

Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification

Guide to PAAC

The Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification (PAAC) is a beneficial educational program designed for the avocational archaeologist. Initially established by the Office of the State Archaeologist of Colorado (OSAC) and the Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS), the program has granted certifications since 1978. PAAC allows anyone with an interest in the archaeological record of Colorado to receive training outside of an academic degree program.

All participants in the PAAC program must:

- Be 15 years of age or older
- Abide by the PAAC Code of Ethics

Program Introduction

PAAC is a statewide certification program designed to build a community of individuals trained to help record, preserve, and serve as responsible stewards of and advocates for cultural resources in Colorado. PAAC participants have the opportunity to gain experience in many facets of archaeology. The program facilitates the contributions of its participants to research, public service and outreach, preservation and management, and stewardship of the archaeological record of Colorado. PAAC complements but does not replace existing university and governmental training programs.

To join PAAC, go online to <https://www.historycolorado.org/paac-program-introduction> and fill out an online form or contact Sarah Allaun, PAAC State Coordinator & Assistant State Archaeologist, (sarah.allaun@state.co.us) to request a PAAC Candidate Application form.



PAAC Code of Ethics

All participants in the Program for Avocational Archaeological Certification (PAAC) must agree to abide by the following code of ethics.

1. Comply fully with all federal, state and local preservation laws and regulations.
2. Conduct field work including survey, recording, excavation, or collection and laboratory analysis only under the supervision of professional principal investigator(s) or project archaeologist(s), as defined by the Office of the State Archaeologist of Colorado.
3. Carry out all PAAC activities in a courteous manner and with respect for federal, state, and private property.
4. Refrain from engaging in, or assisting others in, any vandalism of or theft from a cultural resource.
5. Be sensitive to, and respect the concerns of, groups whose culture histories may be represented by archaeological resources.
6. Recognize that the unauthorized collection of cultural materials on public land is illegal and that all cultural materials found on private land are the property of the landowner. Encourage the title to those materials, if previously collected and removed from their original context, be transferred to a state-approved museum or repository.
7. Any cultural resource data including, but not limited to, site location information, site descriptions, maps, and photographs recovered or obtained as part of participation in PAAC activities is the property of the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or land managing agency. All information about specific cultural resources is confidential and shall not be shared outside of PAAC and no location information or photographs of cultural resources will be posted on any platform, including online platforms, without prior approval of SHPO or the land managing agency.

Code of Ethics Statement

I recognize that all archaeological and historical materials are irreplaceable cultural resources. I will not misuse my participation in this program for personal gain to obtain access to sites, records, or artifacts. I realize that the value of archaeological sites and materials are in their context as well as content, which can never be regained if removed, altered, or destroyed. I agree to abide by the above PAAC Code of Ethics.

PAAC History

Since 1978, courses and workshops have been held in over 20 towns and cities across the state of Colorado and over 300 certificates have been granted.

Courses regularly taught over the years have included Archaeological Practice/Legislation & Ethics, Basic Site Surveying/Field Survey, Colorado Archaeology, Historical Archaeology, Lithic Description and Analysis, Ceramic Description and Analysis, Perishable Materials, Research Design and Report Writing, Archaeological Dating Methods, Field and Laboratory Photography, Rock Art Studies, Principles of Excavation, Laboratory Techniques, Geophysics/Remote Sensing, and a number of others. In addition to these courses, PAAC training opportunities have consisted of workshops and seminars covering various topics, field projects demonstrating archaeological survey methods, and practice in archaeological laboratory procedures. Nearly 300 certifications have been awarded to PAAC participants in Colorado.

Beginning in 2017, surveys were sent out to PAAC participants and CAS chapters to evaluate the certification program and reassess its course offerings. This and the subsequent Covid-19 pandemic highlighted areas where PAAC could be modernized and improved to meet today's standards and the needs of its participants. In 2023, the PAAC State Coordinator and PAAC Board began to oversee the ongoing restructuring and revitalization effort of the certification program.

PAAC Certification Information

Currently, PAAC is undergoing a major restructuring of the certification program. The newly restructured PAAC emphasizes flexibility in the participant's progression through the program. Certification is based on credit hours taken, allowing for greater flexibility in course selection than has been granted in the past. The participant may achieve increasing levels of certification, called Certification Tiers, based on cumulative credit hours taken.

Participants who previously took PAAC classes will be able to begin in the restructured certification program at an equivalent Certification Tier and will retain any past certifications achieved. Equivalency will be evaluated on a case by case basis by the PAAC Board.

Certification Tiers	Cumulative Credit Hours Required
Tier 1	10 credit hours
Tier 2	20 credit hours
Tier 3	30 credit hours
Tier 4	50 credit hours
Tier 5	70 credit hours

When a participant has successfully fulfilled the requirements of a particular certification level, the completed record is reviewed by the PAAC Board. The PAAC Board will evaluate the records and must vote unanimously to grant certification. A certificate of expertise is awarded to the participant and announced at the quarterly and annual meetings of the Colorado Archaeological Society.

Certification is only granted as long as the participant abides by the PAAC Code of Ethics. In the event of a breach of the Code of Ethics, the PAAC Board and PAAC State Coordinator will convene to determine what action should be taken. This action may include censure of the participant, the removal of any previous certification, removal from ongoing PAAC classes, and/or restriction on future PAAC registration. Class fees will not be refunded in the event any action is deemed necessary by the PAAC Board as a result of a breach of the Code of Ethics.

PAAC Class Information

There are five different class types: CAS Seminar Lecture, Weekend Course/Workshop, Weekend Field/Laboratory Workshop, Multi-day Course, and PAAC Field Experience. All class types are taken as pass/fail.

