Professional Designation Options for RNS Graduates

Introduction

Congratulations on completing, or are on your way to completing, the Restoration of Natural Systems (RNS) Diploma Program! As an RNS graduate, you are skilled in the restoration and management of disturbed ecosystems and prepared to play a leading role in the booming field of ecological restoration where there are many employment opportunities related to environmental conservation, restoration, sustainability, and addressing environmental challenges.

The knowledge, skills, and experiences you have acquired through the RNS program opens up further opportunities for professional development, certifications, and designations. This guide outlines some of the professional designation programs that are available, which can further advance your skillset and professional network while being recognized as an expert in your field to give you a competitive advantage.

Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP) & Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner-In-Training (CERPIT) Programs

About the program

The Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) offers a certification program that is aligned with the RNS curriculum and includes two certification levels:

1. Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP):
   - for applicants who can meet both knowledge and experience requirements
2. Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner-In-Training (CERPIT):
   - for applicants who can meet either knowledge or experience but don't have both

As the only international certification program for ecological restoration practitioners, CERP offers a variety of professional benefits and recognizes practitioners as experts in the field of

ecological restoration. The CERP/CERPIT certification complements the skills, knowledge, and credentials that you would have gained through the RNS program.

Becoming a certified practitioner with the CERP program gives you a competitive advantage, demonstrating to employers, prospective clients, and the public that you are recognized as an expert committed to a high standard of practice and professional development within the field of ecological restoration.

Upon certification of CERP/CERPIT, you will be officially recognized as a Certified Environmental Restoration Professional or that you have achieved CERPIT status with an official certificate and a personalized stamp. This allows you to prominently display the CERP or CERPIT acronym on various professional materials like business cards, resumes, reports, websites, and project proposals. In addition, your certification will be listed in SER's CERP Directory that confirms your certified status, making it easy for potential employers, clients, and collaborators to verify your credential.

Application fees

An initial non-refundable application fee is required when you submit your complete CERP/CERPIT application. This fee remains non-refundable regardless of your application outcome. By paying the application fee, you are automatically enrolled in recurring annual payments for the next four years, covering the annual maintenance fee. However, if your application is not approved, no further charges will apply. Once certified, your credential remains active for five years, provided you successfully fulfill all continuing education (CEC) requirements.

Fees are structured based on a schedule that can be found in Table 2 below. To access applicable discounts, it's important to log into your SER account before making payment. UVic has a Society of Ecological Restoration Student Chapter and membership is free for RNS students. Student members fall under the Standard SER Member fee structure for CERP/CERPIT applications. Equity and Open Door rates are available for those who might face financial constraints; Student Association members are also eligible for the Equity and Open Doors rates. Additionally, SER Business, Lifetime, and Restorer members are entitled to substantial discounts on the member rate, but this benefit is exclusively available to active SER members. All fees are in USD.

Table 2: CERP/CERPIT Application Fee Structure

Membership Status	Application Fee	Maintenance Fee (4-year recurring charge)	Membership Savings
Standard SER Member	$250	$75	$100 savings from the non-member price
SER Business/Restorer Member	$225	$67.50	Additional 10% discount off of the member price
Lifetime SER Member	$187.50	$56.25	Additional 25% discount off of the member price
Open Doors Member	$75	$22.50	
*need-based reduced rate available to SER members with an active Open Doors or Equity membership			
Equity Member	$150	$45	
*need-based reduced rate available to SER members with an active Equity membership			
Non-member	$350	$100	
Non-member Equity	$210	$60	
*need-based reduced rate available to applicants who do not wish to become members of SER			

What is the difference between CERP and CERPIT?

The **Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner-in-Training (CERPIT)** certification is designed for individuals who either meet the knowledge base requirements for the full CERP certification **or** have accumulated 5 years of full-time restoration experience **but not both**. This certification is particularly suitable for recent graduates of the UVic RNS program.

The **Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP)** certification is designed for applicants who meet the knowledge base requirements **and** have accumulated **5 years of full-time restoration experience** in a professional setting.

What are the requirements to become CERP or CERPIT?

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements in the following key areas:

1. Knowledge base
2. Professional-level experience
3. Project experience (CERP Only)
4. References
5. Ethics and Disciplinary Policies

The knowledge base requirements for both CERP and CERPIT are the same and include academic course credits in each of the following main categories: biological science, physical science, resource conservation and management, quantitative science, ecological restoration. The RNS diploma program aligns with the knowledge requirements for CERP/CERPIT, and allows for an expedited application and review process into the CERP/CERPIT program.

Each UVic 1.5 credit course required for the RNS diploma is the equivalent of a 3-credit semester course requirement for CERP/CERPIT (1.5 UVic credit course = 3 credit semester course).

1. Knowledge Base

Table 1 compares the RNS course content to the CERP/CERPIT credit requirements. Courses in **bold** are the required RNS core courses; courses in *italics* are RNS elective courses. Courses cannot be double counted. In cases where a course can be used in more than one category, the applicant must choose to assign all credits to one category or to split them between the categories. Because the actual alignment will vary depending on the selected electives, the courses in Table 1 have been generally categorized as an example so that students can verify what category would be most applicable.

