



National
Guidance

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Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expeditions

The Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award aims to give young people the chance to develop skills for work and life, fulfil their potential, and have a brighter future. The DofE website (www.dofe.org) has comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the Award.

To complete their DofE Award, participants are expected to complete an unaccompanied expedition, where a group operates independently of leaders (although supervised remotely by them).

Using External Providers

Many establishments buy in support for running expeditions from external providers. If you are considering using such a provider, see document 4.4h "Using External Providers and Facilities". If the provider is a DofE Approved Activity Provider (AAP), see the guidance below.

Safety Management of DofE Expeditions

There are several roles and organisations involved in the delivery of DofE expeditions, so it is essential to be clear about where responsibility for safety management lies. To provide clarity:

DofE – The national DofE organisation has no direct involvement in the delivery of DofE programmes, including expeditions. The DofE licenses other organisations to deliver its programmes, but it plays no role in ensuring the health and safety of participants on expeditions.

Licensed Organisation (LO) – This is a body licensed by the DofE to deliver its programmes and, as far as the DofE is concerned, it is the body responsible for health and safety issues. A Licensed Organisation is issued with an Operator's Licence (OL). When issuing an Operator's Licence, the DofE does not verify that the safety management systems of the Licensed Organisation are fit for purpose.

A Licensed Organisation may be an Operating Authority (OA) (such as a national organisation or local authority) or a **Directly Licensed Centre (DLC)** (such as a school or other business partner).

DofE Centre – This is the establishment, such as a school, youth centre or Open Award Centre, from which DofE programmes are delivered, either by an Operating

Authority or a Directly Licensed Centre. There may be several DofE groups, at different levels, operating from one DofE Centre. Organisations considering applying to become directly licensed should consider carefully the risks and benefits of this compared with operating as a DofE Centre under an Operating Authority. Operating Authorities often provide advice, support and approval for DofE expeditions, and this may not be available to organisations that choose to become directly licensed.

The Employer – Employers are legally responsible for the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their actions. For example, a Local Authority is responsible for the safety of staff and pupils at its maintained schools, and an academy trust is responsible for staff and pupils at its academies. There may be staff and young people linked to several employers involved in a single DofE expedition, and it is important that this does not lead to omissions or misunderstandings.

Where an employer is the Licensed Organisation the situation is relatively simple (e.g. a Local Authority establishment delivering DofE expeditions under its Local Authority's Operator's Licence). Where the employer and the Licensed Organisation are not the same, it is important that each is aware of their responsibilities and that the employer maintains sufficient oversight of proceedings to properly discharge its responsibilities.

DofE Manager – This is the person who manages DofE programmes within a Licensed Organisation. They are responsible for overseeing the centres and for liaising with DofE. They have a responsibility to ensure that DofE programmes are operated in accordance with both their Licensed Organisation's policy and DofE requirements.

Coordinator – This is the person who oversees all the groups operating from a particular establishment. They must work closely with the establishment's Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) or equivalent, and the Licensed Organisation's DofE Manager, to ensure that the establishment's, employer's and Licensed Organisation's requirements are met. The Coordinator and DofE Manager may have different employers and will need to ensure that any conflicting expectations are resolved.

Leader – This is a person who works with a group of young people to help them complete the Award. Their role during an expedition depends upon their competence and the circumstances: see the sections on Supervision and Roles and Responsibilities below.

Expedition Supervisor - The Expedition Supervisor is responsible for the safety of an expedition group in the field. They should have proven leadership competence for the environment in which the expedition takes place. It is their responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the group and other supervising staff, and to manage any emergency situations that may arise. The Expedition Supervisor must have the competence to make critical judgements about the ability of an expedition group to operate on their own. See the section on Roles and Responsibilities below.

Assessor - The Assessor's role is to ensure that candidates meet the standards set down by the DofE. An Assessor must be accredited by the DofE through their Expedition Assessor Accreditation Scheme. The Assessor has no responsibility for the safety of expedition groups and should not make decisions that affect group

management. However, there may be times when an Expedition Supervisor would be wise to accept advice from an Assessor, particularly when the Assessor has detailed local knowledge.

Approved Activity Provider (AAP) – These are independent organisations approved by the DofE to deliver sections of the DofE programme. If a Licensed Organisation is to use an external provider to deliver a DofE expedition, the provider must be an AAP. It is important to understand that the DofE makes no judgement about the safety management systems of an AAP and offers no guarantee as to their suitability in terms of health and safety or their financial stability. It is therefore essential that AAPs are subject to employers' normal checks on third party activity providers, and for the Licensed Organisation to ensure that the AAP meets its standards: see document 4.4f "Check List - Assessing a Provider". Where an AAP is delivering to participants from more than one employer or Licensed Organisation, each of these must satisfy themselves that the AAP meets their requirements, and that there is clarity over emergency and other arrangements.