Class Type	Credit Hours Achieved if Pass
CAS Seminar Lecture	0.5 credit hours
Weekend Course/Workshop	2 credit hours
Weekend Field/Laboratory Workshop	4 credit hours
Multi-day Course	6 credit hours
PAAC Field Experience	8 credit hours

In an effort to reach a broader audience and to increase flexibility in progressing through the certification program, many classes will be offered in a hybrid and/or online format. Online courses will be able to be completed at the participant’s own pace. Hybrid courses may be attended in person or synchronously attended virtually. A limited number of classes will be offered as in-person only.

Some classes may require a field activity or project to be completed on the participant’s own time. Individuals may volunteer for ongoing professionally-supervised projects or, if given permission by the PAAC State Coordinator, may work independently. Documentation of these field activities must be given to the PAAC State Coordinator to register credit towards certification. A letter of verification from the supervising archaeologist and/or copies of

timesheets signed by the supervising archaeologist will be considered acceptable documentation. A participant wishing to have previous field experience evaluated for credit should submit that experience to be evaluated by the PAAC Board on a case by case basis.

Some classes may require a fee due at time of registration. Please note, these fees will not be refunded in the event of a class Fail. Class fees will only be returned if a class is canceled by the instructor.

Class Types

CAS Seminar Lecture (0.5 credit hour): To receive credit for attending a CAS seminar lecture, the participant must submit the CAS Seminar Lecture form available upon request from the PAAC State Coordinator (sarah.allaun@state.co.us) within two weeks of the date of the lecture. The PAAC State Coordinator will review the form and grant credit to the participant.

Weekend Course/Workshop (2 credit hours): These classes are designed to be completed in one or two days, but vary in duration. They may run between 2 and 8 hours per day. They may be offered in-person only, hybrid, or online only.

Weekend Field/Laboratory Workshop (4 credit hours): These classes are designed to be completed in one or two days and will typically be offered as in-person only, requiring hands-on participation. They may run between 2 and 8 hours per day. Some workshop classes may be offered in a hybrid or online format.

Multi-day Course (6 credit hours): These classes will be offered as hybrid or online courses. Multi-day courses will vary in length from class to class.

PAAC Field Experience (8 credit hours): These classes include OSAC-led archaeological projects and are subject to change. Duration varies between projects. To receive credit, participants typically must take part in a minimum of 2 days (16 total hours) in the field, though requirement may vary from project to project. Field experience classes are offered as in-person only.

Local PAAC Coordinators

Local PAAC Coordinators serve as liaisons for their community and PAAC partner groups with the PAAC State Coordinator and State Coordinator Volunteer.

PAAC State Coordinator

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FAQs

How do I join PAAC? Joining PAAC is simple! Contact the PAAC State Coordinator/Assistant State Archaeologist (sarah.allaun@state.co.us) to request a form or fill out the form online at <https://www.historycolorado.org/paac-program-introduction>. Completion of this form will add you to an email distribution list where all PAAC information will be sent. A Class Fee may be required when you enroll for some PAAC classes, but is not due with the PAAC Candidate Application.

How much do classes cost? Some PAAC classes may require a Class Fee due at the time of registration. The amount may vary from class to class, but is typically less than \$20 per participant.

How do I enroll in a class? Check out the Class Offerings online at <https://www.historycolorado.org/class-offerings-and-communications> to learn more about upcoming class offerings and register for classes. You can also contact your Local PAAC Coordinator for more information.

How can I find out about classes offered in my area? Check out Class Offerings online at <https://www.historycolorado.org/class-offerings-and-communications> or contact your Local PAAC Coordinator for information about classes offered in-person in your area. Many of our classes are now offered in a hybrid format or online only.

Are PAAC course materials available in advance? Course materials will be made available at each class only to registered participants. Course bibliographies and materials from previous PAAC classes may be found in our Class Offerings online at <https://www.historycolorado.org/class-offerings-and-communications> or by contacting your Local PAAC Coordinator.

Do I have to be a member of the Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) or History Colorado (HC) to join PAAC? Membership in these or any other organization is not required. Anyone interested is welcome to join PAAC!

Do I get to dig or do other field work in PAAC? Archaeological excavation (a “dig”) is not a formal part of PAAC training. However, PAAC Field Experience classes offer participants the opportunity to learn about archaeological field methods such as pedestrian survey and excavation. PAAC participants will be placed on an email distribution list and notified of ongoing and future volunteer opportunities that may involve professionally supervised archaeological excavation, but are not formally associated with the PAAC certification program.

Is PAAC class credit transferable to college/university programs? No. PAAC offers participants the opportunity to obtain differing levels of expertise outside of an academic degree program. PAAC complements but does not replace existing university and governmental training programs.

What will a PAAC certificate do for me? The PAAC program is designed to build a community of individuals trained to help record, preserve, and serve as responsible stewards of and advocates for cultural resources in Colorado. PAAC certification is a formal recognition of the achievement of differing levels of technical training. It is not a substitute for a degree from an accredited academic institution, nor is it a license to dig, collect artifacts, or perform other unsupervised archaeological tasks. PAAC participants are often welcome to participate in ongoing professionally supervised projects as volunteers, field assistants and laboratory assistants.

Is it okay to collect artifacts? Unauthorized collection of cultural resources on public land is illegal. Unauthorized collection of cultural resources on private lands without the explicit permission of the landowner is likewise illegal. Unauthorized, undocumented collection of cultural resources is always destructive, resulting in a loss of irreplaceable cultural information, and is a violation of the PAAC Code of Ethics.

Contact the PAAC State Coordinator with any additional questions.

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