

Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures



Hillwalking

Standard Operating Procedures: Hillwalking

Definition and Scope of Activities

The activities involved are all undertaken on foot and may be conducted on a day or multi day expedition basis.

The activity takes place on tracks, open land, forest, moorland, Hill/mountain or on snow/ice and in winter conditions.

Locations are lowland open land / glens / mountain / and open country beyond vehicle based road access.

The major activities covered within this section are as follows:

- Hillwalking
- Expeditioning (including Duke of Edinburgh's Award)
- Mountaineering (without ropes).
- Orienteering on foot

Precautions to Minimise Hazards

It is essential that the Standard Operating Procedures are followed and that personnel leading the Group fully brief the group to pay attention to hazard warning information, remain in control of the activity and follow accredited tuition and activity progression.

The specific hazards identified in Risk Assessment are not exhaustive and additional hazards or combinations may arise during the course of an activity necessitating ongoing attention to minimise or control the risk(s) to a manageable level.

Seasonal Constraints

Open country foot trekking can take place all year. The normal accepted summer season is from 1 April to 31 October. Snow covered ground where specific winter walking techniques may be required at any time of year would indicate winter conditions. A slight 'dusting' of snow or occasional patches of snow underfoot, where conditions would not lead to a slip and downhill slide would not be deemed as winter conditions.

Location Constraints

Use of remote high mountain plateau when winter conditions are present or forecast is prohibited with under 16yr olds.

Tuition Ratios

The maximum supervision ratios are:

Summer:	1 instructor to 10 participants 1 instructor to 8 participants (1 instructor: 1 group; whichever is the lower denomination) when supervising remotely
Winter:	1 instructor to 8 participants.

NOTE: Competent adult: An adult assistant who can be deemed competent would not come under ratios. An application should be made to the technical advisor (or person designated by the TA) to be deemed a competent assistant. Ancrum Outdoor Centre should be contacted in the first instance. Once application is approved the person is then deemed 'competent' and no longer come under ratios, **nor** do they increase ratios.

Tuition Leader Qualifications

All leaders must hold current first aid certificate, (min 2 days relevant to the outdoor environment) and should operate with the remit of their own qualification. The following information is for guidance only. Please see relevant governing bodies for complete remit information.

Non remote walks in a defined area such as small forests, coastal paths and country parks may be lead by Leaders who may not hold a walking qualification providing they hold another qualification where navigation has been assessed (e.g. Trail Cycle Leader or British Orienteering Federation Level 2). In such circumstances, the walk could be up to and around 2km from the drop off point. Remotely supervising a group (e.g. DofE expedition) would not be appropriate under this criteria.

BEL (Basic Expedition Leader): Summer conditions

- Low-lying rural countryside, farmland, valleys, and small areas of forest.
- Lowland glens and valleys from which reliable access to communication or external assistance is feasible without undue delay.
- Gentle to moderate rolling terrain with no steep slopes to negotiate.
- Camping on Official sites and in farm based fields with access to toilets and tap water

LLA (Lowland Leader Award) : Summer Conditions

- Above areas
- Walks must not cross and hazardous terrain
- Throughout the walk the group should never be generally more than 3km from key access point
- Escape routes should lie within the defined terrain for the lowland leader award.
- Walks must follow paths or tracks that are marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground
- Walks must use bridges or other recognised crossing point
- Camping if leader has completed the expedition module

HML (Hill and Moorland Leader award): Summer Conditions

- Above areas plus
- Open, uncultivated, non-mountainous high or remote country, known variously As upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down
- Areas enclosed by well-defined geographical or man-made boundaries such as classified roads (areas that merge with mountain regions and do not have well defined boundaries are excluded)
- Areas of remoteness that are easily exited in a few hours, returning to a refuge or an accessible road
- Areas where movement on steep or rocky terrain is not required (in either a planned or unplanned situation)
- Camping if leader completed the expedition module

ML (Mountain Leader): Summer

- Above area plus
- Wild / Remote country, Mountainous
- Wild remote camping

ML (Mountain Leader): Winter

- Above areas in winter conditions

Duke of Edinburgh

- D of E supervisor accreditation in addition to the Technical Qualification.
- Assessors
- Complete the DofE assessor course
- Hold technical qualification relevant to the mode of transport and operate within the remit of the award **or**
- Been deemed 'competent' by technical advisor and complete the relevant application

The National Governing Bodies contact data relevant to this section are as follows:

- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award – www.dofe.org
- Mountain Training UK – www.mountain-training.org
- Sports Leaders UK - www.sportsleaders.org.uk
- Rescue Emergency Care – www.recfirstaid.net
- British Mountain Guide Association – www.bmg.org.uk
- British Association of Ski Patrollers - www.basp.org.uk

Camping / Expeditions

All types of group and individual camping, this section also make reference to teaching and training of camping activities.

- Teaching camping skills
- Official campsites / grounds – access to water / toilets / washing areas
- Farm / field / forest based camping areas with tap water supplied
- Wild camping
- Bothy use

Teaching skills should be completed in a controlled environment. Participants must be competent in camping skills before being supervised remotely, if camping equipment forms part of emergency plan

Participants must have access to same sex staff during an over-night stay

Ratios max 1 leader to 10 participants – ratios must also be aligned with the mode of transport and environment e.g. 1 leader to 8 participants in winter

Ratios should be reduced as required, particularly with groups with additional support needs.

