

the reading agency

Participate

Accreditation handbook

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Introduction

Why accredit young people's learning?

There are a number of reasons to accredit young people's participation in your service.

For young people, accreditation can provide:

- A sense of achievement and increased self-esteem (particularly valuable for young people who have had negative experiences of formal education)
- The motivation to engage with new activities
- The motivation to continue with activities
- Credibility with employers and educational establishments
- A step on the ladder towards achieving further qualifications.

For libraries, accreditation can provide:

- A useful structure for developing meaningful activities for young people in the library environment
- A quality assurance mechanism to ensure that activities are focused and appropriate to the users
- Recognition with other education providers and agencies
- An evaluation strategy
- A hook to engage the interest of partner agencies
- Possibilities for attracting further funding, especially if offering accreditation through formal qualification routes.

There are many misconceptions about accreditation which can make us wary of using it. Handled inappropriately, accreditation can be seen in the following ways:

- As something that's bolted onto the end of a project
- As something time-consuming and arduous for staff
- As something off-putting to young people
- As a prescriptive mechanism which forces young people to fulfil meaningless or unpleasant requirements.

It is important that, in reality, accreditation is none of these things. Accreditation is a choice for young people. It should be an integral feature of the offer that libraries give to young people and provide staff with the tools to develop meaningful and appropriate activities in conjunction with young people and partner agencies. Accreditation doesn't need to be heavy-handed and should never be discussed in a way that's intimidating to young people, or that implies that it is a compulsory part of involvement however you should be up front with young people about any accreditation opportunities you offer. Planning for offering accreditation should also be done as early as possible, rather than being seen as an afterthought.

In putting together this handbook, The Reading Agency has included a range of accreditation options which are flexible, easy to use and appropriate to the opportunities libraries can offer.

Different types of accreditation

There are a huge range of accreditation options available for working with young people. They fall into two main categories:

1. Formal qualifications which are nationally recognised, which can draw down funding and which can provide credit towards other formal qualifications
2. Informal qualifications which may also be nationally recognised but which don't usually attract funding and can't be claimed as credit towards formal qualifications.

Regardless of their status, most forms of accreditation are part of the National Qualifications Framework and are mapped to standard levels.

National Qualifications Framework

Level of qualification	Formal educational examples	Accreditation award examples
8	Doctorate	
7	Masters degree	
6	Bachelors degree	
5	Diploma of Higher Education	
4	Certificates of Higher Education	
3 Advanced Level	A-Level, Level 3 NVQ	Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award Youth Achievement Award – Platinum
2 Intermediate Level	GCSE Grade A* - C, Level 2 NVQ	Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award Youth Achievement Award – Gold
1 Foundation Level	GCSE Grade D-G, Level 1 NVQ	Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award Youth Achievement Award – Silver Getting Connected
Entry Level	Entry Level/ Certificate in Adult Literacy	Youth Achievement Award – Bronze

This handbook provides further details on the following most commonly used accreditation schemes:

- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- The Youth Challenge and Youth Achievement Award
- Getting Connected
- The ASDAN Activities Award

These awards have been particularly highlighted because of their apparent ease of use and their appropriateness for library activities. However other awards that library services have used include:

Young People's Arts Award <http://www.artsaward.org.uk/>

AQA unit award scheme <http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/uas.php>

If you are working with a local V team you might also use

V involved awards <http://www.vinspired.com/awards>

These are not part of the national qualifications framework, but are a national scheme providing recognition for young people's volunteering. V awards could be used as an introduction to lead on to other forms of accreditation.

Choosing accreditation suitable for your purposes

There are a number of factors to consider when selecting accreditation options:

- The young people that you are trying to engage: their backgrounds, abilities, interests and aspirations
- The partners with whom you wish to work: their targets and accreditation experiences
- Any funding implications for your authority e.g. the costs of the Awards and any training, or the need to draw down funding

The table in the following section provides a guide only. In order to be certain about which accreditation package(s) fulfil your needs, we recommend that you read the detailed information on each award and discuss options with your youth work partners. You can also find links in each section to further information on each award.

