning provision at the site contributes to an understanding of the local and national heritage or natural environment.

What the assessors are looking for:

- The learning programme is rooted in the heritage of the site or collection and could not be achieved in the classroom
- Evidence that the learning programme is based on sound research
- The learning programme links the local heritage of the site or collection to a wider national or international heritage context

Hints and tips....

Every museum, gallery or heritage site/natural resource has a story to tell.

Find what makes you special and focus on that.

Criterion 3



The programme has been developed through consultation with visitors, learning providers and advisers.

What the assessors are looking for:

- The learning team is aware of audience development principles and has developed programmes in response to evidence of audience need including curriculum objectives
- Teachers, learners and advisers are consulted when developing programmes
- Effective evaluation methods are used to collect audience feedback and there is evidence that practices are developed and / or changed as a result
- Evaluation processes seek evidence of success in achieving pre-defined learning outcomes
- Facilitators and team members are encouraged to contribute to evaluation programmes
- There is a programme for regular monitoring of team members, including volunteers and external facilitators
- Team members have access to relevant training to support their continuous professional development

Hints and tips....

Evaluation is your friend!

Ask questions that will give you the information you need to further develop your sessions (or tell you that you've got it right).

Criterion 4



There is attention to good management and administration during all aspects of the visit.

What the assessors are looking for:

- The booking process is effective, gathering all relevant information including specific needs and learning outcomes and site staff are fully briefed
- Free pre-visits and / or pre-engagement conversations are actively encouraged and offered to group leaders at the point of enquiry and booking
- The 'meet and greet' procedure is efficient and welcoming while also offering an inspirational introduction to the visit
- Information is exchanged on arrival, including the location of domestic facilities, health and safety instructions, timings for accompanying adults and self-directed groups and details of any children with additional needs
- The learning team is flexible and can adjust programmes if required
- Desirable domestic facilities are provided, such as bag and coat storage, suitable toilets, refreshment areas and wet weather accommodation

Hints and tips....

The administration of your learning programme is just as important as the content of your programme.

Make sure you have in advance as much information as possible about the groups who are coming to visit.

Criterion 5



Learning resources and services are provided which enhance the quality of the learners' visit.

What the assessors are looking for:

- On-site learning resources such as interactives or trails have been designed to add value to the programmed activities for a range of audiences
- The organisation distinguishes between replicas and originals
- Self-guided resources are inspirational and designed to raise questions rather than find answers, with discussion notes for group leaders
- There are quality pre- and post-visit learning resources such as outreach programmes, digital activities or educational publications
- Informal learning opportunities are available for different audiences
- The organisation has an online presence with details about sessions, pre- and post- visit resources, risk assessments and other safety information

Hints and tips....

Ensure that your website is up to date with easy navigation to all the information to your learning programme and reinforces any information that you send to teachers.

Criterion 6



Statutory requirements are met and essential additional policies and strategies are in place.

What the assessors are looking for:

- The learning programme is bedded within the organisation's policies and strategic planning framework to ensure long term support for learning
- Staff and volunteers are aware of the organisation's policies and procedures and how these relate to the learning service
- A health and safety policy is in place and is reviewed, maintained and updated on a regular basis
- The provider has appropriate public liability insurance cover
- Risks are identified and appropriately managed and these are shared with service users
- Safeguarding procedures are in place for all aspects of the service and child protection policies and procedures are communicated to all team members
- Team members, whether staff, volunteer or external providers, are subject to the appropriate DBS checks if eligible

Hints and tips....

Assessors will want to see your H&S and safeguarding policies, public liability insurance and risk assessments, all things you should have in place.

Sandford Award assessment process

Step 1

Applications are received and checked to ensure they meet the basic criteria.

Step 2

A Sandford Award assessor is allocated to your site.

Step 3

The assessor contacts the applicant by email to initiate the assessment process and arrange a date for their visit. Assessments begin in March and continue until mid July.

Step 4

Assessments must be arranged so that we can see educational groups take part in a site-led session. In addition, assessors should be given a comprehensive view of any areas of the site that are used to support the programme such as learning spaces and domestic facilities (e.g., lunch areas, coat and bag storage,). Assessors should have the opportunity to meet and talk with staff and volunteers who are involved in learning at your site.

Step 5

At the end of the day, the assessor will meet with staff, volunteers and/or facilitators and request to see any documents pertaining to the statutory requirements where they have not already been viewed. It is also an opportunity to discuss the learning programmes in more detail and look at the findings of evaluation. We will not give an indication at this stage, of whether we feel the site has achieved or not achieved the award.

Step 6

Following the assessment, the assessor writes a comprehensive report and makes a recommendation as to whether a Sandford Award should be given.

Step 7

The report is submitted for review and moderation before it is circulated to the full Assessors' Panel. You can view our Moderation of Sandford Award Reports policy on our website.

Step 8

The Assessors' Panel makes its recommendations to The Board of Trustees of the Heritage Education Trust for consideration at their ratification meeting in early September.

Step 9

Applicants are notified of the outcome shortly after the meeting and a copy of the Assessors' Report is sent to the primary contact.

Supporting material

To support your application, the assessor will request some additional material prior to their visit, e.g., copies of any materials you supply to teachers for example: background information on the site, information on learning programmes, booking arrangements and any operational details for a visit.

On the day of the visit, the assessor will need to see evidence of your policies and procedures. We would also like to see evidence of evaluation, either a representative sample of completed evaluation forms or a summary report.

For quinquennial assessments, assessors will evaluate the progress made against the previous recommendations. However, assessors are aware that provision and situations may change significantly within a five year period and will take this into account.

Entry fee

The entry fee to apply for a Sandford Award is currently £400 per site and is reviewed annually. This is non-refundable once the assessment process has started.

If your organisation manages more than one site, you should submit a separate application and entry fee for each. Each site is assessed on its own merit and it is not normally practical for the assessor to visit more than one site and location in a day. However, we are willing to accept similar information in the application. If you would like more information on this matter, please contact the administrator whose details are noted below.

Award validity

If your learning programme is successful in gaining a Sandford Award, it is valid for five years.

The Sandford Award presentation ceremony

Winners are invited to attend a presentation ceremony to receive their award. This may be held virtually or in person and usually takes place in November or early December. It is an opportunity to celebrate achievements and hear about other award winners and their learning programmes.

Procedure for Sandford Award applicants to appeal an assessment

The Heritage Education Trust provides Sandford Award applicants the opportunity to appeal any of the assessments that are made and reported to them. An appeal can be made at the level of any one or more of the six criteria that are assessed in the Sandford Award assessment process and/or at the overall 'AWARD' or 'NO AWARD' concluding assessment.

Any appeal should be presented by the responsible authority for the site being assessed and appealing. Further information about our appeals process will be available on our website for the start of the assessment period.

Disclaimer

The Assessors' recommendations are based on the application, supporting materials, observations of a learning visit, professional conversations throughout the application process and visit and any publicly available information.

Contact

For information on all aspects of the Award and the assessment process, please contact the Sandford Award Administrator

Email: sandford@bishopg.ac.uk

Website: heritageeducationtrust.org

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