

Expedition Policy

(Based on the D of E Expedition Requirements Policy)

January 2022

(Review Date January 2023)

**Abbreviations & Terminology**

* **AALA** – Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority: An organisation that is part of the Health & Safety Executive. AAPs must hold an AALA licence to offer expeditions in Wild Country.
* **Assessor Network** – A panel covering each ‘Wild Country’ area within the UK. Centres must notify each area using Red, Green and Blue forms at least 6 weeks prior to the expedition. In addition, they can provide access to assessors if required (formerly – ‘Wild Country Panel’).
* **BEAL** – Basic Expedition Assistant Leader: A nationally recognised qualification, NVQ Level 2. Governing Body is Sports Leader UK
* **BEL** – Basic Expedition Leader: A nationally recognised qualification, NVQ Level 3. Governing body is Sports Leader UK.
* **Centre/Unit**: An organisation who run the DofE Award under the licence held by the Operating Authority or other Licensed Organisation.
* **CLA** – Countryside Leaders Award: A regionally recognised qualification. Governing body Strong Roots Training.
* **Close Supervision** – where the Supervisor is close enough to intervene if necessary, in order to offer support and guidance and/or to stop mistakes being made. (Ref: DofE Expedition Guide:13th Edition p.165).
* **Daily Report Form** – A form used to note ‘clear days,’ minor incidents, notes of importance for expeditions (see appendix 3).
* **Direct Supervision** – where the Supervisor is in direct contact with the team and is accompanying them. (Ref: DofE Expedition Guide:13th Edition p.165).
* **Expedition Team** – Must be between 4-7 participants.

**Expedition Variation** – where participants have individual needs that mean one or more of the 20 conditions cannot be met

* **Incident Report Form** – A form attached to the ‘Serious Incident Cards’ used to note details of severe incidents/crises.
* **HML** – Hill & Moorland Leader: A nationally recognised qualification. Governing body is the Mountain Leader Training Board. Replaces the Walking Group Leader award.
* **LLA** – Lowland Leader Award. A nationally recognised qualification. Governing body is the Mountain Leader Training Board. This must include the Expedition Skills Module.
* **ML** – Mountain Leader: A nationally recognised qualification. Governing body is the Mountain Leader Training Board.
* **MOD** – Ministry of Defence.
* **NGB** – National Governing Body. An organisation that administers an award such as the Mountain Leader Award.
* **OA** - Operating Authority: the organisation that holds the licence to manage the award, maintain good practice & standards and monitor those who operate under their licence.
* **-**  Please read ratios carefully and understand that at times ratios refer to the number of staff to participants and at other times refer to the number of staff to groups. Staff to participants will always be written in this format 1 : 7 Staff to groups will always be written in this format one to four
* **Remote Supervision** – Where the Supervisor remains out of sight and hearing of the team and allows them to get on with the expedition without any intervention.
* **Supervision Plan** – A form designed by the DofE for noting potential supervision options for groups, the form can be downloaded from the DofE website (www.dofe.org). This should be used in conjunction with the location specific risk assessment.

**Policy Purpose**

This document is designed to clarify the planning arrangements, Health and Safety arrangements, Risk Assessment protocol and staffing levels Complete Expeditions Ltd expect to work to.

This document primarily covers walking expeditions based in the UK. If we go on to offer other modes of transport or overseas expeditions we will update the policy.

All resources named in this policy can be requested from the DofE Expeditions Advisor at the regional office.

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**Expedition Planning Process**

**Walking expedition staffing ratios and supervision**

Training exercises – Direct supervision

Practice Expeditions – Direct and close supervision

Assessment Expeditions – Normally remote supervision, using close when necessary

* Groups must be trained and supervised by appropriately qualified staff
* Ratio of 1:7 (1 qualified instructor to one walking group)
* There should be a minimum of 2 staff members on any trip

**Low Land, e.g. Chiltern Hills, New Forest, Forest of Dean**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expedition Type** | **Minimum Expedition Leader Qualification** | **Minimum Leader to team ratio** | **Minimum Staff Qualification** | **Minimum Staff to team Ratio** |
| Practice | LLA/BEL/CLA | One to Four | Experienced Adult | One to Two |
| Assessment | LLA/BEL/CLA | One to Four | Experienced Adult | One to Two |