Costs will vary depending on the arrangements that you can make with partner agencies. If youth work partners are already registered and experienced in running awards, you are likely to be able to avoid paying registration and training fees, and this route is strongly recommended. You may also be able to negotiate with youth partners regarding subsidising or covering any individual fees for young people.

For brief information about each of the awards, see the section: How to use this handbook.

Working in partnership

There are massive advantages to working in partnership with other agencies to deliver the various accreditation options, and the experience of your partners is likely to be a key factor in determining your choices.

Advantages include:

- The experience of youth workers (or other partners) in delivering the accreditation.
- Many accreditation schemes require that your library service is registered to deliver accreditation. This can have costly implications. If your partner agency is already registered, you are likely to be able to avoid the costs of accreditation training and registration fees.
- You can provide new opportunities for youth work providers and young people, an arrangement that can be mutually beneficial e.g. youth work providers can help with recruiting library volunteers by referring young people from the youth service. In turn, this will help youth services to meet targets for positive activities and accredited outcomes.
- Using accreditation as a marketing tool to get young people involved

Accreditation can be a key tool in attracting the interest of both youth sector partners and young people.

Youth workers and schools will often be engaged in supporting young people working towards accreditation. Libraries can offer an extension of this work, providing young people with new volunteering opportunities to fulfil the requirements of their awards. Libraries can also provide an alternative and stimulating environment where youth workers and young people can run activities.

For some young people, getting involved in library activities will be an end in itself but for others, accreditation will make the opportunities more attractive. This will be especially true for young people who are looking for work experience, who want to build their university applications, or for young people who are not currently engaged in education employment or training (NEET) and are seeking a way back.

Accreditation and marketing should be part of a cycle.

1. Accreditation motivates people to become involved
2. Young people achieve awards
3. Achievement is recognised with celebration events-
4. Celebrations motivate new young people to become involved.

Recognition and celebration events are important to all volunteers whether they are on an accreditation path or not. For more information on recognising and celebrating volunteering, please see the Participate Volunteering Resources.

Possible progression routes

Accreditation provides a variety of progression routes for young people. as it structures young people's participation showing how they can progress between roles and levels of awards e.g. a young person could start off designing a poster as a simple Youth Challenge and then move on to becoming a Marketing Co-ordinator as part of a higher level Youth Achievement Award.

Some simple awards are also linked to other formal qualifications which may be provided by youth work partners. This allows young people to consolidate and progress their achievements e.g. the ASDAN Activities Award can count towards:

- CoPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness)
- ASDAN Bronze, Silver, Gold and FE Awards
- Youth Achievement Award.

How to use this handbook

This handbook is designed to help you:

- choose appropriate accreditation routes for the young people you are working with
- work with partners to plan what you need to do to achieve accreditation.

The handbook may seem dauntingly long, but you don't need to use all of it! Step 1 is to choose your accreditation route(s), and once you have done this you need to read only the appropriate pages.

Step 1 - Choosing accreditation routes

This handbook provides detailed guidance on the following awards (see the Introduction section for the reasons behind this):

- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- The Youth Challenge and Youth Achievement Award
- Getting Connected
- The ASDAN Activities Award

You may find other forms of accreditation are more suitable to your situation and the needs of young people you are working with.

In order to decide which awards to use, you need to ask three questions:

Are your partners registered as providers of a particular award, and do they have experience of delivering it?

Many youth organisations and schools have considerable experience of working with accreditation awards, and are registered providers.

Is the award appropriate for the young people you are or want to work with?

The table below gives information about different award schemes some are more appropriate for particular socially excluded groups , e.g. Young people who are NEET.

Are the young people you are or want to work with happy to use this award?

The young people you are or want to work with may already be registered with an award scheme and may be keen to follow this path rather than the one in which your partner has experience.

If the answer to any of these questions is no, then you may wish to find additional partners who can help. You can also consider registering the library service as an accreditation centre, but this takes time and has a cost and training consideration.

