Rise, Freelancer

Accreditation Information Pack

> A National Standard for Freelance Education, Accountability and Impact

FREELANCER CLUB

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Purpose of Accreditation

The **Freelance Education Framework (FEF)** establishes freelancing as a legitimate and supported learner destination across the UK education sector.

Independent work is now a defining feature of the labour market, yet institutional systems remain misaligned with this reality.

Accreditation provides:

- A clear pathway to strengthen freelance support
- Recognition of meaningful activity already underway
- A shared national standard for consistency and accountability
- Alignment between institutional practice and evolving graduate employment realities
- Enhanced credibility as a leader in modern career pathways, attracting students, partners, and funding
- Peer insight and benchmarking through a network of leading institutions supporting freelancers
- Expert guidance and ready-made resources to design and deliver effective freelance support systems

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What Accreditation Recognises

Accreditation recognises how institutions:

1. Support freelance career pathways
2. Equip students with practical skills and confidence
3. Embed freelancing across culture, curriculum, and services
4. Reduce barriers to accessing paid freelance work
5. Provide inclusive and equitable support structures

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The Benefits of Accreditation

For Students:

- Clear, supported pathways into freelancing
- Greater confidence to pursue independent careers
- Access to relevant skills aligned with high-growth sectors
- Protection from exploitative practice and unpaid work
- Improved visibility of freelance opportunities and routes

For Institutions:

- Supports employability and graduate destination outcomes
- Aligns provision with high-growth sectors (Creative, Digital, Tech)
- Positions the institution at the forefront of a nationally recognised standard
- Strengthens credibility with government, funders, and sector partners
- Strengthens internal coherence across departments and services
- Enhances reputation as a leader in modern, flexible career pathways
- Reinforces commitment to inclusive and diverse student futures
- Ensures standards are met through independent review
- Peer insight and benchmarking through a network of leading institutions, enabling collaboration and shared learning.
- Expert guidance and ready-made resources to design and deliver effective freelance support systems
- A seat at the table, contributing to a collective voice that informs policymakers at government level.

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Freelance Education Framework

The Freelance Education Framework (FEF) is a national standard helping institutions recognise, embed and strengthen freelance support across culture, curriculum and services.

Co-developed with leading sector partners, it provides a pathway for accountability and impact, preparing students for independent careers.

CHEAD

nahemi
national association for higher education in moving image

Royal College of Art

NTU Nottingham Trent University

Ravensbourne University London

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Enterprise Educators UK

Teesside University

University of South Wales Prifysgol De Cymru

University of East London
Pioneering Futures since 1898

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

ual: university of the arts london

UWE Bristol University of the West of England

The Framework's five pillars (page 13 onward in the FEF) identify the institutional conditions needed for sustainable freelance support:

1. **Staff Development**
2. **Training & Support**
3. **Cultural Recognition**
4. **Access to Opportunities**
5. **Community & Inclusion**

Accreditation Process Flow

Your roadmap to Freelance Education Accreditation

Declaration of Intent

Sign the Declaration of Intent to begin participation

Pre-Assessment

Initial readiness check to gauge accreditation suitability

Prepare Evidence

Gather key info to accompany the accreditation application

Choose an Accreditation Tier

Foundation Level

Bronze Accreditation

Development Level

Silver Accreditation

Advanced Level

Gold Accreditation

Accreditation Application

Submit application and supporting evidence

Accreditation Awarded

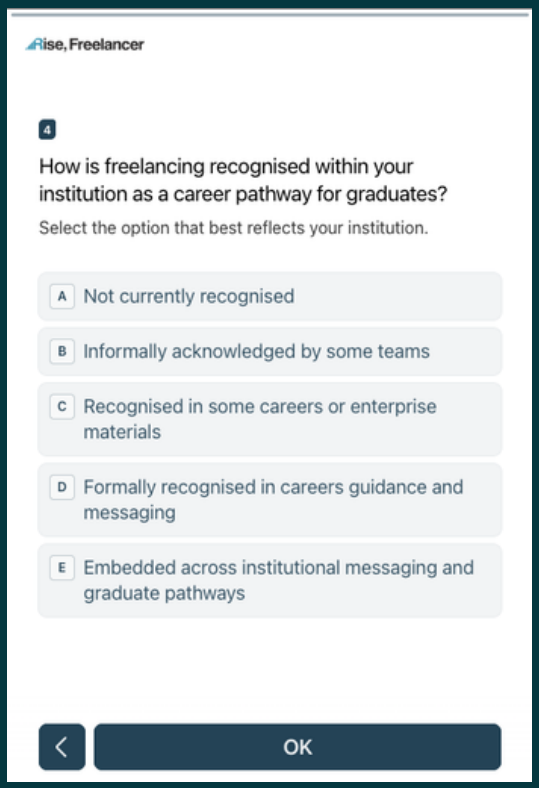
Receive Freelance Education Accredition Certificate and Pack

Pre-Assessment

Before submitting for accreditation, institutions are invited to undertake a **pre-assessment** aligned with the core pillars of the Freelance Education Framework.

