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Volunteer Sandford Award Assessor Information Pack



Images: Top left: Cromford Mills.
Top right: English Heritage Education. Bottom left: The
Old Royal Naval College Greenwich. Bottom right: The
Tower of London, Historic Royal Palaces.

Are you passionate about heritage sites and services providing high quality, inclusive and accessible learning?

The volunteer Sandford Award assessor plays a vital role in providing a supportive space for heritage organisations to showcase what they do and how they do it. Our assessors' panel is made up of museum educators and heritage and education consultants bringing together a wealth of experience and expertise to the award scheme.

We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and are committed to engaging and developing a diverse volunteer body. Every volunteer offers invaluable support to our cause, and they get something back from it too.

What it means to be a volunteer assessor for the Sandford Award

Volunteering as a Sandford Award Assessor brings a number of benefits including:

- offering your experience and skills to forward the Heritage Education Trust's aims and objectives;
- serving as an ambassador for the Sandford Awards;
- participating in peer support and relevant training opportunities;
- being part of a friendly and enthusiastic team.

"I get so much, personally, out of being a Sandford Assessor. Not only do I feel I can contribute to maintaining the quality of learning at heritage sites, but I also get to experience and learn about some of the best practice that is available to schools and other learners across the country. Being a part of the assessor team gives me a network of experienced heritage and education professionals to talk to. I definitely feel that being part of the Heritage Education Trust has helped my own personal and career development."

— Amanda Phillipson, Sandford Award Assessor

What are the Sandford Awards?

The Sandford Award was conceived in 1975 as a result of the European Year of Architecture. Founder members were Lord Montagu, of English Heritage, Lord Sandford, representing the Department of the Environment and Commander Michael Saunders Watson, of the Historic Houses Association. Their purpose was to raise the profile of the educational use of historic properties.

As its name suggests, it was Lord Sandford who instituted the awards scheme to encourage those responsible for running historic houses to appreciate their important educational role, to provide support and monitor standards. Although the awards were originally administered by the Council for Environmental Education, the Heritage Education Trust was set up in 1981 to run and develop them. The first awards were made in 1978. The Trust is the only body in existence to provide independent quality assurance for curriculum- aligned and site led heritage learning programmes which is recognised through the Sandford Awards.

Volunteer Role Description: Sandford Award Assessor

A. Overview

1. The role of the Sandford Award Assessor is to support the Heritage Education Trust's charitable aims and objectives and in doing so, provide a high standard of service to its beneficiaries.
2. As a Volunteer Assessor, you will undertake an assessment of the learning programme at a range of heritage sites that apply for a Sandford Award.
3. The Sandford Award Administrator is the volunteer's main point of contact.
4. The Administrator coordinates the assessments and allocates an assessor to each applicant based, where possible, on geographical location.
5. In most cases only one assessor will visit the site; however, there may be instances when an assessor may be accompanied by a fellow assessor or an assessor in training.
6. Volunteers give their time freely to support the work of the Heritage Education Trust and the arrangement is neither legally binding nor a contract of employment. They are not paid but assessors are reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred.

B. Recommended knowledge and experience

An assessor should have:

1. an active interest in the cultural and heritage sector,
2. an understanding of, and enthusiasm for the work of the Heritage Education Trust and the Sandford Award,
3. successfully designed or delivered a learning or interpretation programme at a heritage or tourism site or educational establishment,
4. an understanding and experience in using a learning outcomes-based approach to assessment,
5. a good understanding of the national curriculum and/or lifelong, community or informal learning as appropriate to the part of the UK, Republic of Ireland or other nations in which they are assessing.

6. a good understanding of the challenges learning managers and officers are facing in the world of heritage learning

C. Recommended skills and qualities

An assessor should:

1. have a good understanding of the Assessors' Handbook, should refer to it on a regular basis and especially in relation to the assessment criteria for the Sandford Award,
2. have excellent report writing and verbal skills and be able to communicate effectively and clearly with a range of people of different ages,
3. be well organised and be able to keep to deadlines,
4. have access to a personal computer,
5. have an excellent broadband connection and be computer literate, notably familiarity with common programs such as Microsoft Office,
6. have a willingness to learn new digital skills,
7. have awareness of current practice in digital learning in a museum/heritage and or educational/community setting,
8. have experience of being involved in online meetings using one of the common platforms, such as Microsoft Teams,
9. be able to undertake assessments which are both in person onsite and, where circumstances dictate, off site and/or online,
10. be aware of current best practice in teaching and learning
11. be aware of the current best practice in and importance of inclusion and representation of content and practices which respect class, gender, ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ.

D. What it means to be a volunteer in general

Volunteering brings a number of benefits to the volunteer, including:

1. an opportunity to serve the heritage learning sector and share best practice,
2. continuous professional development,
3. being part of a friendly and dedicated team,
4. participating in peer support,
5. mutual respect and reciprocal appreciation of motivation and expertise,
6. recognition of your work as a volunteer.