DofE and Adventure Activity Licensing

Employers, Licensed Organisations and establishments must ensure that they know whether they or any establishment, centre or external organisation providing expeditions for their young people is required to hold an Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) licence, and whether it does so. The provider of an activity falling within the scope of the regulations is required to hold an AALA licence. Because of the wide variety of DofE groups, organisations and expeditions it is not possible to give general advice here. See document 3.2f "AALA Licensing" for more details, and where there is any doubt contact the Adventure Activities Licensing Service for clarification - see www.hse.gov.uk/aala.

For example:

- Some employers, such as local authorities, hold a licence that covers expeditions run by their establishments and centres, but some do not;
- An educational establishment running an expedition for its own pupils is exempt from Adventure Activity licensing, but this exemption does not apply to youth groups, nor to schools taking pupils who are not on their roll (e.g. where several schools work together to deliver expeditions);
- Academies should be aware that if they previously delivered expeditions to pupils not on their roll within the terms of a local authority AALA licence, this is no longer possible after they leave the local authority - academies are independent and require their own AALA licence in this situation;
- Some expeditions may not fall within the scope of licensing, depending on the type of activity involved and where they occur;
- A licence is not required for activities for young people aged at least 18.

An AALA licence and a DofE licence for Licensed Organisations should not be confused. The former is a legal requirement and is concerned with safety management. The latter is a requirement of the DofE and is concerned with maintaining its standards and conditions.

DofE Expeditions Overseas

Overseas expeditions are not in scope of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations and so, when using a third-party provider, it will not be possible to use an AALA licence as reassurance of appropriate safety management systems. Alternatives are to look for providers with a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge for overseas expeditions, or for providers operating to BS8848:2014. Establishments should consult their Outdoor Education Adviser when planning any DofE expedition overseas.

When planning an expedition overseas, Licensed Organisations should ensure that the DofE requirements (which include notifying DofE of such expeditions) are met. Training, staff competence, risk assessment, supervision and emergency procedures must all be relevant to the overseas setting.

Participants should have the opportunity to plan their journey overseas and to travel unaccompanied – if they are not able to do this then this could be an indicator that an expedition overseas is not appropriate.

See document 7q "Overseas Expeditions".

Supervision during Expeditions

The Expedition Supervisor is responsible for the supervision of participants during expeditions, whether the expeditions are accompanied by leaders or unaccompanied. Supervision can be direct, indirect or remote.

Before participants take part in unaccompanied expeditions, they must have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge, with the appropriate level of experience, confidence, physical ability and judgement. It is critical that the training provided is sound and thorough. Expedition Supervisors must exercise careful judgement before withdrawing from direct supervision. This process should be gradual and progressive.

During practical training 'in the field', each individual group of young people should be led or supervised by a suitably competent leader.

By the time groups undertake their final expedition, during which the participants are assessed, they should have been judged as capable of operating independently. It may be appropriate at this stage for one experienced and competent Expedition Supervisor, perhaps using a team of assistants, to oversee more than one group. The key issues here are that the overall supervision plan must be effective, and that no leader is given tasks beyond their level of competence. See the section on Roles and Responsibilities below.

Since Expedition Supervisors may not themselves be with the group(s) at all times, they should determine the nature and extent of supervision required to ensure that supervision remains effective - whether it is direct, indirect or remote. Decisions must take account of:

- The experience and competence of the group;
- The experience and competence of any other leaders and helpers;
- The effectiveness of communications in an emergency;

- The weather (both prevailing and forecast);
- The nature of the activity;
- The terrain or environment.

The Expedition Supervisor continues to be responsible for the group, even when direct supervision has been withdrawn.

See the advice on types of supervision in document 4.2a "Group Management and Supervision". Further guidance about remote supervision is available at www.mountain-training.org/walking/other/downloads (click on "2016 Remote Supervision Guidance").

Roles and Responsibilities during Expeditions

For an understanding of roles (including Visit Leader, Activity Leader, Assistant Leader and Helper) and responsibilities, you should ensure that you are familiar with document 4.2a "Group Management and Supervision".

Expedition Supervisor

The member of staff in overall charge of an expedition is the Expedition Supervisor. If the expedition is not part of a wider visit, then the Expedition Supervisor is also the Visit Leader. Sometimes an expedition takes place as part of a wider visit such as a residential: in this case the Expedition Supervisor might not be the same person as the Visit Leader.

