

Guidelines

Iowa Archaeological Certification Program

Offered by
The Office of the State Archaeologist
of Iowa
in cooperation with
The Iowa Archeological Society

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Description and Procedure.....	1
Registration and Initial Evaluation.....	1
Amateur Practicum.....	2
Examination and Final Evaluation.....	2
About the Certification Process.....	3
Certification Criteria.....	3
Site Surveyor Certification.....	3
Field Technician Certification.....	5
Laboratory Technician I.....	6
Certification Examination: Sample Questions.....	6
Questions applicable to all three categories.....	6
Site Surveyor’s exam.....	7
Field Technician’s exam.....	7
Lab Technician’s exam.....	7
Suggested Readings.....	8
Iowa Prehistory and Early History.....	8
General Archaeological Method and Theory.....	8
Archaeological Field Methods.....	8
Obtaining Copies of Suggested Readings.....	8
Flow Chart of Certification Process.....	9
Registration Form.....	10
Evaluation Report Form.....	11

Introduction

Each year archaeological sites are threatened with destruction. In the mid-1970’s, the Office of the State Archaeologist noted the rapid loss of archaeological sites through vandalism, development, certain agricultural practices, and erosion. Realizing there are many amateur archaeologists situated throughout the state who might be in a position to assist, an archaeological certification program was created to promote positive interaction among professional and amateur archeologists. The program objectives are to:

1. Train a group of individuals to assist professional archaeologists in field and laboratory work.
2. Increase the frequency of site reporting in the state and upgrade the quality of site reports.
3. Impress upon nonprofessional archaeologists the necessity of a well-planned research strategy, controlled survey, and scientific evaluation of the archaeological record.
4. Discourage unsupervised pot-hunting and weekend “digs.”
5. More closely involve trained individuals in the location and preservation of Iowa’s prehistoric resources.

Description and Procedure

The Iowa archaeological Certification Program is administered by the Office of the State Archaeologist in cooperation with the Iowa Archeological Society. The program offers three basic learning areas in which certification may be achieved: Site Surveyor, Field Technician, and Laboratory Technician. The certification process for each includes three sections: Registration and Initial Evaluation, Amateur Practicum, and Examination and Final Evaluation. These certifications are not intended to replace professional training and do not qualify an individual to work professionally.

Registration and Initial Evaluation

To begin the certification process, participants complete the registration form, listing the category or categories applied for, their interest in certification, their past education, and their experience in archaeology. You may make copies of this form which is provided on Page 10. The form should be

returned to the Office of the State Archaeologist with the one-time registration fee of \$10.00 payable to the Iowa Archeological Society. This fee contributes to the administration of this program.

Membership in the Iowa Archeological Society is a prerequisite for participation in the program.

The information provided will be used to determine if any past experience may count toward certification requirements. The participant is notified by letter if any previous experience can replace the practicum requirements for certification. The minimum criteria for each category are listed on Pages 4–6 of this guide.

Participants should become familiar with several basic archaeological concepts as they work toward their certification, including:

1. The definition of an archaeological “site” in its broader sense, as any place where there is evidence of past human activity.
2. The definition of “artifact,” again in its broader definition as an object made or modified by human action, and different categories of artifacts (e.g., lithics, ceramics, bone).
3. The trinomial system of site nomenclature used in Iowa and proper labeling techniques for artifacts in the field, lab, or repository.
4. The necessity of contacting the Office of the State Archaeologist to report archaeological finds and to avoid digging in or around archaeological sites without supervision.
5. The meaning and importance of specific terms used in archaeology such as stratigraphy, artifact catalog, surface collection, or site record form.

