

Welcome to the Register of Professional Archaeologists Field School Certification program! Below are the current RPA standards for archaeological field schools as well as the RPA Field School Certification application.

RPA actively advocates the professional growth of all archaeologists, and believes that a strong professional career should begin with a sound introduction to archaeological field methodologies. Archaeological field schools serve as a primary introduction to the discipline. The RPA believes that certification of archaeology field schools will strengthen these important training and learning contexts by requiring certain standards for basic research methodologies, field experiences, reporting of results, and time devoted to field school activities.

# Guidelines and Standards for Underwater Archaeological Field Schools

In 1974, the Society of American Archeology passed the following resolution:

Whereas each archeological site contains evidence of specific human activities and is therefore a unique source of data about past socio-cultural behavior, no site can be written off in advance as unimportant or expendable. No site deserves less than professional excavation, analysis and publication, and whereas the training of students in archeological skills is an important part of an anthropological curriculum, and whereas such training is likely to be grossly inadequate and misleading to the student if it is not given in the context of a serious research commitment on the part of the instructor to the archeological resources in question. Therefore be it resolved that the practice of excavating or collecting from archeological sites solely or primarily for “teaching” purposes is contrary to the provision against indiscriminate excavation of archeological sites contained in Article I, Section 2 of the by-laws of the Society for American

Archaeology. Such activities are to be deplored, whether conducted by anthropologists who are not adequately trained in archeological field techniques, or by trained archeologists who do not have continuing research interest in the resources in question. It further resolved that such activities are unethical as defined in Article III, Section 4 of the by-laws of the Society for American Archaeology and by the guidelines of the ethics committee of the American Anthropological Association, and that members of these organizations who engage in such practices are subject to appropriate sanctions.

In accordance with these principles, and by virtue of its role in providing guidance and

standards for the performance of archeological research, the Register of Professional Archeologists recommends that an academic archeological field school meet the following minimal criteria:

### **A. Purposes**

1. The primary objective of an academic field school must be the training of students. Thus, the field school should provide the initial field experiences required as the first step in her/his development as a professional archeologist (in accordance with RPA standards). Other goals (such as employment, contract work, or salvage of threatened resources) must be secondary to the goals of student training and education.
2. Underwater field schools are meant to introduce students to the ethical and professional standards expected in archaeological research. The field school research design and curriculum, as well as staff and students, must adhere to the Register of Professional Archaeologists Code of Conduct.
3. The field school program and recovered data must be part of an explicitly designed education, research, or cultural resource management program. The program sponsoring the field school must be able to show evidence of past conservation of cultural resources, curation, and publication of results.
4. The field school program must have an existing research design that details the scope of research to be undertaken by field school personnel and participants. The research design must be completed and submitted with the RPA-sponsored Field School Certification application. A full or abbreviated version of the research design should also be made available to each field school participant in printed or electronic form prior to the first day of the field school.
5. Directors or Principal Investigators must submit a written description of diving operations signed by the Dive Safety Officer (DSO) or other supervisor from the institution's Diving Control Board (DCB). The written plan should specify safety procedures, responsibilities of dive team members, equipment use and maintenance procedures, and emergency procedures (including first aid, evacuation, and nearest recompression chamber location). The RPA Field School Certification will not evaluate the diving plan, but requires the DSO signature to ensure that all applicants conduct dive operations under the supervision of their host institution's diving control board.
6. The field school program must provide a curriculum design with the application. The curriculum design should include an explicit, detailed schedule of instruction and supervision, evidence of adequate facilities (see E.1.), and provision for early analysis and reporting of data generated by the program. The curriculum schedule and description of facilities should also be provided to all field school participants.

## **B. Personnel**

1. The Director or Principal Investigator of the field program must be RPA-certified by the beginning of the field school program. The Director or Principal Investigator must also have a demonstrated record of relevant research experience. The Director or PI should have dominant responsibility for direct supervision of field school participants in the field and in the laboratory.
2. Assistant(s)/Supervisor(s) must be qualified by completion of at least one field school which meets the RPA certification guidelines or by an equivalent combination of relevant field and laboratory experiences as determined by the field school Director.
3. Other specialized instructors and lecture topics should be used as appropriate.

