

## Guidance for unaccompanied expeditions

It is strongly recommended that this guidance is underpinned by support from an accredited Outdoor Education Adviser Panel (OEAP) adviser.

**This document is intended to set a good practice benchmark for all involved.**

### Introduction

The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel recognises the huge benefits that remotely supervised, unaccompanied expeditions e.g. DofE award, BTEC Public Services, GCSE Trekking, John Muir Award, field work trips and all other self-supported expeditions can bring to individuals and teams. These include leadership, teamwork, self-motivation, communication, confidence, resilience and consideration for others. Expeditions typically take individuals out of their comfort zones and provide a broad range of challenges for them. The sense of achievement from completing an expedition can be significant and profound.

This document provides a framework for the planning and supervision of self-supported expeditions and self-led activities (including day walks) in the terrain defined in this document.

Expedition staff teams should emphasise the benefits of all adults working as a team. However it is good practice to have a lead Expedition / Visit leader who holds the overview of the whole expedition and an appropriately competent deputy.

Employers need to ensure that staff involved in remote lone working during expeditions are competent and aware of the safety implications including emergency procedure and relevant issues. Staff should ensure safe working practices.

### Leader Competence

There are four recognised ways to demonstrate the competence of leaders

- 1) To hold the relevant qualification
- 2) To hold an equivalent qualification (uniformed services, overseas awards etc)
- 3) To have received appropriate in house training (verified by a technical expert)\*
- 4) To be competent through experience (verified by a technical expert)\*

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/L77.PDF](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/L77.PDF) Paragraph 22-28

**\*A statement of competence written by an appropriately qualified technical adviser must provide evidence for options 3 & 4.**

The leader's competences need to be matched to the terrain in which the expedition teams will be working and the mode of travel used.

### Deploying staff who do not hold NGB awards or Statements of Competence

Where an accompanying member of staff does not hold a relevant NGB Award, or does not have a current Statement of Competence from a suitable Technical Adviser, the Expedition Leader may determine the best use of such staff by taking into account additional training or awareness courses that have been undertaken. Examples of these are:

- Training Courses for NGB Awards - e.g. Mountain Training Awards (LL/HM/ML), Sports Leaders UK (LWL / LEL)
- Training Courses for AALA recognised Awards e.g. The Countryside Leader Award
- Training / Skills Based Courses such as the DofE Expedition Supervisor Course and the DofE Expedition Skills Course
- Training / Skills Based Courses provided by LA's and other organisations such as Uniformed and Voluntary organisations – Cadets / Scouts / John Muir Award etc.

The final decision on deployment of staff lies with the employer and judgements should be supported by robust Risk Management strategies, documentation and evidence of competence

In addition, there should be careful scrutiny of the suitability of the expedition and the safety cover provided by a competent person (E.g. the Outdoor Education Adviser).

**Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities**

	Name	Responsibilities	Competence
Staff assessed as competent (See Table 3)	<b>Expedition/ Visit Leader</b>	<p>Responsible for the overall planning &amp; management of the expedition including the deployment of assistant leaders and additional adults</p> <p>For all considerations please see: <a href="http://www.oeap.info">www.oeap.info</a> 3.4 Visit Leader</p> <p>NOTE: For DofE expeditions: Refer to DofE Supervisor role description on <a href="http://www.dofe.org">www.dofe.org</a> and <a href="http://www.oeapng.info">www.oeapng.info</a> OEAP National Guidance document 7B.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See table 3 below</li> <li>2. OEAP visit leader training recommended/ mandatory dependent on employer requirements</li> <li>3. Familiar with the area where expedition is taking place and competent to look after themselves in that environment.</li> </ol>
	<b>Assistant Leaders</b>	Works under the direction of the Expedition/ Visit Leader to train and supervise the participants to the appropriate standard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need to be competent for the role assigned by the Expedition leader.</li> <li>2. Must meet the criteria in Table 3</li> <li>3. OEAP visit leader training recommended/ mandatory dependent on employer requirements</li> <li>4. Familiar with the area where expedition is taking place and competent to look after themselves in that environment</li> </ol>
Support staff	<b>Additional Support Staff</b>	<p>May support the Expedition Leader/Assistant Leaders with training/supervision where appropriate</p> <p>Must operate under the supervision of the Expedition Leader/Assistant Leaders at all times</p> <p>Where Additional Support Staff are deployed, the Expedition Leader/assistant leaders will remain responsible for all groups</p> <p>Additional Support Staff are present only in a supporting role</p> <p>Additional Support Staff MUST NOT supervise the use of camping stoves unless they have been suitably trained and are overseen by an appropriately qualified person (eg the Expedition Leader)</p>	<p>Deployed by Expedition Leader:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff with appropriate experience who have completed NGB Training (e.g. Lowland Leader training)</li> <li>2. Staff with appropriate experience who have completed a DofE DES Course</li> <li>3. Experienced walker with navigation skills, able to look after their own safety, and able to retrieve the situation in an emergency</li> </ol> <p>Additional considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced teacher/teaching assistant/youth worker/or similar</li> <li>• Prior knowledge of the group</li> <li>• Familiar with route and area used</li> <li>• Current First Aid qualification</li> </ul>
	<b>Adult Helper</b>	<p>Works under the direction of the Expedition/ Visit Leader to carry out limited tasks that do not require the competences outlined in the table 3 below.</p> <p>To support with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welfare/behaviour/pastoral care</li> <li>• Logistics/transport/backup</li> <li>• Non-remote check points</li> <li>• Additional First Aid cover where qualified</li> <li>• Adult Helpers can also help with lone working scenarios &amp; with staffing gender issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Assessed (by the EVC/ Organisation Head/Manager with advice from the Expedition/ Visit leader) as competent to support the activity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undergone safeguarding checks (essential)</li> <li>2. Prior knowledge of the group</li> <li>3. Basic knowledge of the area</li> <li>4. Ideally possess knowledge &amp; understanding of First Aid</li> </ol>

