

Background

The new national award, which will accredit school libraries in primary or secondary sectors, involves a sign-up by SLSs in order to be able to administer the award. This is free of charge but involves agreeing to the [Terms and Conditions](#) governing the Award.

Please note that the term 'SLS' (denoting a Schools' Library Service) is used for convenience but may imply 'Education Library Service' or any other name used to denote a traded service of bulk loans of books and other resources to schools within a local authority area.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How much does it cost?

A: There is NO charge to SLSs wishing to administer this Award. They just have to register to download the documents on the ASCEL website, and to agree to the Terms and Conditions as laid out there. However, there is then a fixed charge to schools, wherever they are in the country, with three rates of fee, depending on whether the school is a subscriber to the local SLS, is a member of SLA or is neither. SLSs must offer the Award on this agreed scale.

Q2: Is the award just for secondary schools?

A: No, the Award is offered to schools in any sector, primary or secondary and maintained, academies and independent schools.

Q3: How do schools sign up?

A: The Award is offered by SLSs that decide to do so, so they advertise to the schools in their area or neighbouring authorities where there is no SLS. There is a flier which schools can edit with their contact details to make this easier. Schools might enquire about the award centrally to SLS-UK / ASCEL. Where this happens, the school will be referred to the local SLS that has signed up to administer the Award.

Q4: Is there a time limit for schools to complete their self-assessment?

A: No. Schools should pay the fee once they apply to take part and are sent the documentation. There is no time limit then for them to return the self-assessment, but the SLS may want to consider nudging after a year, especially if they feel the school might need some encouragement to complete the form.

Q5: Do SLSs go into schools to assess the Award?

A: No, there is no need to do this. The simplicity of the Award is that it is meant to work through self-assessment by the school and minimal evidence. We do not want to see a portfolio nor to spend time going to schools to validate what is happening there. Because the scheme is administered locally, most schools and their staff will be known to the SLS and most queries should be cleared up by an email or phone call.



A typical application will involve the following amount of time (Total 1h 20m) for the SLS:

- **sending** the documents (5 mins)
- **marking** the submission - can be done by minimum of 2 people (c1 hour)
- **editing** and sending cert to school (10 mins)
- **publicising** on website, newsletter etc (5 mins)

Any decision to visit should be in own time to enable entry to a particular school where this has been difficult in the past, not as a matter of course.

Q6: How long does the Award last?

A: There is no time limit on the validity of the Award. However, if there are changes of personnel or a significant change in the library facilities at a school, they might agree with the SLS to revalidate their award. A period of 5 years might be reasonable for this, but will not be insisted upon. Any revalidation would be a new self-assessment following the same procedure as first time, so charges would be as currently applicable, with new certificates being awarded.

Q7: What happens if a school never completes the application?

A: SLSs should remind schools (as in Q4) if they have not completed the form after a time lapse, and check if they might need some support or guidance. But it should be clear to schools that the fee is non-returnable.

Q8: What happens if a school fails the process?

A: The Award is designed to be achievable and has been achieved in its previous 'incarnation' by a range of libraries in both primary and secondary sectors. The Gold Award allows those operating a larger and perhaps better-budgeted service to excel, but experience shows that sometimes the smaller libraries achieve better as they are doing more with less. If a form is returned which does not reach the required number of ticks, the SLS should liaise with the school to ensure the school has not been too hard on itself! So far there has not been a school that has failed. Usually there are conversations to ensure the school is being fair in its claims – and these can err both under and over the criteria set out in the Award documentation. Always refer to this and keep consistent guidelines amongst your own schools and it should be possible to make this an award that affirms and encourages rather than a series of impossible hurdles.

Q9: What if I want to change the Award?

A: The Award has been agreed nationally, and its strength is in being offered consistently across the UK. However, it will be reviewed annually by ASCEL to ensure the content works and the fees are reasonable. This will also be in conjunction with our endorsing bodies, SLA, CILIP-SLG and SCL. If you have any particular comments to feed in to this process, please do make them known as in Q10 below.

Q10: What if I still have questions?

A: Do please talk to colleagues, the ASCEL SLS rep is always pleased to field these in the first instance (currently Nina Simon) via schoolslibraryservicesuk@gmail.com. She will refer your enquiry to others as appropriate.



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