



Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic
Technological
University



SLIGO
COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH

GREEN FORT ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT, IRELAND

Course ID: ARCH 365BT (5-week), ARCH 365BU (3-week), ARCH 310E (Online)

Online Component (for all participants): Mar 3, 2026 – May 12, 2026

Academic Credits: 2 Semester Credit Units

5-week option in field: May 17, 2026 – June 20, 2026

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units

3-week option in field: May 31, 2026 – June 20, 2026

Academic Credits: 6 Semester Credit Units

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S)

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Aerial view of the Green Fort, with the Garavogue River and Sligo Town in the background

OVERVIEW

The Green Fort is a bastioned or 'star-shaped' military fort with spectacular and extensive views overlooking Sligo Town, Sligo Bay, and the surrounding mountains. It was probably built in 1599 during the Nine Years War (1594-1603), on the site of an early medieval ringfort (c. 6th – 10th century AD) known as Ráith dá Briotócc, which is understood to mean 'Britton's Fort', the 'ringfort of the two stuttering women', or the 'ringfort of the two British women'. The Green Fort became a strategic defensive base during the Williamite Wars (1688-91), initially held by the Williamite forces, it became a Jacobite base but was then besieged and retaken by the Williamites. Bastioned forts became the defensive military structure of choice in Europe from the 16th century onwards as they were better able to withstand cannon bombardment than medieval stone castles, and the diamond-shaped bastions maximized the directions for flanking fire to defend the fort. As a result of colonial expansion, bastioned forts were widely employed in the Americas, Asia and Africa, with large numbers still existing, particularly in the eastern US.

Situated within the extents of the modern town of Sligo, and working with Sligo County Council and the local community, this excavation project aims to examine the role of the Green Fort in the history of the town and surrounding area, and to communicate these findings to the public.

Between 2016 and 2021 much of the background work was done to prepare the site for excavation. This included:

- A topographical survey of the 'Green Fort' carried out by Sam Moore and students of IT Sligo (now ATU Sligo) over a number of years.
- Scrub clearance work was carried out by Sligo Co. Council in 2021, which allowed Eoin Halpin of Archaeology and Heritage Consultancy Ltd to use the topographical survey as a baseline to record the present state of the monument.
- Geophysical (magnetometer and resistivity) surveys of the monument, which were commissioned by Sligo Co. Council and conducted in 2021 by Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit (ACSU).

Excavation began in 2025, and continuing on from this, the focus will be on understanding the dating and origin of the site as well as the nature of features identified by fieldwalking, geophysics and survey. We plan to open one cutting in the monument interior to further investigate features exposed in 2025, including areas of intense burning, and a drainage system. Students will be working closely with fieldwork volunteers from the local community and with Irish-based students to unpick the story of this fascinating place. They will gain experience of excavating, recording and surveying sites. In the laboratory at ATU, students will undertake important aspects of post-excavation including cataloging and processing artifacts and samples, and preparing artifacts for conservation. They will also have the opportunity to undertake introductions to archaeological illustration and constructing 3-D digital models using photogrammetry, as well as interactive demonstration sessions.

Students will also gain experience in communicating heritage with the wider public by guiding visitors around the excavation during school visits, open days, and site tours. The records developed by students and the artefacts recovered will become part of the permanent archaeological record, deposited with the National Monuments Service and National Museum of Ireland. Field Trips will provide an insight into

the archaeology of the wider area, and in the evenings, students will gain an insight into Irish culture, society and hospitality.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 10 or 8 semester credit units through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see assessment, below). Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institution prior to attending this field school.

Transcripts: An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One more transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the [National Student Clearinghouse](#).

PREREQUISITES

This field school is open to anyone who has an interest in archaeology. It will be of particular interest to those contemplating further study in archaeology or work in the heritage sector. The field school will give you the opportunity to develop a range of skills, and for those with prior archaeological experience, to build upon those skills and develop them further.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

One of the main objectives of the field school is to develop the archaeological skills and understanding of the participants and their ability to communicate their knowledge. This will be achieved using a balance of formal lectures, field trips, and readings, as well as solid practical experience. Students will be excavating, recording and surveying archaeological features and explaining heritage to members of the public during school visits, open days, and site tours. Additionally, students will experience another culture as they will be working closely with fieldwork volunteers from the local community and with Irish-based students, and in the evenings will gain an insight into Irish culture, society and hospitality.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the program students will be able to

- Explain how archaeological excavation and post-excavation fit into a larger research project.
- Show a knowledge of aspects of Irish archaeology and history, with a particular emphasis on the archaeology and landscape of NW Ireland.
- Have a knowledge of aspects of Irish archaeology and history.
- Understand and be able to explain how an archaeological excavation is conducted.
- Demonstrate awareness of and an ability to carry out key archaeological excavation and recording techniques, including both traditional and photogrammetric methods.
- Differentiate soil horizons and stratigraphic contexts and express these in both matrix and written formats.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the component parts of the post excavation process and the roles played by various specialists.