## Table 2: Ratios of Adults to Young People.

A minimum of 2 adults must accompany an Expedition. If there are male & female participants, it is advisable to have a leader of each sex.

The following expedition staffing ratios are starting points for consideration based on risk assessment.

Staff Ratios on Unaccompanied Expeditions				
<b>Terrain 1 (see Table 3)</b>				
1 Team	1 Expedition Leader and either 1 Assistant Leader, 1 Additional Support Staff or 1 Adult Helper			
2 Teams	1 Expedition Leader and either 1 Assistant Leader or 1 Additional Support Staff			
3 Teams	1 Expedition Leader and 1 Assistant Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If 2 members of staff are supervising 3 or 4 teams, serious consideration must be given to the emergency plan should one member of staff be incapacitated or need to take a participant to hospital. In these instances a third competent member of staff will be required in order to continue with the expedition as planned.</li> </ul>		
4 Teams	1 Expedition Leader and 1 Assistant Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be some circumstances where an Assistant Leader (or an appropriate member of Additional Support Staff) may be necessary for <u>each</u> team. The risk assessment process will determine this.</li> <li>(e.g. practice expeditions or where teams are working independently - different routes/large areas)</li> </ul>		
5 Teams or more	<p>The minimum ratio of 1 Expedition Leader/Assistant Leader for every 2 teams must be maintained Eg. 5 teams require at least 1 Expedition Leader and 2 Assistant Leaders</p>			
<b>Terrain 2 &amp; 3 (see Table 3)</b>				
1 Team	1 Expedition Leader and either 1 Assistant Leader, 1 Additional Support Staff or 1 Adult Helper			
2 or more Teams	1 Expedition Leader and normally 1 Assistant Leader for each team (Consider whether a third member of staff is required in order to effectively manage an emergency situation)			
3 Teams	1 Expedition Leader and 2 Assistant Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to deal with Emergencies effectively a third competent member of staff is required where there are 3 or more teams operating</li> </ul>		
4 Teams	1 Expedition Leader and 2 Assistant Leader	<p>There will be some circumstances (e.g. practice expeditions) where an Assistant Leader may be necessary for <u>each</u> team. The risk assessment process will determine this.</p>		
5 Teams (or more)	<p>The minimum ratio of 1 Expedition Leader/Assistant Leader to 2 teams must be maintained E.g. 5 teams will require 1 Expedition Leader and 2 Assistant Leaders (additional Leaders may be required)</p>			
<b>Taken from AALA Guidance Note 5.13: Supervision of DofE Expeditions</b>				
In licensable terrain:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where teams are operating independently (not in the same area/ immediate vicinity) then each Assistant Leader deployed to supervise a team should hold a HML (or higher) or hold a statement of competence from an appropriate technical adviser</li> <li>Where Teams are operating in close proximity then each assistant deployed to supervise a team would need at least a statement of competence from an appropriate technical advisor</li> </ul>				

Expedition Leaders and their advisers should ensure that sufficient numbers of competent staff (see Table 3) are deployed to ensure effective supervision is in place at all times

Effective supervision is essential and the above table provides the **minimum** framework under which expeditions can take place.