Please see camping / expeditions risk assessment

Camping in official camp grounds:

- Groups should be pre-booked and permission granted from owners
- Designated group area defined to both site owner / others users (including other young people) and group
- Groups should use 'buddy' system when using communal facilities or inform others when using facilities, as appropriate
- Robust safety brief covering: Boundaries, vehicles, behaviour, farm / field / forest based camping – access to tap water and near to vehicles
- Permission granted from land owner and restrictions / instructions adhered to
- Animal issues (faeces, interactions, infections)
- Outdoor Access code adhered to

Wild Camping

- Permission granted from land owner and restrictions / instructions adhered to
- Use of water purification system (tablets, boil, filters)
- Animal issues (faeces, interactions, infections)
- Outdoor Access code adhered to
- Emergency plan in place

Bothy

- Permission granted from land owner and restrictions / instructions adhered to
- Outdoor Access code adhered to
- Building structure to be checked for safety
- Other users to be considered (tents carried)
- Fire / stoves in building to be controlled by staff
- Child protection to be considered for sleeping arrangements

Equipment - Participants

All participants must have access to

- Windproof / waterproof / protective clothing, appropriate to prevailing and forecasted conditions
- Personal first aid supplies
- An emergency bivibag

and, dependent on location:

- Ice axe/crampons (Winter)
- Food / water
- Personal avalanche transceiver
- Avalanche probes and shovel.

During planned overnight trips:

- Sleeping bag
- Insulated sleeping mat
- Tent or bivi bag
- Stove/fuel
- Torch
- Sufficient food / water
- Spare clothing

In bright sunshine/adverse weather access to sunglasses / ski goggles is recommended.

Equipment – Group Safety

Additional equipment to be considered depending on location / conditions:

- Safety rope (minimum spec. 30 metres 8.5mm)
- Watch
- First aid supplies
- Map of area
- Hot drink or means of making one
- Emergency rations
- Group emergency shelter or tent
- Crampon repair kit
- Torch

Access / Environment

As locations are mountain based there may be access restrictions due to land use. Access permission should follow national access codes of practice - **see below**

Unfarmed land and moorland are rich habitats for a wide variety of flora and fauna which can be easily disrupted or damaged. The principle of minimal environmental impact is recommended.

RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT REF NO: Hillwalking 1

Activity: Hill walking

Location: Various

Assessor: LJ/ JL

Hazard	Who might be harmed?			Existing controls What makes the hazard less risky? What makes these controls effective?	Risk			Further actions Avoid Control at source Take advantage of technology Protect all Make what you have more effective	Target date dd-mm-yy	Responsibility	Completion Date	New Residual Risk
	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Exhaustion		x	x	Progressive route and suitable route choice	2	3	6	None				
Ill fitting equipment and equipment failure		x	x	Check equipment prior to and during activity	1	2	2	None				
Getting lost		x	x	Leader to be current and practice navigational techniques regularly. Check forecast and work within qualification remit Remote supervision should only be used by leaders trained / experienced an understanding the seriousness of the technique.	2	3	6	Consider use of GPS as back up. Leaders using sound judgement on students skill level before using remote supervision.				
Avalanche		x	x	Staff to check SAIS or other forecast and avoid avalanche prone areas. Equipment should be issued as needed e.g. Transceivers	2	5	10	None				
Injury from equipment		x	x	Staff to train participants in the use of equipment e.g. ice axe	1	4	4	None				

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Adverse Weather Conditions		x	x	Forecast Checked and interpreted for intended area Campsite located with weather and environmental conditions considered Equipment appropriate for expected conditions	3	2	6	None				
Darkness		x	x	Torches and spare/ spare batteries Night routes (eg toilets) identified and free from hazards Use of 'glow-sticks' or other lighting if required	5	1	5	None				
Illness		x	x	Medical information collected and examined Required medications to be taken Base and emergency contacts know to all Robust brief including detail on emergency plan Staff to hold relevant valid first aid certificate Good personal hygiene	2	4	8	Ongoing FA CPD				
Getting lost from camp		x	x	Robust safety brief Clear defined boundaries Use of 'glow-sticks' or other lighting if required to highlight tents				None				

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	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
				Use of 'buddy' systems if group required								
Stove injuries	x	x	x	Group trained in correct use of stove by competent person Robust safety brief Adverse weather plan Check suitability of stove (design) for the knowledge/experience of the group. Use in well ventilated places Stable base / not moved while hot / no stepping over etc Fuel stored correctly	3	2	6	On going leader CPD to maintain up-to date knowledge				
Food Poisoning		x	x	Robust safety brief on hygiene and cleanliness Washing hands before food preparation and eating	2	4	8	None				
Drinking contaminated water	x	x	x	Use of designated collection / washing/ toilet areas Use of purification system (chemical / boil / filters etc) if appropriate Provide water if needed	2	4	8	Staff continued CPD				

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Ticks		x	x	Information on treatment and identifications Tick twisters / tweezers carried Staff trained in First aid	2	4	8	Staff continued CPD				
Tents / ground / etc catching fire	x	x	x	Robust safety brief Stoves / fires not left un-attended Fires to be kept controlled Flames kept away from tents	1	5	5	None				

Further actions approved by: Derek Napier

Signature: D Napier

Date: 9th April, 2026

Urgency of Action = (20> *Very High*) (16-20 *High*) (9-15 *Moderate*) (4-8 *Low*) (1-3 *Very Low*)

Severity = 1. Damage 2. Minor Injury 3. +3 Days/Hospitalised 4. Major Injury/Permanent Disability 5. Fatality

Probability = 1. Very Unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Fairly Likely 4. Likely 5. Very Likely

Review Date: April 2027

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