**Moorland/Upland, e.g. Dartmoor, Peak District, Yorkshire Dales**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expedition Type** | **Minimum Expedition Leader Qualification** | **Minimum Leader to team ratio** | **Minimum Staff Qualification** | **Minimum Staff to team Ratio** |
| Practice | HML/WGL | One to Two | Experienced Adult | One to One |
| Assessment | HML/WGL | One to Two | Experienced Adult | One to One |

**Mountain, e.g. Snowdonia, Lake District, Cairngorms**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expedition Type** | **Minimum Expedition Leader Qualification** | **Minimum Leader to team ratio** | **Minimum Staff Qualification** | **Minimum Staff to team Ratio** |
| Practice | ML | One to Two | Experienced Adult | One to One |
| Assessment | ML | One to Two | Experienced Adult | One to One |

A non-qualified member of staff may be authorised by the Company Director to make up ratios if they have the relevant experience and operating under the guidance of an ML on gold expeditions.eg 1 ML may operate with 2 authorized experienced staff for 3 groups if they have the relevant experience in the environment and have been approved by the Director prior to the expedition.

Expedition Leaders should also hold:

* Current First Aid Qualification: Lowland minimum 8hrs, Moorland/Mountain minimum 16hrs
* DofE accredited Expedition Supervisors Course
* Enhanced DBS check (previously CRB check)

An Experienced Adult should have:

* Knowledge of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award
* Knowledge of the expedition environment
* Should have enough technical abilities to be self-sufficient in the environment
* Should be known to the Expedition Leader and hold a DBS check completed in the last 3 years.

A designated Expedition Deputy Leader should be named who is competent to perform the duties of the Expedition Leader should the need arise.

**Expedition Supervision Arrangements**

* Expedition staff will employ a range of supervision styles depending on the terrain, weather conditions and competence of the group.
* When NGB qualified staff are supervising two teams on assessed expeditions, the supervisor must be able to reach either team in the event of an emergency. This means both teams must be in the same area.
* Expedition staff will be familiar with the terms ‘Direct Supervision’, ‘Close Supervision’ and ‘Remote Supervision’ as described in the DofE Expedition Guide, 13th Edition, p165.
* The Expedition Leader will perform a detailed location specific risk assessment, identify all local hazards on each group’s route.
* At Silver Assessment and Gold level, groups may not be directly supervised overnight but participants must be checked into their camp in the evening, especially if wild camping. Participants must also know how to access staff overnight if issues arise, and clearly understand their escape routes and what to do in an emergency. This should also be clearly stated in the parental letter and event specific plan.

Additional guidance:

* We will clearly state how participants will be supervised, whether staff will be on the same campsites and define what ‘wild camping’ actually entails in the parental letters.
* Where necessary we will set up a base camp for the duration of the expedition and consider access to shelter or bunkhouse/camping barns.
* We assess how realistic it is for teams/leaders to access additional staff in an emergency. This will depend on how remote the routes go and the availability of phone and radio reception.
* We plan for the worst-case scenario by ensuring you have thought through and noted contingency plans and escape routes. For assessed events we liaise with the assessor to ensure teams are not over/under supervised.

**Late Back Procedure**

* A formal written late back procedure will be included with the ESP.
* It is expected that one person will be nominated to control all communications with the Home Contact and Mountain Rescue, check trackers and then control distribution of search parties.

**First Aid**

* All staff should hold a current first aid qualification. The recommended course is a 16hr outdoor based course such as an ITC or REC accredited course.
* Expedition staff should carry a substantial first aid kit and spare personal medication for participants in their group e.g. epipens, inhalers.
* All participants to have undertaken at least basic first aid training (in accordance with the DofE training syllabus).
* All participants must carry personal first aid kits/personal medication plus the group must share a larger first aid kit to cover more substantial first aid issues.

**Staff documentation**

It is expected that all staff on the expedition will carry the following documents:

* Event Specific Plan (or relevant risk assessments)
* Critical Incident Procedures.
* Medical Summary sheet (to include staff details).
* Summary list of all staff contact details & the emergency contact details.

The Expedition Leader & Expedition Deputy will carry in addition to the above:

* Hard copies of all the ‘Consent Forms’.
* Emergency contact details including doctors’ information for all participants & staff.

**Serious Incident & Near Miss**

Where a ‘Serious Incident’ or ‘Near Miss’ has occurred an Incident Report should be completed. We will then liaise with the Incident Team at DofE Head Office. For severe incidents the events Emergency Contact is asked to keep the DofE Duty Officer up to date on the situation.

