E.C.C.O.
European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations A.I.S.B.L.

E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (III)

Education

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, Brussels 1 March 2002.

Updated at the General Assembly, Brussels 2 April 2004.

I. The Basic Aims of Education in Conservation-Restoration

Education is to be based on the highest ethical standards of the profession, aimed at respecting the uniqueness of cultural heritage and its aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual significance. After a completed education, graduates should be capable of working responsibly in the field of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, including the more specialised technical, scientific and artistic aspects. They should be able to collaborate with all other professions concerned with the preservation of cultural heritage. Graduates should also be capable of independent research in the field of conservation-restoration and historical technology and techniques. The education is also aimed at developing all other important abilities, as stated in the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines I.

II. Level of Education

The minimum level for entry into the profession as a qualified conservator-restorer should be at Master's level (or recognised equivalent). This should be achieved by a period of full-time study in conservation-restoration of no less than 5 years at a university (or at a recognised equivalent level) and should include well-structured practical internships. It should be followed by the possibility of study to PhD level.

Both theoretical education and practical training are of high importance, and should be organised in good balance. After successful completion of a final examination the candidate is awarded a degree or diploma. A reference to the specialisms studied should be given.

Depending on national situations, it may also be relevant to assess professional practice to confirm the conservator-restorer's ability to work, ethically and competently in his/her specialism.

III. Practical Training

Practical training must involve the treatment of original objects deemed particularly suitable for didactic purposes. The objects chosen should provide material for a well-documented case study including technical examination, diagnosis and related treatment. From the beginning of their education, such case studies make the students understand every object as a unique case in the most practically oriented way. Furthermore, case studies offer the best possibility to integrate all the theoretical, methodological and ethical aspects of conservation-restoration into the practical training. The study and practice of historical techniques, technology, and the manufacturing processes of related materials are encouraged, as they promote greater understanding of the physical, historical and artistic aspects of cultural heritage.

IV. Theoretical Instruction

A balance between science and the humanities is indispensable for theoretical instruction. The theoretical subjects should be determined by the specialisation in the field of conservation/restoration and should include:

- Ethical principles of conservation-restoration
- Science (e.g. chemistry, physics, biology, mineralogy, colour theory)
- Humanities (e.g. history, palaeography, history of art, archaeology, ethnology, philosophy)
- History of materials and techniques, technology and manufacturing processes
- Identification and study of deterioration processes
- Display and transport of cultural property
- Theory, methods and techniques of conservation, preventive conservation and restoration
- Processes involved in making reproductions of objects
- Methods of documentation
- Methods of scientific research
- History of conservation-restoration
- Legal issues (e.g. professional statutes, cultural heritage law, insurance, business and tax law)
- Management (collections, staff and resources)
- Health and Safety (including environmental issues)
- Communication skills (including information technology)