Amateur Practicum

This portion of the certification process is designed to give the participant hands-on instruction under the supervision of a professional archaeologist. This experience is intended to provide the opportunity for the participant to learn the basic program concepts while gaining experience to help them to later meet the program objectives. Participants need to keep good notes and record any observations they feel may be important to later research. They will need to be sure their supervisor will be able to complete the attached evaluation form and to arrange to send copies of their notes to the OSA. Participants in the Site Surveyor category will be under the supervision of the OSA Site Records Coordinator. Participants seeking certification as site surveyor will also receive a site survey form and instructions on how to complete the form. Those copies will be placed in the participant’s file and will be reviewed by the certification committee to help determine what the participant learned during their Practicum. If necessary, recommendations may be made to broaden the experience of the participant.

Examination and Final Evaluation

Examples of the questions asked on the exams are included on Pages 6–7 of this guide. The exam is taken at home after the participant has met the minimum criteria and the required experience for the certification sought. Exams follow an open book format that includes both objective and essay portions. Completed exams will be evaluated by the program committee. The committee may recommend to award the certification to the participant, recommend further work, or in certain extreme cases, particularly where the objectives of this program have not been met, may recommend to not award a certification.

Participants will need to become familiar with a basic set of concepts by the time of the certification exams. Ideally the Amateur Practicum will help candidates prepare for the exam, but it is difficult to give full coverage to each concept in a typical field or laboratory situation. It is strongly recommended that participants also review the suggested list of reading materials prior to requesting the exam. Prior to taking the exam, an individual may wish to consult an introductory text on archaeology or archaeological field methods. A list of suggested readings is provided at the end of these guidelines. If you choose, you may also participate in a separate but related program.

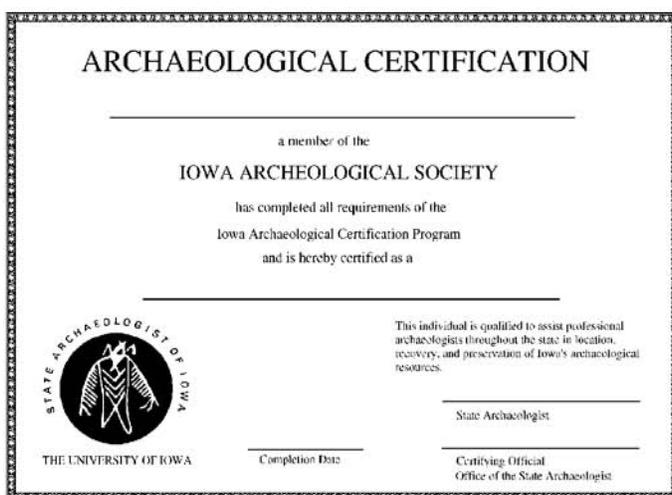
About the Certification Process

If you decide to pursue any or all of the three basic certification tracts, you should find it a rewarding process. It will provide the opportunity to learn more about the past and the methods that professional archaeologists use to study past cultures, how people live, and the necessity to preserve the fragile links to past cultures that are buried in the ground. Upon completion of the program requirements, a participant will receive both a wallet-size card and a certificate. The formats for these certificates are shown below. Receiving a certification should not be viewed as an endpoint. The essential elements of the certification program are the concepts learned while completing the requirements for the certification. Depending upon personal interests, activity level, and availability of work, participants may continue to contribute to Iowa archaeology in many meaningful ways. Opportunities exist in specialized areas such as artifact restoration and conservation, artifact illustration, archaeological photography, map drawing, and the identification and preservation of animal bones from archaeological sites. Certified IAS members have volunteered as assistant supervisors at field school excavations. Volunteers have also provided valuable assistance with artifact processing at the OSA Laboratory.

Certified participants may assist in the location and recovery of prehistoric remains on the local level. A certified site surveyor, for example, may be able to cooperate with landowners and management officials to monitor cultural resources and contact the State Archaeologist when significant sites may be potentially threatened. A field technician is qualified to act as a crew member on supervised excavations. Certified lab technicians are qualified to process and assist in supervised analysis of archaeological materials. Certified members are encouraged to submit articles for publication in the IAS newsletter and journal. Participants might describe private collections they have helped record, for example, or sites that they helped to identify and preserve, and field schools in which they have participated.

