

How to pick a field school that's right for you

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Below are questions that you should consider asking about any academic field program to which you are considering applying, either by reading the program literature or by talking to the directors. The idea is that answering these questions will help you to assess your fit with the program. These are adapted from Madelyn Iris' 2004 article in the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) Bulletin 22:164-168.

1. What is expected of you?
2. What is the methodological specialty of the program? What will you learn how to do?
3. Are you comfortable with the project goals and are they in line with your own interests?
4. What is the length of the time commitment?
5. What are the relationships between the host communities and the field school? Are you comfortable with them?
6. Do you meet the language requirement, if there is one?
7. How much structure is provided and what are your needs? How comfortable are you working independently or with a group? How much day to day supervision will you need?
8. Is the field school setting a place where you want to be?
9. Are there any safety concerns you should be aware of? Are they addressed in a way that makes you feel comfortable?
10. How much mentorship is provided? How much do you want?
11. Is there an orientation and what does it cover?
12. Are there prerequisites and are you adequately prepared?
13. Does the field program have policies and protocols in place with regard to appropriate behavior and sexual harassment?

These are other important questions to consider about yourself, along with reminders of important issues to talk about with program directors.

1. Is flexibility a part of your personality and will you be okay if the program schedule changes?
2. Are you willing to experience a group living situation and meet new people? Are you easy to get along with?
3. Can you make a commitment to this program and to this research project?
4. Do you have special dietary needs and can those be accommodated in a field setting?
5. Do you have any chronic medical conditions or disabilities and can these be accommodated?
6. Do you take regular medications that require refrigeration?
7. Can you withstand the physical and cultural environment to which you will be going for the duration of the program (heat, high altitude, wildlife, sanitation, privacy)?
8. Do you have enough spending money for incidental expenses to last through the entire program?