E. What it means to be a volunteer assessor for the Sandford Award

As noted in the Overview [above] Assessors are volunteers and give their time freely to support the work of the Heritage Education Trust. This arrangement is neither legally binding nor a contract of employment. You will not be paid but assessors are reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred.

Although assessors are volunteers, we expect that you will:

1. help the Heritage Education Trust to fulfil its charitable aims and objectives through the promotion of best practice in heritage learning,
2. serve as ambassadors for the Sandford Award,
3. follow the procedures and standards for volunteering,
4. keep confidential any information relating to the organisation not in the public domain,
5. participate in training relevant to your role,
6. be prompt and reliable when participating in our activities,
7. perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability,
8. be an active part of the team,
9. be prepared to keep up to date on heritage education and on any curriculum changes which might affect the way in which they consider the learning offered by a site,
10. commit to attend Sandford Award assessment visits, where arranged by the assessor, giving reasonable notice to the applicant and Sandford Award Administrator when this is not possible,
11. endeavour to attend the annual Assessors' Panel meeting and training workshop in person, though joining online would be an option when circumstances mean it is impossible to attend in person,
12. commit to act solely in the best interests of the Sandford Award without regard to personal interest or benefit.

F. What it means in practice to be an Assessor

As an assessor, you will be expected to:

1. have use of your own vehicle (with business insurance) or be able to access public transport in order to undertake volunteering activities,
2. adhere to all BGU's travel requirements,
3. according to BGU's financial guidelines, arrange your own travel and accommodation (the latter may not always be necessary),
4. work directly with Sandford Award applicants and the staff at BGU to deliver a professional, supportive and friendly customer service,
5. be prepared to comply with all requirements in relation to social distancing in place at the time locally, nationally, as required by HET and the Sandford award and as required by the applicant sites,
6. be able to explain clearly the assessment criteria to an applicant site,
7. be able to interpret the variety of evidence submitted by an applicant site against the assessment criteria,
8. be able to match the assessment criteria against the variety of evidence,
9. be able to recognise that the form of the evidence may sometimes be unusual and unexpected but nevertheless appropriate,
10. be able to explain their findings to the applicant site,
11. be able to write reports that:
 - a. relate to the Sandford Award criteria,
 - b. align with the guidance in the Assessment Handbook,
 - c. include clear recommendations for the Board.

Please note that:

- the role of the Assessor is advisory and supportive; it is not judgemental – the final decision about an award rest with the Board,
- although we will endeavour to ensure that you will be able to be involved in the assessment process each year this cannot be guaranteed.

In relation to the assessment of each applicant, you must be prepared to:

1. be available during the annual assessment period which takes place annually between March and mid-July,
2. be flexible so that you can be available outside the normal assessment period,
3. devote the time required to prepare appropriately for a site assessment, undertake that assessment and write the report – this is not onerous, but will no doubt involve:
 - a. up to one day in preparation – for example, liaising with the applicant by email/telephone to arrange a date, reading the application, the previous report and any supporting material available before the assessment day,
 - b. one day in travelling to the site and undertaking the onsite assessment – assessors should schedule their arrival to observe the welcome and orientation with the visiting school and arrange to meet with Learning Team members during the day, usually after the school departs,
 - c. up to one day in reading any materials gathered on the assessment day, drafting and finalising the report and in clarifying any details which need to be so checked with the applicant,
4. submit the report in a timely manner by the end of June to allow for circulation to all assessors and directors prior to their meetings in July,
5. make every effort to attend the annual Assessors' Panel Meeting which currently take place online over two hours,
6. make every effort to attend any training workshops which currently take place online over two hours,
7. make every effort to attend the annual virtual Sandford Award Presentation Ceremony which takes place in early December
8. be prepared to give their time to develop new aspects of the assessment materials, (e.g., revising the assessors' handbook, producing house style guides and material to support the report writing etc),
9. be prepared to give their time to read the assessors' reports prior to the meetings to help ensure consistency and compatibility.

G. How the Sandford Award will help you to be an effective assessor

To enable you to carry out your role effectively we will endeavour to:

- provide a clearly defined outline of the role and expectations of assessors and what they can expect from us,
- provide the training and support volunteers need to complete the tasks involved for this role,
- explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain these,
- provide a named person as a key contact,
- do our best to help you develop your role,
- provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst undertaking work,
- provide an environment which is free from unfair treatment,
- try to resolve fairly, any problems and difficulties volunteers may encounter during their time with the Sandford Award,
- keep you informed of changes and developments affecting you,
- involve you with decision making that affects you, where appropriate, and provide opportunities to give and receive feedback on your role,
- ensure you are valued by paid staff, who are fully aware of the nature and purpose of volunteering.

How to apply

Please complete our Volunteer Registration Form and accompanied by your curriculum vitae, send it to Jayne Ellis, Sandford Award Administrator at:

Email: sandford@bishopg.ac.uk

Write to us:

Heritage Education Trust
Bishop Grosseteste University
Longdales Road
Lincoln
LN1 3DY