The Expedition Supervisor has overall responsibility for the expedition including the deployment of Activity Leaders, Assistant Leaders and Helpers.

Activity Leader (also known as Group Leader, Instructor)

It is critical that, at any one time, there is an Activity Leader responsible for the supervision of each group taking part in the expedition. In many cases, the Expedition Supervisor will also be an Activity Leader as well as taking an overview of the expedition.

It is possible for one Activity Leader to be responsible for (and therefore to remotely supervise) more than one expedition group, provided that the risk assessment demonstrates that this is acceptable. See "Staff Ratios" below.

Assistant Leader, Helper

If more than one leader works with a group, it must be clear who is the Activity Leader: the other(s) will be Assistant Leader(s). There must be a clear handover if responsibilities change. An Assistant Leader should be sufficiently competent to deputise for an Activity Leader (or the Expedition Supervisor) in an emergency.

Assistant Leaders and Helpers may be delegated tasks to support the Expedition Supervisor or an Activity Leader in various ways, depending upon their level of competence. For example:

- Welfare support;
- Logistics/transport/communications/backup;
- Staffing check points (non-remote unless competent to operate remotely);
- Supporting lone working by other staff.

Leader Competence

All Leaders and Helpers should be approved by the employer for the role and responsibilities they are to undertake: see document 3.2d "Approval of Leaders". Approval should include assessing competence for the specific adventure activity (mode of travel) to be undertaken, taking into account the terrain in which the expedition takes place, their ability to look after themselves in that environment, their knowledge of the area and their familiarity with the participants.

Activity Leaders should be competent in First Aid: see document 4.4b "First Aid". A recommended qualification for an unaccompanied expedition in the UK is completion of a 2-day/16-hour course designed for outdoor activities and remote environments, taken within the past three years. The appropriate level of competence in First Aid for an Assistant Leader or Helper depends upon the responsibilities assigned to them.

The following training can be useful in developing the necessary competence:

- Professional training (teaching, youth work, etc.);
- Training courses for the relevant AALA-recognised awards;
- DofE courses (e.g. Expedition Supervisor, Expedition Skills);
- Relevant in-house training provided by employers;
- Relevant training provided by voluntary organisations (e.g. Cadets, Guides, Scouts, John Muir Trust).

Activity Leader Qualifications

The following is a summary of the types of terrain (for walking and cycling) or water type (for paddlesports) used to determine the appropriate minimum leadership qualifications for the most popular modes of travel used in expeditions. Minimum AALA-recognised qualifications are summarised for walking.

For further information see AALA inspector notes 5.15 (for paddlesports), 6.12 (for off-road cycling) and 5.18 (for other adventure activities) at the following link: webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/connect.ti/adventureactivitiesnetwork/view?objectId=205776&exp=e1

For guidance about other forms of travel, such as by horse or wheelchair, see the relevant AALA note or consult your employer's Outdoor Education Adviser.

Walking (Trekking)

The matrix in AALA note 5.18 lists the approved minimum qualifications for three levels of terrain. These levels are described by the awarding bodies in their course information, and are summarised below. There are different qualifications for summer and winter: those shown below are for summer conditions only (i.e. when there is no unavoidable snow or ice on any part of the route); for winter qualifications see the AALA matrix.

Lowland Country

Farmland, valleys and woodland with no hazardous terrain (e.g. cliffs, very steep slopes, water hazards etc.) and no more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area (any potential escape routes should also lie within Lowland Country). Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both

marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas, and must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.

Minimum recognised qualifications:

- Lowland Leader Award, with Expedition Skills Module if camping (www.mountain-training.org);
- Lowland Expedition Leader Award (previously Basic Expedition Leader) (www.sportsleaders.org);
- Countryside Leader Award (www.countrysideleaderaward.org).

Moorland Country

Open, uncultivated, non-mountainous, high or remote country (known variously as upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down), which should not require movement on steep or rocky terrain in either a planned or unplanned situation. Walks should be in areas enclosed by well-defined geographical or man-made boundaries such as classified roads (areas that merge with mountain regions without well-defined boundaries should be regarded as Mountain Country).

Minimum recognised qualifications (see www.mountain-training.org):

- Hill and Moorland Leader Award, with Expedition Skills Module if camping;
- Walking Group Leader.

Mountain Country

Wild country, which may contain steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help.

Minimum recognised qualification (see www.mountain-training.org):

- Mountain Leader.

Cycling

There are two levels of terrain for cycling, which are described in the matrix in AALA note 6.12, along with the appropriate qualifications. Leaders should also hold the relevant minimum walking (trekking) qualification for the terrain through which the expedition passes.

