



National  
Guidance

## Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) Expeditions

### Benefits of the DofE Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's 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](http://www.dofe.org)) has comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the Award.

Research carried out by the University of Northampton has found that:

- 90% of young people said that doing their DofE has given them opportunities to help others.
- 82% noted their DofE has made them want to continue with volunteering/voluntary activities.
- 62% feel that doing their DofE has helped them make a positive difference to their local community.
- 74% said they developed self-esteem.
- 64% feel that as a result of DofE they are better at sport or physical activity.
- 74% said it allowed them to try activities they would never have tried before.
- 71% identified improved self-belief.
- Three quarters of young people think that their DofE Leaders are inspirational.

### Safety management of DofE expeditions

There is a variety of roles and organisations involved in the delivery of DofE expeditions, so it is essential to be clear about where responsibility for safety management lies. The following list is intended to clarify this:

**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 LO 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, then it is important that each is aware of their own 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 the DofE. They have a responsibility to ensure that DofE programmes are operated in accordance with both their LO's policy and the 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 the person who works with a group of young people to help them complete the Award. Depending upon their competence and circumstances, they may or may not be the Expedition Supervisor.

**Expedition Supervisor** - The Expedition Supervisor is responsible for the safety of an expedition group in the field. Their responsibilities include those of a Visit Leader (see the National Guidance document "Visit or Activity Leader"). 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 the expedition group to operate on their own. See the National Guidance document on Assessment of Competence.

**Assessor** - The Assessor's role is to ensure that candidates meet the standards set down by the DofE. 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. The DofE website states that "... the AAP licence does not guarantee the suitability of an AAP in terms of health and safety or its financial stability. Licensed Organisations using AAPs will have their own process for checking the suitability of AAP programmes in terms of health and safety requirements for their young people and they have the final say on the appropriateness of a course in this respect". It is therefore essential that AAPs are subject to employers' normal checks on third party activity providers, and for the LO to ensure that the AAP meets its standards: see the National Guidance checklist for assessing an adventure activity provider. Where an AAP is delivering to participants from more than one employer or LO, 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 requirements

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 the National Guidance document on AALA Licensing for more details, and where there is any doubt, contact the Adventure Activities Licensing Service for clarification [www.hse.gov.uk/aala](http://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. However, this exemption does not apply to youth groups, or 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 license 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. Establishments should consult their Adviser when planning any DofE expedition overseas.

When planning an expedition overseas, Licensed Organisations should ensure that the DofE requirements for 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 the National Guidance document on Overseas Expeditions

## Supervision during Expeditions

To complete their Award, every DofE participant is expected to complete an unaccompanied expedition, where the group operates independently. For this to happen, participants must first 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 must be 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. During the final assessment, when (if all has been done correctly) the young people are capable of operating independently, it may be appropriate for one experienced and competent Expedition Supervisor, perhaps using a team of assistants, to oversee more than one group of young people. The key issues here are that the overall supervision plan is effective and that no assistant leader is given tasks beyond their level of competence.

Since Expedition Supervisors will not be with the group at all times, they should determine the nature and extent of supervision required to ensure that supervision remains effective - whether it is direct or remote. Such decisions must take account of:

- the experience and competence of the group
- the experience and competence of any assistant supervisors
- 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 remote supervision in the National Guidance document on Group Management and Supervision.