RNS diploma graduates are eligible for CERP/CERPIT with some combination of the core and electives coursework as outlined in Table 1. In order to meet all of the CERP/CERPIT knowledge requirements, the applicant will need to complete all 6 core courses, 10 elective courses, and have 9 additional credits (equivalent to 3 UVic courses) in physical science. Applicants may choose to either take additional electives through UVic or substitute 12 other credits (equivalent to 6 UVic courses) obtained through prior coursework in any incomplete categories.

Table 1. Program Alignment Overview

Category	**Course Examples**	**CERP/CERPIT Credit Requirements**	**University of Victoria Courses (1 course = 3 credits)**	**RNS Alignment**
Biological Science 15 credits (at least 9 credits in ecology)	General biology (e.g., cell biology, genetics); ecology (e.g., forest ecology, wetland ecology, freshwater ecology, ecosystem ecology); botany (e.g., plant taxonomy, plant physiology); zoology (mammalogy, wildlife population biology, entomology)	9 credits in ecology	*ER338A: Special Topics: Fire Ecology (3 credits)*[1] **ER311: Principles and Concepts of Ecological Restoration (3 credits)**[2]	Meets this requirement with two core courses and three elective courses.
		6 credits in biology	**ER313: Biodiversity and Conservation Biology (3 credits)** *ER332: Selection and Propagation of Native Plants (3 credits)*	
Physical Science 15 credits (at least 6 credits in soils, hydrology, and/or climate science)	Soil science, hydrology, geology, climate science, physics, chemistry, fluvial geomorphology	6 credits in soils, hydrology, and/or climate science	*ER334: Soil Conservation and Restoration (3 credits)* *ER338A: Special Topics: Climate Change in Ecological Restoration (3 credits)* *ER335A: Restoration of Freshwater Aquatic Systems (3 credits)*	Meets soils, hydrology and/or climate science requirement with two elective courses

			ER335B: Restoration of Marine Aquatic Systems	
		9 remaining credits	Applicants may choose to either take additional electives in the Physical Sciences through UVic or substitute 9 other credits (equivalent to 3 UVic courses) obtained through prior Physical Science coursework.	Requires additional elective credit courses in the Physical Sciences.
Resource Management and Conservation 12 credits (at least 3 credits in ecological dimensions and at least 3 credits in human dimensions)	Ecological dimensions (e.g., forest management, fire management, range management, management of native or natural communities, invasive species management, conservation of wildlife populations, plant conservation, project planning and management) and Human dimensions (e.g., ethics of resource management, human behavior, public administration, interpersonal communications, natural resource policy/law, conflict resolution)	3 credits in ecological dimensions	*ER328: Forest Restoration and Sustainable Forestry (3 credits)* *ER352: Non-Timber Forest Management and Sustainable Use (3 credits)* *ER331: Urban Restoration and Sustainable Agriculture (3 credits)*	Meets ecological dimensions requirement with one elective course[3]
		3 credits in human dimensions	**ER314: Ethical/Legal/Policy Aspects of Ecological Restoration (3 credits)**	Meets human dimensions requirement with one core course
		6 credits in resource conservation and management	*ER336: Leadership Skills in Ecological Restoration (3 credits)* *ER326: Traditional Systems of Land and Resources Management (3 credits)* *ER338C: Special Topics: Methods in Adaptive Management for Ecological Restoration (3 credits)*	Meets the other credit requirements with two other elective courses within this category
Quantitative Science 9 credits (at least 6 credits in inventory, monitoring, or assessment)	Sampling theory and design, monitoring and assessment, data management, field techniques, GIS, remote sensing, biometrics, statistics	6 credits in inventory, monitoring, assessment	**ER312A: Field Study in Ecological Restoration I (3 credits)** **ER312B: Field Study in Ecological Restoration II (3 credits)**	Meets this requirement with three core courses
		3 other credits	**ER390: Environmental Restoration Project (3 credits)**	
Ecological Restoration 6 credits	Ecological restoration, restoration ecology	6 credits	*Advanced Principles and Concepts of Ecological Restoration (3 credits)* *ER327: Ecorestoration Strategies (3 credits)* *ER328: Forest Restoration and Sustainable Forestry (3 credits)* *ER329: Mining Reclamation (3 credits)*	Meets this requirement with two elective courses

			ER335A: Restoration of Freshwater Aquatic Systems (3 credits) *ER335B: Restoration of Marine Aquatic Systems* *ER336: Science Communication for Ecological Restoration* *ER338C: Special Topics: Methods in Adaptive Management for Ecological Restoration (3 credits)* *ER412/ER441: Galiano Field School*	

[1] This course could also be used in the Resource Conservation and Management category.
[2] This course could also be used in the Ecological Restoration category.
[3] Any of these elective courses not used for the ecological dimensions' specialty could also be used in the other Resource Conservation and Management category.