Certification Criteria

Site Surveyor Certification



The program certificate (left) and wallet card (above) are signed and sent to participants who successfully complete the certification program.

Minimum criteria. The following is a list of basic skills and knowledge that a certified site surveyor is expected to possess:

1. Obtain permission from the landowner and tenant before beginning survey instead of trespassing on private property.
2. Recognize different general classifications of archaeological sites in the field, including lithic scatter, habitation, mound, historic scatter, and former farms or residences.
3. Know how to judge the depth of a site when appropriate and the meaning of midden, cache pit, habitation structure, and surface debris.
4. Know the meaning of sterile matrix or subsoil.
5. Describe the surroundings in which the site is found including generalized landform, vegetation, surface visibility, and distance to easily identifiable landmarks.
6. Interpret a topographic map (soil map or aerial photograph if topographic map unavailable); understand and be able to locate a site to the nearest section division (i.e., $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{4}$).
7. Read a simple compass.
8. Draw a basic map of the site.
9. Describe the site, noting any cultural features that are distinguishable.
10. Pace off or measure the approximate extent of the site.
11. Know what to collect from a site to provide a representative sample and how to collect it. Debitage, bone fragments, charcoal and other plant remains, and potsherds can be just as important as a complete projectile point and may require special methods of collection.
12. Complete a site form and draw an accurate map.
13. Describe all artifacts found at the site and label them.

Requirements for certification. In order to evaluate an individual's knowledge of the above criteria, the following requirements must be completed for certification:

1. Survey a particular region, record ten archaeological sites on Iowa Archaeological Site Record form. The forms must be acceptable to the Office of the State Archaeologist.
2. Successfully complete the site surveyors examination which is designed to test the participant's grasp of the above criteria (see Pages 6–7).

Field Technician Certification

Minimum criteria. The following is a list of basic skills and knowledge that are expected of the certified field technician:

1. Recognize archaeological sites in the field.
2. Recognize and be able to differentiate different categories of artifacts.
3. Understand the use of the grid at an archaeological site (while this does not mean that individuals will have to set up a grid, they should know why the grid is used).
4. Understand and use the metric system in the excavation of levels within a square and in charting provenience of artifacts within a square.
5. Properly operate a trowel and use a shovel in skimming floors or levels.
6. Excavate a square by designated levels, keeping walls straight and floors level.
7. Map artifacts and features within the square; have a basic understanding of triangulation.
8. Draw a basic wall profile.
 9. Keep daily excavation notes.
10. Label level bags properly and identify artifacts.
11. Screen materials in the field.
12. Understand the delicate nature of charcoal and its careful recovery for radiocarbon analysis.
13. Recover a pollen sample and gastropod column.
13. Understand the meaning of stratigraphy and how to judge the degree of disturbance of a site.
14. Clean and care for field equipment.

Requirements for certification. In order to evaluate an individual's knowledge of the above criteria, the following requirements must be completed for certification.

1. Forty hours of supervised excavation with written evaluation from supervisors. Work on any professionally supervised excavation project in Iowa will qualify. A field school may be conducted periodically by the Office of the State Archaeologist in order to give individuals an opportunity to acquire field experience.
2. Successfully complete the field technician examination, which is designed to test the participant's grasp of the above criteria (see Pages 6–7).

Laboratory Technician Certification

Minimum criteria. The following is a list of basic skills and knowledge that a certified laboratory technician is expected to possess:

1. Respect the delicate nature of perishable artifacts and understand they are to be treated carefully.
2. Understand the methods of preservation of fragile bone or shell.
3. Wash archaeological materials, knowing which materials require greatest care, and sort them into descriptive and functional categories (general sorting).
4. Catalog materials, attaching correct provenience number, and writing catalog numbers in the least damaging areas.
5. Understand and be able to use the binocular microscope.
6. Participate in water flotation and screening of materials in the lab and pick out the micro evidence.
7. Understand how to reconstruct artifacts and what not to do (i.e., joining rim sherds together, reconstructing broken bone and stone artifacts, how to unglue a joint, how to avoid manipulating the final appearance of the artifact).

