

Conducting archaeological fieldwork requires a commitment to ethical principles that respect the cultural heritage of communities, safeguard the archaeological record, and promote responsible research. These guidelines are designed to ensure the ethical conduct of archaeology fieldwork and promote collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and environmental preservation.

1. Personal Conduct in the Field

Duties

Be mindful of duties to society, and to those that could benefit from your work: clients (in the case of commercial archaeology), commissioners, colleagues, and helpers.

Comply with all the laws applicable in the country or region of the excavation, as well as with international treaties, conventions, and charters.

To the extent that it does not conflict with other duties or laws, observe the customs and cultural sensibilities of the country or region of the excavation.

Consider the legitimate concerns of individuals or group(s) about places, objects, human remains or intangible heritage that they believe to hold significant cultural or religious meaning or connotations.

Give due regard to the requirements of legislation relating to employment discrimination on grounds of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, political preferences, or religious belief.

Respect the rights of individuals who wish to join or belong to a trade union, professional or trade association.

Be aware to local sensitivities about politics, human rights and social issues. Avoid confrontation with local communities by expressing personal views that may lead to conflict.

Knowledge and qualifications

Avoid and discourage misleading, exaggerated, or unwarranted statements about archaeological matters.

Abstain from conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation in archaeological matters.

Do not reveal confidential information unless required by law; nor use confidential or privileged information to your advantage or that of a third person.

Give appropriate credit for work done by others.

Determine whether the project undertaken is likely to affect research work or projects of other archaeologists. If so, attempt to minimise such effects. Do not undertake archaeological work for which you are not adequately qualified.

When distributing tasks, the director or person in charge should consider the skills, proficiencies and capabilities of each member. Training and learning experiences should be promoted but always considering the need to conduct appropriate excavation practices.

Health & Safety

[The PI\(s\) of the project are in charge of indicating security measures during the fieldwork, as well as of ensuring that these measures are implemented.](#)

Give due regard to the requirements of health and safety legislation.

Keep in mind the physical and psychological security of all workers on site. Use appropriate security measures and equipment and be vigilant to avoid accidents.

Have detailed emergency and contingency plans in anticipation of accidents.

[It is important to submit the traveling request to your institution before starting fieldwork, to be sure that the insurance covers any issues in case of an accident.](#)

As much as possible, try to keep personal hygiene and the cleanliness and good order of all common-use spaces and equipment.

Appropriate behaviour

During work and leisure hours, avoid language that may be deemed emotionally distressful to other people on the grounds of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, political preferences, religious beliefs or other.

Should such a situation occur a single time, the offending party should apologise, and both parties strive for a friendly settlement of the matter so that the situation is not repeated. Conflict should be handled by a trained member of senior staff.

During work and leisure hours, avoid gossiping, badmouthing, slighting, or spreading rumours about any person present or known to people on site.

During work and leisure hours avoid any actions or language that constitute moral, sexual, or personal harassment as well as verbal or physical abuse. For a definition of these, please see "[ICArEHB's Policy on Ethics, Discrimination, Discriminatory Behaviour, and Harassment](#)".

At least two senior and a junior member of staff should be appointed as points of contact to report any incidents of harassment or abusive language in a confidential manner. Handling of these situations should follow the guidelines proposed by Colaninno, C. E., Lambert, S. P., Beahm, E. L., & Drexler, C. G. (2020). Creating and supporting a harassment-and assault-free field school. *Advances in Archaeological Practice*, 8(2), 111-122.

In case of conflicting demands or ethical dilemmas, due regard shall be given to safeguarding human life first, and second to the fundamental responsibility of archaeologists towards the interests of the public.

Uphold the good name of the profession.

2. Community Engagement and Collaboration

Engage with local communities before initiating, during and after fieldwork. Consider stakeholders, and, if present or holding a disputed interest in the site, indigenous groups. Respect their perspectives on the project's objectives, methods, and potential impacts. Seek their input and establish partnerships.

Obtain informed consent from local communities and landowners before initiating excavations or surveys on their land. Ensure that the goals and potential outcomes of the research are clearly communicated.

Provide opportunities for community members to learn about and participate in the research process.

Respect local cultural practices, traditions, and belief systems. Collaborate with community members to understand their values and concerns related to the archaeological site.

3. Preservation of the Archaeological Record

Adopt a principle of minimal intervention when excavating archaeological sites. Strive to preserve the context of artifacts, features, and structures to allow for future interpretations.

Thoroughly document and record all excavations, findings, and observations. This includes keeping detailed notes, photographs, drawings, and maps, which should be archived for future reference.

Avoid unnecessary destruction or alteration of sites. Implement suitable excavation techniques to ensure that sites are left in a stable condition.

(Indicated in Point 5. but labwork preservation during fieldwork is also important)

Be aware of the cares archaeological remains need after fieldwork to ensure their future preservation. This concerns especially, to labwork methodology. Avoid non-reversible interventions or actions that may not ensure the long-term maintenance of the material culture.

4. Environmental Responsibility

Implement environmentally sustainable practices during fieldwork to minimize the ecological impact of archaeological activities.

Respect local flora and fauna and adhere to relevant environmental regulations.

Properly manage waste generated during fieldwork, including archaeological waste and personal trash.

5. Artifact and Data Management

Handle artifacts with care to avoid damage. Properly curate, conserve, and store recovered artifacts in a controlled environment to ensure their long-term preservation.

Make sure there are experts on site specialised in different types of materials should the need arise (*p.ex.* biological anthropologists, archaeobotanists, geoarchaeologists, etc).

Promote open and responsible data sharing within the archaeological community. Share findings, documentation, and research outcomes to facilitate collaboration and further research.

6. Reporting and Interpretation

Interpret findings based on evidence and avoid sensationalism or speculation. Present research results in a transparent and objective manner, acknowledging uncertainties and potential biases.

Engage in cultural interpretation with sensitivity and respect for the people and communities associated with the archaeological site. As much as possible, avoid ethnocentric or biased interpretations.

7. Public Outreach and Education

Engage with the public to raise awareness about archaeology, cultural heritage, and the significance of archaeological sites.

Promote education by providing accurate and accessible information to the public, students, and interested parties. Foster an understanding of the value of archaeology in understanding human history.

FOR MORE GUIDELINES

<https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20revOct2022.pdf>

<https://www.saa.org/career-practice/ethics-in-professional-archaeology>

<https://www.shh.mpg.de/2189254/dacodeofconduct>

<https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/a38d2/>

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/authors?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0102172>

https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-careerpractice/harassment_resource.pdf?sfvrsn=d5b7b7d8_4

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/advances-in-archaeological-practice/article/creating-and-supporting-a-harassment-and-assaultfree-field-school/B15F753B63B662CA40E9FF4367D4AD77>