2. Professional-level experience

CERP applicants must clearly demonstrate that they have accumulated 5 years of full-time restoration experience in a professional setting.

If CERPIT applicants do not meet the knowledge base requirements specified above, they must clearly demonstrate that they have accumulated 5 years of full-time restoration experience in a professional setting.

3. Project experience – only applicable for CERP applicants

CERP applicants are required to have experience in planning and implementing restoration projects from start to finish. This includes conducting initial baseline assessments, contributing to project planning and execution, and engaging in ongoing monitoring efforts. As part of the CERP application process, applicants must document participation in three separate restoration projects.

4. References

Applicants must provide three letters of recommendation from three references. These recommendations should come from individuals who are familiar with the applicant's academic or restoration work, including colleagues, mentors, or peers. It's important to note that SER automatically sends out requests for these letters upon application submission. If you're applying close to the deadline, it's strongly recommended to remind your references to submit their letters before the application deadline. Applications will be considered incomplete without the letters of recommendations and won't be reviewed until all recommendations have been received.

5. Ethics and Disciplinary Policies

CERP/CERPIT applicants must agree to adhere to the SER Code of Ethics and the SER Disciplinary Policy.

How to apply

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis year-round: applications received by April 30 will be reviewed by June 30; applications received by October 31 will be reviewed by December 31.

Outlined below are the key steps on how to apply to become a CERP/CERPIT.

Step 1: Verify that you meet the program requirements

- Ensure that you have reviewed and can meet the minimum requirements before beginning the application process (knowledge base, professional-level experience, project experience (CERP Only), references, ethics and disciplinary policies).

Step 2: Pay the application fee

- An initial non-refundable application fee is required. Once certified, your credential remains active for five years, provided you successfully fulfill all continuing education (CEC) requirements.

Step 3: Complete SER's e-Learning course

- The e-learning course is a mandatory online training module that summarizes key points from the SER foundation documents. The objective of the course is to ensure that applicants have a better understanding of SER's guiding principles and policies using a common language in restoration.

- **The module must be completed prior to submission of your CERP application.** It will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours to complete.

- Take the e-Learning course here: https://ser.my.intuto.com/accesscode?k=DTXCmrycv6NlWpkZz9F3YZOo8wssBwJYxcHm+g5Sgl4=

- **Note:** when you click on the link, you will be prompted to create an account with Intuto, which is the third-party software that SER uses to host e-learning course content. *This account is completely separate from your SER membership account.*

Step 4: Review past applications

- You may find it helpful to review the example applications below as a reference while completing your application.
    - Example 1
    - Example 2
    - Example 3
    - Example 4

Step 5: Submit your application

- Review the application checklist here to ensure you have completed all the necessary steps and prepared all of your materials in advance of submission.

- You will need to create an account with Submittable, a third-party software that SER uses to process CERP applications. This account is completely separate from your SER membership account.

- Fill out a detailed application form through Submittable, upload transcripts, project descriptions, and other supporting documents.

- You will need to provide three emails from three references. SER will send requests for letters of recommendation upon submission of application.

- Once all the steps have been completed, you will be ready to submit your application through SER's official submission portal!

What happens once I'm certified?

Once certified as a CERP or CERPIT, your certification remains valid for five years. You will need to (1) pay an annual maintenance fee to maintain active status during this period, and (2) participate in continuing education to stay abreast of rapidly evolving knowledge, approaches, strategies, and techniques in the field of ecological restoration. After the five-year period, you will need to apply for recertification and pay the recertification fee in order to renew your credentials. Note that the CERP/CERPIT maintenance fees are separate from the SER membership dues.

In order to renew your certification, CERPs and CERPITs must accrue 50 continuing education credits (CECs) over the 5-year period (minimum of 5 CECs per year) and complete a simple recertification process *before your certification expires.* Learn more about recertification here.

Continuing education requirements

Continuing education keeps practitioners updated with the rapidly evolving knowledge, methods, strategies, techniques, and requirements in ecological restoration. Credits can be earned by participating in approved short courses, webinars, workshops, symposia, technical publications, and other events that contribute to the advancement of ecological restoration.

There are select RNS courses that have been pre-approved for continuing education credits for CERP/CERPIT:

- ER313 Biodiversity and Conservation Biology

- ER329 Mining Reclamation
- ER331 Urban Restoration and Sustainable Agricultural Systems
- ER332 Selection and Propagation of Native Plants for Ecological Restoration
- ER338A Special Topics in Environmental Restoration: Climate Change in Ecological Restoration

There are a number of in-person and on-line events, workshops, and webinars that are available through SER. Learn more about pre-approved CECs here. For other professional activities with content relevant to ecological restoration for which CECs may be granted, visit the SER website here.

Learn more about CERP/CERPIT

- Learn more about CERPIT or CERP.
- Learn more about recertification here.
- Learn more about CECs here.
- Visit the FAQ page here.
- Contact SER at certification@ser.org