Choosing an accreditation route

Award	Age and ability of young people	Typical Partners	Time to achieve award	Content	External requirements	Possible costs to service
Duke of Edinburgh Award	14-25 Usually motivated, high achievers	Often run through schools, also Youth service	12-18 months	Volunteering: working as a volunteer for the library Skills: Taking part in library activities e.g. reading groups	Expedition. Physical education and residential requirements cannot be met by library opportunities	No cost for library service
Youth Challenge / Youth Achievement Awards	11-19 Any ability	Youth service	30-120 hours for an Award 6-15 hours for a Challenge	Any library based activity can be counted towards these Awards aligned to young people's needs and interests	None	approximately £48 p.a. if registering approximately £5 - approximately £11.20 per young person approximately £130 for staff training
Getting Connected	Usually 14-25 Suitable for young people who are NEET	Youth work partners learning mentors in schools education exclusion units	120 hours for a Profile of Achievement 30 hours per unit	Units on Using Information, Getting and Giving Support are suitable for library activities	Units including Exploring Risks and Coping with Feelings are more appropriate to a youth work context	approximately £20 per young person, plus approximately £8 per unit approximately £350 for staff training (optional)
ASDAN Activities	Mainly 13-19 Any ability	Youth service	10-60 hours (average 30 hours for whole Award)	Any library based activity can be counted towards these Awards aligned to young people's needs and interests	None	approximately £58.75 p.a. if registering approximately £4.75 per young person approximately £79 for staff training

Examples:

You are working with some young people who are socially excluded. Your youth service partners are registered as Youth Challenge / Youth Achievement providers, and the learning mentors from your school partners are registered with the Getting Connected Scheme. How do you decide which route to take?

Ask the young people. Each partner could talk to the group about the awards, and the group can decide which they think is the most appropriate for them.

You are working with local youth services partners. They are registered providers for Youth Achievement Awards, but some of the young people who want to volunteer already have Duke of Edinburgh bronze awards, achieved through their school Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and want to work towards their silver awards.

Speak to the school staff member in charge of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. S/he may be unaware of what libraries have to offer, and this could lead to more young people taking part in library activities through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Step 2 - What you need to read

When you have chosen your award you will only need to read the sections relating to that award. There are sections on:

- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Youth Challenge/ Youth Achievement Award
- Getting Connected
- ASDAN Activities Award

Each of these sections tells you:

- what the award scheme is
- who runs it
- what the scheme consists of
- more detail about recording achievement, assessment, etc.
- how you can run the scheme within your service
- the cost
- how to find useful contacts and further information.

Step 3 – Plan

You will need to plan your introduction of accreditation as a mini-project, starting with a meeting with your partner(s) to discuss exactly what needs to be done, and who is going to do it.

You will need to decide:

- training – who, if anyone, needs to be trained in delivering the award?
- funding – nearly all awards incur some cost. Will this be paid by your partners? Have you included this cost in your young people’s service budget? Will you ask young people for a contribution?
- presenting the accreditation path and procedures to young people – who will do this how much detail will you give how much say will the young people have? The example activities in the following sections can be very helpful in demonstrating to young people what is involved.
- timescales – when will any training be complete? When can young people start on their activities? When can they expect to reach the various stages?
- targets – how many young people will you expect achieve accreditation? Will you include targets for different groups of young people?
- evaluation – how will you evaluate your accreditation work? When will you review what has been done so far?

Make sure that all of these are agreed and written down before you do anything else!

Step 4 – Implementation

Put your plan into practice!

Step 5 – Review

As part of your plan, you will have decided on review dates for each phase. Make sure you are clear about what you expect to achieve, and make notes of:

- what has been achieved
- what has not yet been achieved
- anything that has gone really well
- any problems.

If there have been significant problems or delays, or you are way off target, you may need to rethink your approach to accreditation – perhaps a different award system would be more appropriate for your groups of young people. If all is going well, then you could perhaps use this opportunity for setting new targets.