



# MODULE: COMMERCIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES & VOCATIONAL IDENTITY

CP13PGD (4 Credits) + ID12PGD (3 Credits)

Course duration: 4 weeks  
Mode of presentation: blended learning



**THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR HERITAGE SCIENCE & CONSERVATION**

*Provisionally registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Act.*

*Registration certificate No. 2018/HE07/007 - valid until 31/12/2023*

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# COMMERCIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES & VOCATIONAL IDENTITY

## General Observations

This 4-week, 7-credit, blended learning module sets no entry prerequisites for trained conservators, and is accordingly also accessible as a stand-alone course to equip and benefit the private conservation practitioner. The module addresses and illuminates a crucial but neglected front of conservation practice. In doing so, it holds value for a great many conservation practitioners and students - whose education to date had remained bare of an essential element, namely: The remunerative deployment of conservation skills and service within the private and commercial arena.

**This course investigates the respective incentives, proclivities and vocational realities which shape the practice of conservation within the private or corporate studio environment, as opposed to the institutional. It considers the contractual environment, client relations, expenses and profitability, start-up considerations, practical needs, practitioner identity and much more. How may the novice conservator profitably establish and operate a private conservation studio or service? And why is this a viable and self-evident option? What view to take then of institutional employment, professional identity, collegial relationships, etc.?**

The seemingly distinct subjects of **commercial best practice** and **vocational identity** are in practice very closely linked - and in combination these drive entrepreneurial conviction - also exercising and conditioning the wellsprings of technical skills, astuteness, enterprise flair, common sense and strategic initiative.

Study commitment: While it is feasible to maintain other vocational or study commitments alongside, the average student candidate must prove willing and able to commit 16 - 18 hours per week to this course of learning. (Approximately two-and-a-half hours daily, on average).

## Module Rationale

In many parts of the world, even today still, conservation practice is reflexively viewed as an institutional function – reminiscent of museums, galleries or archives: This can readily convey an impression of a vocation somehow dependant on a sheltered, funded, even cloistered environment. How reasonable is this view, considering that the bulk of humanity's portable cultural inheritance resides within the custodianship of private owners - existing quite apart from formally curated collections? There is also civilization's wealth of heritage buildings and historic structures to consider: Is it truly “museum conservators” alighting those scaffolds?

In reality the vast bulk of conservation services undertaken, whether on moveable or immovable objects, occurs in the private, commercial domain. Is it rational then to regard the world of the museum as the natural or primary (or even for that matter desirable) habitat of a profession so fundamentally embedded in the physical sciences?

A deep-seated yet mistaken perception of museums primacy in conservation nonetheless perpetuates itself within much of institutional culture and society - being variously reinforced by entrenched reputation, pinpoint advocacy, habituated thought, the imprimatur of textbooks, media, vocational and academic journals - even funding objectives. Regrettably, many conservation training programmes similarly reflect and express that curiously narrowed view of conservation.

This is not to say that there are not also meritorious and admirable instances of productive, institutionally based conservation to be found. While such clear exceptions to the general rule can be found, the part of the rule which holds conspicuously firm is that private practitioners are seldom thought of as the face of conservation. The answers to why this is so are both far-reaching and invigorating - and are engaged through lively investigation and debate.

The content of this course combines to teach, orientate and prepare the conservation practitioner for the vigorous, stimulating, post-2022 world of private conservation practice. It points the way by convincingly reconciling the present-day realities of a somewhat “post-institutional, post-funding world” with the hopes of the work-from-anywhere conservation candidate - ideally a practitioner who values technical mastery, and who is drawn to private practice.



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## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this module, the student should/will:**

- be able to accurately distinguish and delineate the scope of work, standing, professional context and identity conferred and encompassed by conservation practitionership - also distinguishing it from parallel professions.
- appreciate the role of certain softer and supplemental skills within the commercial client / contractual environment.
- be able to recognize and practice the distinction between effectuation logic and causation logic, as opposing strategies for bringing an enterprise into being.
- be free to accord lesser significance to considerations of "funding & grants", "business plans, budgets, marketing" and other hackneyed assumptions, often misapplied from institutionalized contexts.
- have gained the confidence and clarity of view to launch or enhance their private studio endeavours\*, engaging clients of remedial and/or consultative services in conservation.

*\*Bear in mind that the course can not address the specifics of regulatory frameworks, as these are particular to a wide range of jurisdictions / regions, potentially represented by the average class. However, the enterprise environment contemplated by this course of study is nonetheless relevant to a very broad swathe of market-driven economies.*

## Mode of delivery & Assessment

This is a distance study, blended learning course. It is initiated via one-on-one interviews which serve to benchmark each student, taking the measure of their particular vocational juncture and hopes. Formative interactions and teaching are delivered via a blend of live, online classes and lectures, self-study course material and group discussions. Final assessment is accomplished via individualized conference sessions with tutors, to determine each student's gains. A pass mark of 55% is set.

## COURSE DETAILS

Entry prerequisites:

Starting date:

Duration:

Registration fee:

Module fee:

Deadline for enrollment:

No entry prerequisites are set for trained conservators

19 June 2023

4 weeks

R 282.61 (excl. VAT)

R 12 850.00 (VAT Exempt)

15 June 2023

**Certificate of attainment & scored Course Report follow completion.**