- Demonstrate an ability to carry out a variety of post-excavation related tasks.
- Demonstrate an understanding of site-based health and safety regulations.
- Have a knowledge of aspects of Irish archaeology and history.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the principal sites visited and their landscape setting.
- Apply gained knowledge towards understanding the role of monument types in the northwest of Ireland.

ASSESSMENT

Online-plus-3-week program

Participation 40%

Attendance at all lectures, field trips, survey, laboratory, and excavation sessions is required. Students will be graded based on their enthusiasm, willingness to participate, attention to detail, teamwork, and overall contribution to the project.

Journal 40%

Students will be required to keep a journal of their experiences and to submit this for assessment in the final week of the field school. Staff will provide guidance on the type and style of entries required.

Assignments 20%

A quiz will take place in advance of fieldwork to assess the student's understanding of the required readings and of the lectures. A short assignment will be required at the end of the program.

Online-plus-5-week program

Participation 27%

Attendance at all lectures, field trips, survey, laboratory, and excavation sessions is required. Students will be graded based on their enthusiasm, willingness to participate, attention to detail, teamwork and overall contribution to the project.

Journal 40%

Students will be required to keep a journal of their experiences and to submit this for assessment in the final week of the field school. Staff will provide guidance on the type and style of entries required.

Assignments 33%

A quiz will take place in advance of fieldwork to assess the student's understanding of the required readings and of the lectures. A short assignment and an essay will be required at the end of the program.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with a safety orientation. This orientation addresses local and program protocols concerning student behavior, appropriate attire, local practices and sensibilities that may be unfamiliar, potential fauna and flora hazards, IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and the student Code of Conduct.

Online lecture topics. Associated readings are shown in (brackets)

- Introduction, organization and practicalities: travel, accommodation, clothing, etc.
- Types of excavation. Why we excavate. Outcomes of excavation.
- Prehistoric Ireland (8000 BC – AD 400) overview, in the context of the Green Fort (10, 11, 12 - readings for online-plus-5-week course only)
- Historic Ireland overview (AD 400 – 1900) overview, in the context of the Green Fort (1, 7, 13)
- The archaeology and history of the Green Fort (3, 5, 6)
- Irish archaeological legislation, 1930-2024. Excavation licensing process
- How to excavate and record a context. Context sheets. Describing deposits and cuts etc (4)
- Stratigraphy and Harris matrix (4)
- On-site paperwork: context list; finds list; sample list; photograph list; site diary (4)
- On site equipment and tools (4)
- Recording and organization (4)
- Surveying and levels; Site photography, Archaeological drawing: planning and planning conventions (4)
- Excavating human remains and ethics (4)
- Environmental samples and artefacts finds – what can they tell us (2, 8)
- ‘First Aid for finds’ – processing artefact finds and environmental samples on site (2, 8, 9)
- Preparing environmental samples and artefacts - finds for specialist analysis (2, 8)
- Health and Safety, onsite conduct (4)
- Reiteration and further detail on organization and practicalities: travel, accommodation, clothing, etc.

	Online plus 5-week program	Online plus 3-week program
Total Credits	10	8
Online lecture classes	Mar 3 - May 12, 2026 18 hrs online: 2 hrs/wk plus 3 hrs/wk personal study	Mar 3- May 12, 2026 18 hrs online: 2 hrs/wk plus 3 hrs/wk personal study
Total fieldwork time	5 weeks	3 weeks
Arrival date	May 17, 2026	June 31, 2026
Archaeology of Ireland Study Tour	ATU Sligo, Daily field trips May 18 - 29, 2026	n/a
Excavation	Green Fort, Sligo June 1 - 12, 2026	Green Fort, Sligo June 1 - 12, 2026
Post-excavation analysis	ATU Sligo June 15 - 19, 2026	ATU Sligo June 15 - 19, 2026
Departure date	June 20, 2026	June 20, 2026
Assessments	Continuous assessment	Continuous assessment
Accommodation	Included	Included
Food	Not included	Not included
Weekends	Free for study or travel	Free for study or travel