## **Risk Management**

Expedition/ Visit leaders and assistant leaders should consider all relevant factors before and during the expedition to inform the 'risk-benefit' assessment. This should include all-weather routes for expeditions in Wild Country as well as good-weather routes.

The proximity of the teams must be taken into account at all times as well as the starting and finishing points and the location of the check points. This must be part of the on-going risk management process.

See OEAP National Guidance: [www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info) Section 4.3c Risk management – An overview, Section 4.3f Risk management- some practical advice and 4.3g Risk management – what to record and when.

All Expeditions must be approved/ scrutinised/notified by the appropriate Educational Visits Co-ordinator/Head Teacher/Manager/ Education Visit Adviser/ Employer.

## Section 1: Walking Expeditions (summer conditions)\*:

**Table 3:**

Terrain 1	Competence	First Aid
<p><b>Lowland Country</b></p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p>	Lowland Leader (LL) OR Lowland Expedition Leader (LEL)/Basic Expedition leader (BEL) OR Countryside Leader Award (CLA) OR a higher qualification OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent qualification</li> <li>• In house training with a statement of competence signed off by a technical adviser</li> <li>• Appropriate experience signed off by a technical adviser.</li> </ul>	Minimum of 16hrs with an outdoor element recommended
Terrain 2	Competence	First Aid
<p><b>Moorland Country</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>	Hill and Moorland Leader Award (HML) Walking Group Leader (WGL) OR a higher qualification OR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent qualification</li> <li>• In house training with a statement of competence signed off by a technical adviser</li> <li>• Appropriate experience signed off by a technical adviser.</li> </ul>	Minimum of 16hrs Required Outdoor element recommended
Terrain 3	Competence	First Aid
<p><b>Mountain Country</b></p> <p>Wild country which may contain steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help.</p>	Mountain Leader Summer (MLS) or a higher qualification OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent qualification</li> <li>• In house training with a statement of competence signed off by a technical adviser</li> <li>• Appropriate experience signed off by a technical adviser.</li> </ul>	Minimum of 16hrs Required Outdoor element recommended

**Please Note:**

1. \*In case of winter conditions refer to your outdoor education adviser for further advice before planning.
2. There is an additional camping module for Lowland Leader and Hill and Moorland Leader awards.
3. A 3 year first aid revalidation is required to keep all first aid qualifications valid.

**When applying this guidance to DofE Expeditions please ensure you follow the DofE requirements:**  
<http://www.dofe.info/en/content/cms/leaders/resources-download/expedition-d...>

## Remote Supervision

<http://www.mountain-training.org/walking/other/downloads> please click on walking and download 2016 remote supervision guidance PDF  
[www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info) Section 4.2a group management and supervision.

## Emergency Planning

[www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info) Section 4.1 all documents.

## DofE Approved Activity Providers

Many schools now buy in leadership services (i.e. leaders with appropriate NGB awards) from Approved Activity Providers. If you engage the services of an AAP to deliver your expeditions they must follow the requirements of this policy. An AAP should be providing competent instructors in accordance with this guidance and the qualification matrix.

If the expedition falls into the description of Terrain 1 (Table 3) the school's DofE Manager / Coordinator should:

- Check if the provider (AAP) holds a current Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTc) Quality Badge. <http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search> and or an AALA Licence
- If the provider does not hold a LOTc quality badge - seek further evidence and assurances about safety and educational quality.
- Require the Provider/AAP to complete a Providers' Questionnaire ([www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info) 8p)

If the expedition terrain falls into the description of Terrain 2 or Terrain 3 in Table 3, or if watersports are done on 'specified water' (that is the sea, tidal waters, inland waters more than 50 metres from the nearest land or on turbulent inland waters) then the AAP you engage should hold an Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority license. This license can be checked by using the provider search:  
[http://www.aals.org.uk/aals/provider\\_search.php](http://www.aals.org.uk/aals/provider_search.php).

When engaging the services of an AAP, schools must remember that they retain the overall responsibility for their students on expedition at all times. It is good practice that there should be staff from the school/organisation in attendance on the expedition, particularly overseeing and supporting the pastoral care and welfare of students.

## Section 2 – Cycling Expeditions

### Leader Competence

The table below gives the qualification requirements for levels of terrain for cycling expeditions. These cycling specific qualifications are in addition to and **must** be complemented with walking expedition qualifications as detailed in Section 1.