Requirements for certification. In order to evaluate an individual's knowledge of the above criteria, the following requirements must be completed for certification:

1. Eighty hours of lab work with written evaluation from supervisor(s). Forty hours of this experience must be supervised in the laboratory. An additional 40 hours may be completed by the individual at home. In order to make this possible, the Office of the State Archaeologist will provide archaeological samples for the participant with instructions on how to analyze the samples.
2. Successfully complete the Lab Technician examination which is designed to test the participant's grasp of the above criteria (see Page 6–7).

Certification Examination: Sample Questions

The following are the type of questions that will be asked on the category exams.

Questions applicable to all three categories

1. Name three possible criteria for recognizing an archaeological site.
 2. What do “13,” “PM,” and “1” stand for in the following designation, 13PM1.
 3. Name two different types of archaeological features.
4. If you were helping to excavate an archaeological site, how would you determine if it was stratified?
If it was stratified where would you expect to find the oldest materials?
5. Artifacts are made of what kinds of materials?
6. If you discover a site, whom should you contact?
7. The term “lithics” refers to what?
8. The term “ceramics” refers to what?
9. May an archaeological site in North America be other than Indian in origin? Explain.

Site Surveyor's exam

1. In order to gain access to a site on private property for the purpose of making a surface collection, what is the first thing the site surveyor should do?
2. What kind of materials should the surveyor collect from the surface of a site?
3. If you were making up a site sheet, what information would you record about a site?
4. Once you have collected artifacts from a site, what should you do with them?
5. How do you find out if the site you have located has already been recorded?
6. Describe to the nearest quarter section the location of the site shown on the map provided in the test book.
7. Describe the probable terrain where the following might occur: mounds, village sites, rock shelters.

Field Technician's exam

1. How is it possible to recover tiny bones and artifacts from an archaeological site?
2. Why are animal bones and seeds recovered in an excavation important?
3. What is the purpose of establishing a grid at an archaeological site?
4. If the excavation unit you were working in had projectile points, flint scrapers, bison bone, and Woodland pottery on top, and in the lower levels of the same unit you found Coke bottles, tin cans, and hula hoops, what would you say was unusual about the unit? What could this mean about the site as a whole?
5. Why is it important to keep a record of all artifacts found in a particular level and square?
6. What is a feature? In a sentence or two explain how you would record a feature.
7. List the things you might need if you were going to serve as a crew member on a dig. What things should be provided for you?
8. In collecting a radiocarbon sample, what is the best material for dating? What precautions would you take in recovering the material? What container(s) would you use?

Lab Technician's exam

1. Outline the procedures for water flotation. What are the differences between different type of flotation equipment?
2. What kinds of signs might you look for to tell if a stone tool was natural or made by humans?
3. Practical exercise. Given the following sample of materials, separate into bone, lithic, and ceramic classes, and divide the lithics into types.
4. Sort the following flotation sample into classes of bone, scales, ceramics, charcoal, daub, and lithic debitage.

Suggested Readings

Iowa Prehistory and Early History

Alex, Lynn M.

1980 *Exploring Iowa's Past: A Guide to Prehistoric Archaeology*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City

2000 *Iowa's Archaeological Past*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City

Anderson, Duane C.

1975b *Western Iowa Prehistory*. Iowa State University Press, Ames.

1981 *Eastern Iowa Prehistory*. Iowa State University Press, Ames.

General Archaeological Method and Theory

Fagan, Brian M.

1994 *In the Beginning: An Introduction to Archeology*. 8th Edition. Harper Collins College, New York.

