



National
Guidance
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Adventure Activities

Definition

For the purposes of OEAP National Guidance, an adventure activity is defined as an activity which is exciting and challenging and which involves significant inherent risk of harm, without which the activity would lose much of its value, or which takes place in a remote or hazardous location.

Adventure activities require a higher level of risk management, and may require specific competence, in order to reduce the risks to an acceptable level. See OEAP National Guidance document [4.3c "Risk Management – an Overview"](#). In order to ensure this, employers and establishments should consider whether their policies should include special requirements for adventure activities, such as an approval process for leaders and activities.

It requires judgement to decide whether a particular activity falls within the definition of an adventure activity. Many employers and insurance companies therefore provide lists of activities that they define as adventure activities. However, such lists are not exhaustive, so employers should provide leaders and establishments with access to advice, such as from an Outdoor Education Adviser – see OEAP National Guidance document [3.4d "Outdoor Education Adviser"](#).

Rationale

Participating in adventure activities can be one of the highlights of a young person's learning experiences. While any off-site activity will probably be exciting, adding an extra dimension of personal challenge through participation in adventure activities can make the experience particularly memorable, the learning that takes place often being life-long. Students are active participants, not passive consumers, and a wide range of learning styles can flourish.

Adventure activities can lead to a wide range of learning and development outcomes including:

- awareness of and management of risk to self and others, including risk assessment and decision-making;
- development of social skills;
- experience of personal responsibility;
- improved mental and physical health;
- learning to work collaboratively;
- awareness of alternatives to traditional sports and games for healthy lifestyles;

- learning to trust and to earn trust;
- learning to give and receive support;
- resilience – developing the mental, emotional and behavioural ability to deal with difficult or challenging situations;
- enhanced emotional intelligence, including a greater awareness of the needs of self and others;
- development of entrepreneurship and enterprise;
- improved environmental appreciation, knowledge, awareness and understanding;
- motivation for learning.

Leading Adventure Activities

If establishment staff are to lead adventure activities, they must be properly assessed as competent to do so. See OEAP National Guidance documents [3.2d "Approval of Leaders"](#) and [6h "FAQ – Adventure Activity Qualifications"](#).

Using an External Provider

If establishment staff are not to lead the adventure activities, there are several options available:

1. There are many freelance instructors who can arrange activities, and can often provide all the equipment needed.
2. Some employers (such as local authorities) have their own outdoor and/or environmental provision. While their primary purpose may be serving the needs of a particular community, many will also provide services to outside groups.
3. There are many commercial, charitable and public-sector providers throughout the country. Some offer residential accommodation, and some provide for participants with special needs.

For advice on selecting and using a provider, see OEAP National Guidance documents [4.4g "Selecting External Providers and Facilities"](#) and [4.4h "Using External Providers"](#).

Licensing

Some specific adventure activities for young people in England, Wales and Scotland are subject to the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004. Many providers of these activities, including educational establishments providing them for participants from another establishment, are required to hold a licence. See OEAP National Guidance document [3.2f "AALA Licensing"](#) for more detail.

If a provider holds a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, this is evidence that it meets safety as well as educational quality standards, and that it holds an AALA Licence if it is legally required to do so.