Examples of a Serious Incident/Near Hit as defined by DofE Head Office are:

Serious Injury, Fatality, Emergency Services Call Out, Minor injuries (requiring GP or hospitalisation), Conflict with landowners or other members of the public, Near Miss

**Walking Expeditions at Gold Level – additional guidance**

Gold events are required to take place in Wild Country areas and a thorough training programme should be implemented to prepare participants for the challenges they will face. The practice expedition should reflect the assessment process as much as possible with areas being identified that match the assessed location in terms of:

* Navigation
* Type of terrain, topography & steepness of terrain
* Remoteness
* Style of camping
* Weather (where possible)
* Journeying
* Duration

For direct entrants (those who have not completed the previous level of the DofE award) additional training will be held to bring participants up to the same level as those who hold a Silver award.

**The Variation Process**

Where participants have individual needs that mean one or more of the 20 Conditions cannot be met, they may apply for a variation to enable them to complete their DofE expedition.

The Expedition Variations application form must be submitted at least 12 weeks before the planned expedition, and after discussion with the DofE Expeditions Advisor.

The process requests providers to give:

* An explanation as to why one or more of the conditions cannot be met
* A suitable alternative plan that leads to minimal impact
* Additional risk management (where appropriate)

Some examples of reasons to apply for variation are:

* A participant who is unable to carry a full expedition rucksack for medical reasons
* A participant who requires a carer or worker to support for the duration
* Where a participant is unable to safely cook and requires a member of staff to support

**Example contingency letter to parents for hot/cold weather**

**Weather Arrangements.**

In the event of excessively hot weather during expeditions the following actions will be put in place.

Additional water drops will be made by supervisors and checks on water being drunk. Participants will be briefed in precautions to take in adverse weather, use of sun cream, drinking extra water, taking breaks in the shade and must wear a hat. Start times reviewed to missing hottest part of the day, longer lunch stops at midday. Participants will be briefed on correct clothing for the conditions. Participants packs can be lightened by the supervisors if the Participant is struggling in the conditions. Expedition Manager to liaise with Area DofE Staff re the contingency planning. Parents to be sent the attached letter prior to the expedition to inform them of preparations for expedition.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In view of the recent extended spell of warm weather, we are writing to you to reassure you that every contingency is in place to ensure the expedition this weekend is successful and that participants do not suffer unduly in the heat. We have spoken to the Duke of Edinburgh Area Office and they are happy with our plans to manage the situation (as detailed below) and for the expedition to go ahead. Many participants have undertaken similar expeditions in similar conditions in the past. We have a highly experienced group of supervisors and assessors and our primary aim is the wellbeing of the participants. The following steps have been put in place:

1. Extra water drops to the participants are being made - all supervisors and assessors will carry 10 litres of water and top up between drops;

2. Participants will be briefed prior to departure: there will be no maximum time to get in to camp. They are also permitted to ask for water from householders;

3. Large portions of the route is in woodland;

4. When taking a break, they will sit in shade;

5. Participants have been told they must have a hat and sun cream and carry 2 litres of water or they cannot take part;

6. Assessors/supervisors will be advised to make sure they see all participants drink and eat;

7. If students are struggling we will lighten their packs.

Unfortunately, the option of re-scheduling is not available as our expedition team have booked the weekend out and other staff normally work Saturdays and have taken time off. We have also booked assessors and they are not available for other weekends. If you do wish to withdraw your child so they can complete it on another date, please let us know; due to the short notice it will not be possible to provide a refund.

Yours faithfully,

In very wet or cold conditions, again the safety of the participants is paramount. Expeditions may be rescheduled if the DofE Area team deem it necessary. Foul weather routes will be used and plans adapted. Extra bedding, clothing, spare tents are always carried on the minibus. A close camping barn, bunkhouse or indoor space could be used if the conditions deteriorate.

Parents will be directed to information on the DofE website about weather conditions.

**Attached Appendices**

* Example Risk Assessment/ESP
* Expedition Specific Risk Assessment examples
* First Aid log
* Incident Record Sheet
* Incident Log
* Example Asthma Attack flow chart
* Example Volunteer Briefing sheet
* Volunteer Drivers Form
* Guidelines for Day Walkers
* Example Mapwork Training framework
* Guidelines for Supervisors
* Supervisor Checklist
* Hand Over Form
* Reflection Sheet
* Safety and Emergency Procedures Sheet
* D of E Kit List