1997 *Archaeology: A Brief Introduction*. 6th Edition. Addison Wesley Longman, Mountain View, California.

Sharer, Robert J., and Wendy Ashmore

1993 *Archaeology: Discovering Our Past*. 2nd Edition. Mayfield Publishing, Mountain View, California.

Archaeological Field Methods

Dancey, William S.

1981 *Archaeological Field Methods: An Introduction*. Burgess Publishing, Minneapolis.

Hester, Tomas R., Harry J. Shafer, and Kenneth L. Feder

1997 *Field Methods in Archaeology*. Mayfield Publishing, Mountain View, California.

McMillion, Bill

1991 *The Archaeology Handbook: A Field Manual and Resource Guide*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Obtaining Copies of Suggested Readings

This list of titles includes books you might find useful to read as background preparation for you certification examination. You should start with your local library. If you can not find a title there, you may be able to find it at a nearby college library. You may also request your local librarian to arrange for you to check out the suggested books from a major university library through interlibrary loan. In addition, you should be able to purchase many of these books at your local bookstore. If they do not carry they book, you can have ask them to order any of the titles listed above. Many research library collections and listings of books in print can be searched through the world wide web. Contact the OSA of you have problems in obtaining the readings.

Flow Chart of Certification Process

Participant Procedure

Step 1- Information Request

Participant requests information on certification.

Step 2—Registration

Participant fills out registration form; sends in appropriate fees: \$10 for certification program and \$15 for IAS membership, if not already a member. Both should be payable to the Iowa Archeological Society.

Step 3—Amateur Practicum

Participant completes practical experience portion of certification requirements—returns site sheets, provides name and address of supervising professional archaeologist, arranges for sample copies of field or lab notes to be forwarded to OSA

Step 4—Examination

Participant takes open-book exam, returns materials to OSA within 2 weeks

Office Procedure

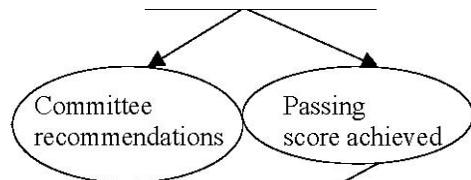
Office of the State Archaeologist sends description of program with registration form.

OSA forwards membership information and fees to IAS Membership Secretary; establishes certification file; reviews previous experience; determines if any criteria necessary to complete certification requirements have already been met; notifies participant a list of criteria to complete.

Committee: criteria completion review

Committee recommendations Criteria complete

Committee: examination review



Participant certified; receives certificate and card; added to list of certified IAS

Registration Form

Iowa Archaeological Certification Program

Name: Last First Middle Age:

Address: **Phone:** () (Home) Zip: () (Office)

Occupation:

Are you an IAS member Yes No Chapter affiliation (if applicable)

Education: High School Year Graduated College Degree Earned Year

Interest in the archaeological certification program (briefly describe your interest in the certification program and what you would expect of such a program).

Archaeological field experience (include a specific description of any field experience or laboratory experience working with archaeological materials that you may have had. Give a detailed account of all activities you have participated in and the length of time you spent on each. You may use the back of the form if additional space is needed.)

Inclusive dates Location Investigator Nature of the project Your activities **Persons who would agree to serve as references:** List anyone you may have worked under who could supply an account and evaluation of your past experience:

Name Address

Name Address

Category applying for: Site Surveyor Field Technician Laboratory Technician

Signature Date

Registration Fee: \$10.00. Make check payable to the Iowa Archeological Society. The registration fee is a one-time fee for all certification categories.

The Office of the State Archaeologist, from time to time, receives inquiries to identify individuals who have successfully completed their certification program. The office's practice is to respond with such inquiries by identifying the names and addresses of such individuals and also provide those making the inquiry with additional information from the individual's application forms such as degrees earned and amount of field experience. If you prefer not to have such information disclosed about you in response to such inquiries, please inform the office.

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