## **C. Operational procedure of each field school**

The Register realizes that field school research programs include a wide variety of research objectives, field methods, and theoretical perspectives. The following section details operational procedures that include, but are not limited to, field and laboratory procedures that will broaden the educational experience of field school participants. Terrestrial survey and excavation methods may be reviewed during introductory lectures; however, the underwater field school experience is not meant to replace training in terrestrial methods.

### **Field school operations should include:**

1. Prefatory formal lectures on safety protocols, field excavation and survey observations, excavation procedures and hazards, terrestrial and underwater artifact provenience, site stratigraphy, intrusions, site formation processes, specialized equipment to be used during the field work, on-site artifact conservation as well as conservation outside the field environment, diving procedures, descriptive note writing, remote sensing and other survey methods, field logistics, administration, etc. Films, slides, models, and other techniques should be used as available and appropriate. At least 12 hours of lecture instruction should be devoted to this introduction prior to actual field excavation and survey.
2. All students who complete an RPA-certified field school should be exposed to a broad overview of the various skills required of field work in underwater archaeology. Students should receive formal, small group instruction on the following topics. Where the research design does not include an activity specified below the PI must demonstrate that students will receive a formal lecture on the topic given by an experienced instructor.

A. Introduction to topographic and plane mapping, use of azimuths, baselines, and trilateration. Students should be minimally introduced to concepts of scales, ratios, coordinate systems (state plane, UTM, geographic, etc.), and terms by an experienced instructor skilled in underwater mapping. Where applicable, the Register recommends students simulate mapping techniques on land before attempting underwater.

B. Introduction to underwater and archaeological field photography, including photographic techniques and problems (lighting, angles, wide angle lens, close-up, etc.). Proper photographic equipment must be employed during field operations (North arrow, photo boards, etc).

C. Introduction to reconnaissance-level survey (circle searches, towed searches, swim line search, grid searches, etc.), not only to instruct in finding and recording data but also for instruction in the use of such data for defining archaeological problems.

D. Formal laboratory instruction and supervision in on-site care and conservation practices, long-term cleaning, labeling, sorting, identification of artifacts, curation and storage, etc., as appropriate. Field supervisors should alternate as lab supervisors, preferably scheduled so that field school personnel process their own field data.

3. Formal lectures in field or laboratory including but not limited to the specific research plan, long-range project goals, culture(s) being investigated, field problems, curation and reporting plans, public outreach and interpretation, site preservation, etc.

#### **D. Field procedures/ structures**

1. All students should be instructed in the use of all tools, equipment, and vehicles (as qualified), rotating as assistants with photography, mapping, provenience control, sketching, and other specialized functions. All steps in procedures and evaluation of appropriate techniques should be repeatedly explained. Safety procedures including health hazards, proper equipment use, and in-field medical care should be discussed before and during the first day of field work.

2. Supervisors are required on all field days to brief divers on dive objectives, unusual hazards or environmental conditions that may impact diver safety, and any modifications to dive or emergency procedures necessitated by specific operations. Daily dive plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) must be on file with the appropriate Diving Safety Officer (DSO). Dive plans should include daily activities as well as the SOP for diving emergencies and the location of the two nearest health care providers (e.g. hospitals and chambers). This must be made clear to all supervisors, divers, and/or students. If emergency procedures are initiated, all diving operations must cease until the DSO gives approval for operations to begin again. Supervisors are responsible for suspending diving operations at any time if, in their opinion, conditions are unsafe. Supervisors also are responsible for ensuring that students who do not feel comfortable with diving or the diving operations are provided the opportunity

to abstain from diving activities without fear of prejudice or penalty.

3. All students should be required to keep daily systematic notes as parts of the permanent record. All notes and records must be reviewed and critiqued daily by supervisors. Additional notebooks, photo records, etc., shall be maintained as necessary, under systematic supervision.