Institutions are encouraged to review current provision and answer a series of questions across five areas:

1. Recognition of freelancing
2. Staff capability
3. Student support
4. Institutional alignment
5. Outcomes and data.



The pre-assessment stage creates space to reflect on existing activity, identifying how freelance support is embedded across services, culture, and programmes.

Structured guidance is provided to assess suitability for accreditation, alongside clarity on which tier best aligns with current provision. The process also delivers indicative feedback, highlighting strengths, areas for development, and priority actions to enhance a future submission.

This process enables institutions to approach the formal application with greater clarity, ensuring evidence is focused, relevant, and aligned with the expectations of the framework.

Freelance Education Accreditation Process

Following completion of the pre-assessment, institutions will be invited to proceed to the formal **Freelance Education Accreditation** stage. At this point, they will receive a link to the online accreditation application, the relevant supporting documentation and the full set of criteria aligned with their chosen accreditation tier.

Institutions will be asked to describe their current provision and may upload supporting evidence.

Upon submission, the application will be reviewed by an independent assessor against the set of criteria. Where appropriate, the assessor may request additional information or clarification to support the review process.

Once the assessment has been completed, the outcome and any relevant feedback will be formally communicated to the institution.

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Evidence Checklist

Supporting evidence should demonstrate how freelance support is embedded within the institution. This may include curriculum materials, programme outlines, partnership examples, student or graduate outcomes, event records, policy documents, and testimonials that show how freelancers are supported in practice.

Examples of Evidence:

- ✓ Strategy or policy excerpts
- ✓ Workshop outlines or programme descriptions
- ✓ Staff CPD records
- ✓ Student resources or toolkits
- ✓ Case studies or testimonials
- ✓ Partnership examples
- ✓ Data snapshots (if available)

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3 Tiers of Accreditation

The accreditation model is structured across three tiers, recognising institutions at different stages of embedding freelance support while providing a clear pathway for progression. Each tier reflects a distinct level of institutional commitment, practice, and leadership, enabling universities to demonstrate how freelance career pathways are integrated across their culture, services, and educational provision.

Together, the tiers form a progressive framework that encourages institutions to deepen and extend their activity over time. While many will pursue accreditation sequentially as their provision evolves, each tier also stands independently as a mark of distinction, recognising meaningful progress and signalling a credible commitment to supporting independent careers.

Accreditation is awarded on a three-year cycle to ensure institutions continue developing their provision. However, institutions do not need to wait until the end of the cycle to progress; where activity strengthens, they may apply for a higher tier at any point, allowing accreditation to reflect their most current level of practice and leadership.

Tier 1: Foundation Adoption

The first tier of accreditation recognises institutions that formally commit to supporting freelance careers and have begun embedding this across their provision.

Foundation Level

Foundational level signals that the institution acknowledges the growing role of self-employment in the modern workforce and is beginning to embed freelance awareness across its culture, services and messaging. This includes visible recognition, initial activity, and early-stage support for students exploring freelance and portfolio careers.

For students and graduates, it means early exposure to the realities of independent work, access to guidance and resources, and reassurance that freelancing is recognised as a legitimate and supported career pathway.

Tier 2: Development Level

The second tier recognises institutions actively delivering meaningful freelance support.

Development Level

Institutions:

Development level acknowledges institutions that have moved beyond intention and are actively delivering meaningful support through programmes, curriculum activity and partnerships.

Students gain hands-on opportunities to experience freelance work through live briefs, industry engagement and practical learning, while staff are equipped to guide.

For graduates, it creates a stronger launchpad into self-employment, equipping them with the confidence, skills and networks required to build sustainable freelance careers.

Tier 3: Advanced Level

The highest tier of accreditation recognises institutions setting the benchmark for freelance education.

Advanced Level

The advanced level celebrates institutions that are leading the sector in freelance education and shaping the future of work. Freelance support is embedded strategically across departments, with strong partnerships, measurable outcomes and a culture that champions entrepreneurial and portfolio careers.

Students benefit from a highly integrated ecosystem of learning, industry collaboration and real-world opportunities, while graduates leave with the capability, credibility and networks to thrive as independent professionals. Institutions at this level also help influence national practice, setting the benchmark for others to follow.

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Safeguards & Assessment Process

A fair, supportive process with readiness checks, feedback and opportunities to strengthen submissions before final decisions.

To ensure fairness and credibility, the Freelance Education Accreditation process includes several safeguards.

