

Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures

Trekking / Touring Snowsports

Standard Operating Procedures: Trekking / Touring Snowsports on Unprepared Surfaces (Off Piste)

Definition and Scope of Activities

The activities involved use ski equipment of various types to tour on an unprepared surface not designated by fences, poles or markers.

Uplift is usually by mechanical means or skins/waxes adhering to the underneath surface of skis.

The unprepared surface is usually off piste snow.

Locations are mountain based. Most activity on the mountain accessed by mechanical uplift operates from an alpine ski designated centre otherwise all access is manual.

The major activities covered within this section are as follows:

- Alpine Skiing
- Telemark Skiing
- Nordic Skiing
- Snowboarding
- Ski Mountaineering
- Orienteering on Skis / Snowboard

Precautions to Minimise Hazards

It is essential that the Standard Operating Procedures and risk assessments 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.

Seasonal Constraints

European snow ski touring is dependent on sufficient snow depth/avalanche risk and takes place in Scotland usually during the period January - April annually but may occur outwith these margins as a result of weather patterns.

Location Constraints

Off piste use of remote high mountain plateau or exposed ground between 1 November and 31 March is prohibited with participants under 16 years of age.

There are no further location constraints on the use of unprepared mountain touring routes outwith military training areas/disuse prohibition restrictions.

Tuition Ratios

The tuition ratios are: 1 instructor to 6 participants maximum and 1:2 where technical snow/ice climbing is involved.

Participants requiring increased leader supervision or possessing certain disabilities may require additional staffing or reduced participant ratios.

Touring activities outwith designated alpine ski centre boundaries is not authorised with participants under 16 years of age.

A second adult should be present at the group location with participants under 18 years of age.

Tuition Leader Qualifications

Please see the following grid:

Activity	Minimum Tuition Qualification	National Governing Body
All	First Aid Accreditation (minimum 2 day)	Accredited first aid agencies.
PLUS FOR WITHIN PATROLLED SKI CENTRE AREA		
Alpine Skiing (Off Piste)	Mountain Ski Leader or Alpine Ski Instructor level 2	Snowsport Scotland British Association of Snowsport instructors or another ISIA recognised body
Nordic Skiing (Off Piste over 600 metres)	Mountain Ski Leader or Nordic Ski Instructor	Snowsport Scotland British Association of Snowsport Instructors or another ISIA recognised body
Telemark Skiing	Mountain Ski Leader (Telemark) or Telemark Ski Instructor	Snowsport Scotland British Association of Snowsport Instructors or another ISIA recognised
Snowboarding	Snowboard Leader or Snowboard Instructor	Snowsport Scotland British Association of Snowsport Instructors or another ISIA recognised body
PLUS FOR OUTWITH PATROLLED SKI CENTRE AREA		
All excluding (Mountain Ski Leader)	Off Piste Module	British Association of Snowsport Instructors or another ISIA recognised body
or	Mountain Leader (Winter)	Mountain Leader Training Scotland
PLUS IF TECHNICAL SNOW/ICE CLIMBING INVOLVED		
All	Mountain Instructor Certificate or Mountain Guide (Winter)	Mountain Leader Training Scotland British Mountain Guide Association
PLUS FOR DISABILITIES		
All	Adaptive Ski Instructor	Snowsport Scotland British Association of Snowsport Instructors

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

- British Association of Snowsport Instructors - www.basi.org.uk
- Snowsport Scotland - www.snowsportscotland.org
- Mountain Leader Training Scotland – www.mltuk.org
- British Mountain Guide Association – www.bmg.org.uk
- British Association of Ski Patrollers - www.basp.org.uk (recommended First Aid Accreditation)

Equipment - Participants

Participants must be adequately equipped for the activity and location in use.

The equipment must be well maintained, serviced and set to the individual operational needs of the participant by experienced accredited personnel e.g. ski bindings.

Participants must be helmeted on off piste snowsport/climbing activities.

All participants must have location access to

- Windproof / waterproof / protective clothing
- Gloves / mitts

Dependent on location

- Ice axe/crampons
- Food
- Personal avalanche transceiver
- Shovel
- Avalanche probes.

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

Equipment – Group Safety

In addition, the Group may require on activity access to:

- First Aid kit
- Group shelter
- Whistle
- Torch
- Safety rope
- Watch
- Crampon repair kit
- Flares
- OS map (1:50000 scale)/compass
- Hot drink or means of making one
- Additional food
- Binding repair kit

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

The use of skis/boards on areas of thin snow cover can be damaging to underlying frail vegetation and mosses. Care should be taken to avoid such erosion especially early / late in the season.

RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT REF NO: Skiing 1

Activity: Snowsports –off piste

Location: Various

Assessor: LJ

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					
Injury from falling	x	x	x	Participants should be given the appropriate equipment, staff to teach progressive session	4	2	8	None				
Collisions	x	x	x	Robust safety brief and progressive sessions, staff to monitor non-participants locations	2	2	4	None				
Equipment failure	x	x	x	Regular equipment checks and staff to perform visual checks before and during session	1	3	3	Continued CPD				
Extremes of weather		x	x	Staff to check forecast and provide clients with appropriate equipment	2	4	8	None				
Avalanche	x	x	x	Staff to check SAIS and avoid avalanche prone slopes , participants to carry and use avalanche equipment (transceiver, shovel, probe) where appropriate and be proficient in their use.	1	5	5	Continued CPD				
Getting lost, white out etc		x	x	Staff to work within remit of qualifications	1	5	5	Continued CPD				

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Ski tow failure	x	x	x	Ski lift company to carry out regular checks	1	5	5	None				
Driving issues	x	x	x	Follow instructions from police etc drive according to road condition	1	5	5	None				
Slip trip fall		x	x	Good route choice / kit up area	3	2	6	None				
Environmental injuries		x	x	proper equipment worn/carried for the conditions instructors trained to recognise potential problems	2	5	10	None				
Fatigue		x	x	Participants informed of route and stops made as required	2	2	4	None				
Inadequate skill base		x	x	Skills assessed prior to activity	2	3	6	Continued CPD				
Different snow conditions		x	x	Group go one at a time on difficult snow conditions	3	4	12	Continued CPD				

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Terrain – big drops, icy patches		x	x	Route picked by instructor to avoid major hazards , extra care taken in poor visibility.	2	5	10	Continued CPD				
Benighting		x	x	Equipment carried to help the group to survive an overnight when working in remote terrain.	2	5	10	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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