4. All field procedures should be guided by the concept of data and record responsibility as an integrated component of professional fieldwork, with responsibility and authority for field decisions and record keeping clearly defined.

5. All students should have access to type collections and relevant library materials (including maps, photographs, site reports and literature on the archeology and environment relevant to the fieldwork). In most cases, this will require maintenance of such resources in both field and laboratory.

#### **E. Sponsor**

1. The institution sponsoring the field school must, by virtue of available resources, meet minimal specifications for institutional support, including appropriate space for laboratory work, for storage, appropriate accessioning and cataloging procedures, adequate curation, and support for publication/distribution of the research results.

2. The institution sponsoring the field school must provide for the safety and health of participants. Students must have a minimum open water SCUBA certification from an internationally recognized training agency. Advanced certifications may be required based on site conditions and scope of work. In the absence of an institutional diving control board (DCB), field schools must adhere to nationally recognized safety standards. Students will be required to complete a preliminary check out dive at the field site.

3. The ratio of students to supervisor should be determined in consultation with the Diving Control Board and on a case-by-case basis considering the site location, conditions, and scope of work to be performed.

#### **F. Field School Duration and Certification Criteria**

Field school duration has a direct influence on the education and training process. Field schools should provide at least four weeks of field experience including both field and laboratory training during the course of the program. These weeks do not have to be in a single block of time, but must be completed within a single year. One week is equal to five full days of field and/or laboratory experience.

In cases where shorter field experiences are offered, PIs may still obtain RPA certification. Short field schools (fewer than twenty days) may be certified as "RPA-Introductory." Introductory field schools provide students with exposure to archaeological field work, but do not constitute a full training experience.

The Register will attach identification criteria to each field school certification. The Register will be certifying programs according to the duration of the field school and the presence or absence of prerequisite training prior to field school participation.

Criterion 1 - The total number of weeks of field and laboratory experience each participant will gain if she/he completes the full field school program. Each full five days of field or laboratory experience will count as one week. For example, a certified field school with twenty days (4 weeks) of total training time will be certified as "RPA-4."

Criterion 2 - Presence of any prerequisite training prior to taking the field school. If field school participants are required to complete formal courses prior to the field school, or continue various research activities after their participation in a certified field school, a "P" will be added. For example, if a 20-day field school requires coursework before or after the completion of the field portion of the program, that program will be certified as "RPA-4P."

### **G. Listing of RPA-Certified Field Schools**

The Register will publish an annual list of RPA-Certified Field Schools each year in the spring issue of RPA Notes. This same list will also be made available on the official RPA web site. RPA certification of a field school may also be indicated in various clearinghouses of field school information, including the Archaeological Field School Opportunities Bulletin (AIA), Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology (ACUA) website, and fieldwork opportunities web pages.

#### **• Application and Review Process**

In order for the Register to certify a field school, we must make a determination if the proposed program meets the published RPA guidelines. In order to do this, simply fill out the Application Questionnaire and submit it, along with the requested documents, to the current RPA Certification Chair for review. There is a processing fee of US\$35.

Beginning in October 2001, all field schools will be certified for two years. Recertification after the end of the second certification year will require completion of the application form and the submission of a research design.

Application should be made as early as possible to provide for review and inclusion in the spring RPA newsletter. Please allow four weeks for certification review and notification.

- **Certification**

Once the Certification Committee has reviewed your application, you will be notified of the results by the Registrar of Professional Archeologists. If your application is approved, you can publicize your field school as being Certified by the Register of Professional Archeologists.

- **Follow-up Review**

Based on information you provide, the Certification Committee will conduct a follow-up review to determine if your deadlines for completion of laboratory work and reporting have been met. In addition, occasional peer review visits to field schools while they are in session may be conducted to determine if a certified field school is abiding by the RPA guidelines and standards. Information from follow-up reviews and peer visits may be used during the processing of applications for subsequent field schools associated with the same institution or director.