Cycling expeditions may take place using public roads, towpaths and other non-technical terrain. Alternatively the expedition may take place on marked trails in wilderness areas, and the leaders qualifications need to be matched to the terrain in which the expedition teams will be working. For simplicity this terrain has been split into two distinct categories, please note this does **not** directly relate to Bronze, Silver and Gold DofE Expeditions.

**Table 4:**

Description of Terrain	NGB Qualification
<p>1) Trail terrain: non-technical, that does not involve specific route selection; gentle to moderate rolling terrain, for example, rocks, roots or other obstacles in order to ride on it. It can be as narrow as handlebar width.</p> <p>Typical trail terrain includes: Canal paths and public highways, way-marked routes, rights-of-way on which cycles are permitted, identifiable routes, tracks and trails with obvious navigational features. These routes will be 90-95% rideable and take the group no more than 30 minutes walk by a reasonably fit person away from the nearest accessible road or a shelter with communication..</p>	<p><b>On Road:</b> British Cycling Ride Leader Level 1</p> <p><b>Off Road:</b> British Cycling Ride Leader Level 2 Off Road Non Technical Terrain</p> <p>CTC Trail MTB Leader Award</p> <p>COLA Level 1 Mountain Bike Trail Leader</p> <p>MBLA Trail Cycle Leader</p> <p>Cycling UK Trail Mountain Bike Leader</p> <p>MBCUK Trail Leader</p> <p>MIAS Level 1 and 2</p> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent qualification</li> <li>• In house training with a statement of competence signed off by a technical adviser</li> <li>• Appropriate experience signed off by a technical adviser.</li> </ul>
<p>2) Technical terrain: routes with obstacles, which require technical skill to be ridden over or avoided, such as roots, rocks or holes. It does not necessarily mean large drop offs or seemingly unachievable sections, but the sort of terrain that most mountain bikers may come across on a normal ride.</p> <p>Typical technical terrain includes: single-track, farm and moorland tracks and paths and other mountain bike accessible rights of way with sections requiring line selection to ride. Technical Terrain also includes trail terrain and public highways and roads.</p> <p>Areas of remoteness to any height above sea level and more than 30 minutes walk from the nearest shelter with communication that are easily exited in a few hours, returning to a refuge or an accessible road.</p> <p>(Areas that merge with mountain regions and do not have well defined boundaries are excluded)</p>	<p>British Cycling MTB Leader Level 2</p> <p>BSCA Mountain Bike / Off Road Leader</p> <p>Cola level 2 MBA</p> <p>CTC Technical Terrain Leader Award</p> <p>MIAS Level 2</p> <p>Cycling UK Technical Mountain Bike</p> <p>MBCUK Technical Trail Leader</p> <p>MBLA Mountain Bike Leader</p> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalent qualification</li> <li>• In house training with a statement of competence signed off by a technical adviser</li> <li>• Appropriate experience signed off by a technical adviser.</li> </ul>

**For overnight expeditions Leaders must also hold the relevant walking qualification for the level of terrain they are operating in. See Table 1**

It must be noted that participants will be carrying all of their expedition equipment both on their bikes and on their person and good route selection and planning is essential, as bike handling will become more difficult with a loaded bike.

**For all other considerations for cycling expeditions follow ALL the on foot expedition guidelines.**

## Section 3 – Paddle Expeditions

### Leader Qualifications

The link below gives the qualification requirements for training and supervising young people for expeditions on water. These paddlesport specific qualifications are in addition to and **must** be complemented with walking expedition qualifications as detailed in Section 1.

Paddlesport expeditions may take place using canals, rivers and other inland waterways, lakes or at sea. These waters can be familiar to the participants but as participants improve the waterways are usually in rural areas and unfamiliar and more advanced expeditions could pass through wild country and moving water either current, tide or large bodies of water could be part of the challenge.

Leader's competence and qualifications need to be matched to the environment in which the expedition teams will be working.

Please visit:

<https://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/guidance-documents/>

British Canoeing Environmental Definitions & Deployment Guidance for Instructors, Coaches and Leaders

**For all other considerations for paddlesport expeditions follow ALL the on foot expedition guidelines.**

**For any other modes of travel not covered by this policy please speak to your Education Visit Adviser for clarification.**

### References

National Guidance –OEAP [www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info)

Mountain Training UK - <http://www.mountain-training.org>

AALS regulations: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/about-activities-licensing.htm>

British Canoeing - <https://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/>

DofE expedition handbook (13<sup>th</sup> edition – 3<sup>rd</sup> impression 2015)