Daily schedule		
Archaeology of Ireland Study Tour	Depart ATU Sligo at 9am Break timings variable Return at 5pm	n/a
Excavation	Start 9am Morning break 11-11:20 Lunch break 1:30-2:10 Finish 5pm	Start 9am Morning break 11-11:20 Lunch break 1:30-2:10 Finish 5pm
Post-excavation analysis	Start 9am Morning break 11-11:20 Lunch break 1:00-1:40 Finish 5pm	Start 9am Morning break 11-11:20 Lunch break 1:00-1:40 Finish 5pm

REQUIRED READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students. Students are encouraged to download and/or print readings prior to traveling. Course participants are expected to be prepared to engage the discussions led by facilitators, all of whom will be looking for compelling evidence that students have read and thought about the assigned readings prior to the scheduled day on which they are first discussed.

For both programs

- (1) Anon, n.d. Sligo Readings. Produced by Sligo Co. Co. (will be provided to registered students).
- (2) Beglane, F 2021, *TII Zooarchaeological Sampling Guidelines*. Version 1. Dublin: Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- (3) Beglane, F, Dowd, M and Moore, S 2025. The Green Fort Archaeology Project. *Archaeology Ireland* 39(2), 46-50.
- (4) Beglane, F, Nugent, L and Dowd, M 2025. *Green Fort Archaeology Project Excavation Manual*. Unpublished document prepared on behalf of the Green Fort Archaeology Project.
- (5) Bolton, J, Dargan, P and Roche, N. 2017. *The Green Fort Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report prepared on behalf of Sligo County Council.
- (6) Dowd, M 2021. Folklore focus: The Green Fort, Co. Sligo. *Archaeology Ireland* 35(3), 37.
- (7) Gallagher, F 2019. *Sligo: an historic urban centre on the Atlantic coast', A heritage guide for Archeology Ireland*. Dublin, Wordwell.
- (8) McClatchie, M and O Carroll, E 2015. *TII palaeo-environmental sampling guidelines: retrieval, analysis and reporting of plant macro-remains, wood, charcoal, insects and pollen from archaeological excavations*. Revision 5, Dublin, Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

- (9) NMI 2022. *Standards for the care and treatment of archaeological objects from excavation*, Dublin, National Museum of Ireland.

Additional readings for Online-plus-5-week program

- (10) Bergh, S 2005. Knocknarea: the ultimate monument: megaliths and mountains in Neolithic Cúil Irra, North-West Ireland. In C. Scarre (ed.) *Monuments and landscape in Atlantic Europe*. Routledge, London 149-16.
- (11) Bergh, S and Hensey, R 2013. Unpicking the Chronology of Carrowmore. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, **32**(4),.343-366. (with supplement Bergh & Hensey 2013 Review of Neolithic dates from Carrowmore).
- (12) Kador, T, Cassidy, LM, Geber, J, Hensey, R, Meehan, P and Moore, S, 2018. Rites of Passage: mortuary practice, population dynamics, and chronology at the Carrowkeel passage tomb complex, Co. Sligo, Ireland. In *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*. **84**. 225-255.
- (13) Lobell, GA 2020 Inside a Medieval Gaelic Castel. <https://www.archaeology.org/issues/371-2003/features/8423-ireland-lough-key-medieval-castle>. [Accessed June 2021]

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- (14) Gallagher, F 2012. *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, No. 17, Sligo*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy.
- (15) Gallagher, F 2008. *The Streets of Sligo: Urban Evolution over the course of Seven Centuries*. Sligo, F. Gallagher.
- (16) Murphy, D 2022. *Green Fort, Rathquarter, Co. Sligo. Geophysical Survey Report – Final*. Licence 21R0261. Unpublished report produced on behalf of Sligo County Council.
- (17) O'Sullivan, A, McCormick, F, Kerr, T and Harney, L 2014, *Early medieval Ireland AD400 - 1100: the evidence from archaeological excavations*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy.
- (18) Waddell, J 1998, *The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland*, Galway, University Press.