Paddlesport

The matrix in AALA note 5.15 summarises the appropriate qualifications for canoeing, kayaking and other paddlesports in various contexts, including:

- "Open Water (Local)", e.g. a canal journey;
- Open water journeying;
- Simple and advanced white water;
- Simple and advanced sea journeys.

The paddlesport qualifications should be complemented by walking expedition qualifications as detailed above, relevant to the terrain through which the expedition passes.

Planning and Preparation

By their very nature, unaccompanied expeditions should be the culmination of a significant period of training, planning and preparation. Training should include:

- Relevant activity skills;
- Camping skills for overnight expeditions;
- Navigation;
- Route planning;
- Emergency procedures;
- First Aid;
- Practice expeditions with direct or indirect supervision.

Each expedition group should normally have a minimum of four participants (so that in the event of a casualty one can remain with them while two go for help), and no more than eight (so as to be able to operate as a cohesive team). The DoFE has regulations about group size.

There are serious hazards associated with camping stoves. Participants should be trained and directly supervised by a competent leader until the Expedition Supervisor is confident that they can operate the stoves safely without supervision.

Route planning considerations should include:

- Suitable terrain/water conditions for the competence of the group and leaders;
- Awareness of significant hazards in the area (e.g. steep ground, fast-flowing water);
- Suitable campsites;
- Anticipated weather and ground/water conditions at the time of year;
- Alternative routes for different weather and ground/water conditions, especially in wild country;
- Escape routes;
- Emergency communication (e.g. phone boxes, mobile phone, VHF radio);
- The need for suitable check or message drop points on the route;
- Suitable start and finish points, accessible by public transport if possible in order to allow greater independence;
- If more than one group is taking part in an expedition at the same time, the need for reasonable proximity in order facilitate transport and supervision.

For cycling expeditions, participants will be carrying all of their expedition equipment on their bikes and on their person, and so good route selection and planning is essential, as bike handling becomes more difficult with a loaded bike.

See also documents 4.3c "Risk Management – An Overview", 4.3f "Risk Management - Some Practical Advice" and 4.3g "Risk Management – What to Record and How".

Remote supervision of expeditions can involve staff working alone in remote places. They must be competent to do this, and the risks assessed to ensure their safety.

There should be an emergency plan to cover the whole period of the expedition. See section 4.1 of this guidance for documents about emergency planning.

There should be careful scrutiny of plans for unaccompanied expeditions by a competent person (e.g. the employer's Outdoor Education Adviser).

Staff Ratios for Unaccompanied Expeditions

Decisions about staff/participant ratios should be made through a process of risk assessment, taking into account the 'SAGE' variables (Staff, Activity, Group, Environment) and the need for sufficient staffing in the event of an emergency or (if required) to continue with the expedition if a member of staff is incapacitated. See document 4.3b "Ratios and Effective Supervision".

It is therefore not possible to set down definitive ratios for supervising unaccompanied expeditions. The following guidance is to help you make decisions based upon your specific circumstances.

A normal starting point would be for each group to be supervised by an Activity Leader (one of whom could be the Expedition Supervisor), supported by at least a Helper who is sufficiently competent to implement the emergency plan should the Activity Leader be incapacitated, and for the staff team to be of mixed gender if the group is mixed.

When there is more than one group on expedition, it may be possible for one Activity Leader to remotely supervise two groups (but no more). It may also be possible for Activity Leaders to support each other where the groups are in close proximity and the terrain allows this to be done effectively (see AALA note 5.13).

Overall, there must be a sufficient number of leaders to cover for an Activity Leader diverted to deal with an emergency and still allow the groups to continue their expeditions with adequate supervision, or at least to implement the emergency plan.

Some establishments might be able to have a reserve Activity Leader back at base (if this is close enough to the location of the expeditions) to cover. Otherwise, for groups operating in close proximity:

- If there are just two groups, two Activity Leaders would still be needed;
- For three or four groups, it would not be sufficient to have just two Activity Leaders (because this would leave one having to supervise all the groups if the other is incapacitated) – a third Activity Leader (or perhaps an Assistant Leader) is likely to be necessary;
- For five or more groups, a minimum of one Activity Leader for every two groups (i.e. three for 5 or 6 groups, four for 7 or 8 groups, etc.) may be sufficient, especially if they have some support from one or more competent helpers (such an arrangement would require clarity about how they will support each other and supervise the groups if any of them is incapacitated).

In some circumstances, a higher level of staffing could be needed. In exceptional circumstances, the risk assessment might justify a lower level of staffing than that suggested.