Institutions are encouraged to undertake a short pre-application readiness check to confirm alignment with the Framework and suitability for the chosen accreditation tier before submitting evidence.

During the formal assessment process, the independent assessor may request additional information or clarification where appropriate. If the panel determines that the criteria are not yet fully met, institutions will typically be offered constructive feedback and may be invited to submit further evidence or resubmit within an agreed period without an additional assessment fee.

These measures ensure the process supports institutional development while maintaining the integrity of the accreditation standard.

Once the assessment has been completed, the outcome and any relevant feedback will be formally communicated to the institution.

Accredited Institutions: Rewards & Benefits

1. Official Recognition

Institutions receive a formal certificate stating their accreditation tier and validity period, a digital accreditation badge for online use, and an assessment summary highlighting key strengths and areas of excellence.

2. Marketing & PR Toolkit

A communications pack including logo usage guidelines, a press release template, ready-to-use social media graphics, and short website copy to help institutions promote their accreditation.

3. Practical Value-Adds

Resources that support student engagement, such as a student-facing explanation of the accreditation, confirmation of listing on the accredited institutions directory, and a physical accreditation sticker for campus spaces.

4. Continuous Support

Guidance to support ongoing development, including a roadmap outlining how to progress to the next accreditation tier, opportunities to provide feedback on the framework, and access to freelance-specific resources.

5. Community Access

Access to a network of sector leaders advancing freelance support through a dedicated online community for collaboration and peer exchange, and a seat at the table shaping a collective voice to inform government policymakers.

6. Legal & Compliance Documents

Documentation outlining appropriate use of the accreditation logo and the terms under which institutions may display and reference their accredited status.

Become a Freelance Champion & Voice For Change

Peer insight & benchmarking

Knowledge exchange & connections

Shape the future of work and freelance policy

Accredited institutions join a community of freelance thought leaders, with opportunities to connect through meet-ups and online channels.

- Gain peer insight and benchmarking through a network of leading institutions supporting freelancers
- Knowledge share, collaborate and develop connections
- Contribute to a collective voice to feed into the Freelance Champion, helping shape policies that impact millions of freelancers.

Governance & Oversight

Accreditation under the Freelance Education Framework is overseen by Freelancer Club, the independent body responsible for stewarding the framework nationally. This governance model ensures the accreditation process remains credible, impartial, and consistent across institutions. As the governing body, Freelancer Club maintains the integrity of the framework, oversees the accreditation process, and ensures the standards continue to reflect developments in the labour market, higher education, and the freelance economy.

To support transparency and sector alignment, the framework is informed by an advisory panel comprising representatives from universities, sector associations, freelance practitioners, and student voices. The panel provides strategic insight and sector feedback, ensuring the framework continues to reflect the realities of higher education and freelance career pathways while maintaining its mission-led focus on supporting freelancers and raising national standards.

Assessment and Decision-Making

Applications for accreditation are reviewed by independent Assessment Officers, appointed to ensure the evaluation process is impartial and evidence-based. These officers review institutional submissions against the framework criteria and the tier applied for, considering supporting evidence, examples of practice, and where appropriate, additional clarification from the institution.

Assessment Officers make recommendations based on the strength and alignment of the evidence provided. Final accreditation decisions are confirmed through the framework's governance structure to ensure consistency and fairness across all submissions. This process ensures that accreditation recognises genuine institutional activity and maintains confidence in the framework as a credible national standard.

CONSISTENCY **TRANSPARENCY** **NATIONAL ALIGNMENT**

Participation & Fees

Pricing

PRE-ASSESSMENT ELIGIBILITY CHECK	FREE
ANNUAL ACCREDITATION	
Small (up to 5000 FTEs)	£1,400
Medium (5000 - 20,000 FTEs)	£2,200
Large (20,000+)	£3,600

Assessment Fees (per audit)

Accreditation is awarded on a three-year cycle.

FOUNDTATIONAL ACCREDITATION	£2,500
DEVELOPMENT ACCREDITATION	£3,500
ADVANCED ACCREDITATION	£4,500

Additional support

Optional support services are available where required. Enquire about pricing.

- Staff CPD on freelance support
- In-depth institutional self-audit
- Strategic implementation guidance
- Student and graduate workshops
- Student and graduate coaching
- Community building
- Access to resources and reporting
- Improving freelance data capture

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Contact Information

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Statement of Limitations

The “Freelance Education Accreditation" is a voluntary, industry-led standard designed to recognise excellence in supporting student and graduate freelancers.

This accreditation is not a statutory requirement, nor is it issued by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) or any government-appointed educational regulatory body. Participation in this scheme is an elective commitment by the institution to adhere to our proprietary framework standards.