



Overseas Expeditions

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document sets out common minimum standards for expeditions that are in line with current good practice, based on the following:

- Outdoor Education Advisers Panel National Guidance

OVERSEAS EXPEDITION OR OVERSEAS VISIT - A DEFINITION

This guide focuses on the arrangements and issues to consider for an overseas expedition, which involves travelling through or working in either:

- Countries or remote locations where health and safety standards or levels of infrastructure/development may be lower than the accepted standard in the UK
- A challenging environment e.g. desert/mountain/sea/jungle/snow

Examples of an overseas expedition would include travelling to destinations such as Africa, the Himalayas or the Amazon to engage with local communities and carry out voluntary activities i.e. understanding local countries, construction of a community building, exploration of a unique environment such as Operation Raleigh or Duke of Edinburgh's award.

An Overseas Visit is normally identified as a short term activity that would include a stay in a city or overseas region to carry out curriculum related studies i.e. art/history/languages, or as part of an organised [Exchange Visit](#) or the annual ski trip.

In both cases, successful planning of the trip and supervision of young people are the primary responsibilities for leaders to ensure that a visit or expedition is successful, and enriches the experience and learning of all involved.

Further guidance on Overseas Visits can be found on the Exchange Visits document of SC Outdoor Education website or from the Outdoor Education National Panel website: <http://oeapng.info/download/1228/>

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COMPLIANCE BY THE OVERSEAS EXPEDITION PROVIDER

In advance of making a booking, the Visit Leader should confirm that an EV4 has been completed appropriately by any intended external provider/tour operator.

Please see [Appendix A](#) for further information on using an external provider or tour operator and the requirements of form EV4.

When this is completed the visit leader may complete and submit an application for visit approval from their school/establishment for endorsement by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit, who now act as the County's OEA (Outdoor Education Adviser).

Where the EV4 is not completed appropriately, the Provider is asked to indicate any areas of potential non-compliance, and these must be agreed or resolved to the satisfaction of the LA (Local Authority) prior to a contract with the provider being made.

In order to do this, the visit leader/EVC (External Visits Coordinator) should discuss any areas of non-compliance directly with the provider, and if appropriate with the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

Please note that non-compliance does not necessarily mean that the expedition will not be approved by the LA. Rather, the purpose of this procedure is to highlight and resolve any potentially contentious issues at an early stage in the planning process and before a commitment is made.

Where significant factors from the EV4 have been omitted the Corporate Health and Safety Unit may discuss the implications of the omission directly with the visit leader/EVC and where necessary with the provider.

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TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are used in this guidance:

Visit Leader: The named member of staff employed by the LA, and designated by the Head and EVC to be the School's/Establishment's visit leader. Also the 'pastoral' leader.

Expedition Leader: The named (senior if more than one) leader from the third party provider, organisation or tour operator. Normally the 'technical' leader.

Provider: The third party agency, commercial company, or tour operator employed by the school/establishment.

Staff: Any adult from either the school/establishment or the Provider that is involved in the venture, who is not a student at the school/establishment. This would include expedition 'assistants', or volunteers.

EVC: The External Visits Coordinator of the school/establishment.

LA: Local Authority.

OEA: Outdoor Education Adviser. (Note: Any reference to OEA in this document will be managed by Somerset Council's Corporate Health and Safety Unit, who now provide Outdoor Education Advisory support and guidance.)

School/establishment: A venue that provides education and opportunities for young people to experience and participate in a wide range of outdoor activities. Please note that the term 'School' also relates to Academy schools, who may seek guidance, support and endorsement on Outdoor Education expeditions and activities as part of their purchased health and safety provision from the Local Authority.

Note: Unless this is an agreed joint venture between two or more school/establishment, other adults or young people may only be included in the expedition if they:

- are part of the school/establishment designated group or
- are a designated representative of the school/establishment or LA or
- are an employee of the provider or
- are engaged by the provider in a supporting or training capacity

Normal procedures regarding Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) are required. Where an equivalent DBS process is not available in the country of visit, please follow the guidance on page 3 of the [Exchange Visits](#) guidance document.

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TARGET EXPEDITIONS

‘Overseas Expeditions’ typically take place in remote areas of the world and/or in developing countries, both of which present significant hazards and organisational challenges not normally encountered in the UK or Europe

This guidance is targeted at an expedition that:

- in essence remains a school/establishment organised expedition
- is developed or commissioned as an educational package for under 19’s
- has trekking into remote areas as a component, which may involve fieldwork and community projects
- visits or journeys through one or more challenging environments (NB ‘challenging’ as compared to the current experience of the young people, concerning high mountains, jungle, deserts or similar)
- is placed in a considerably contrasting culture(s) to those of the participants
- is designed to be of a team building nature
- raises young people’s awareness and skills in assessing and managing risks

It is not:

- an individual or small independent group’s self-led expedition
- an over 18s expedition
- an extreme challenge in hazardous environments
- an expedition requiring the young people to manage unknown risks; make decisions without training or relevant information; or to manage known risks without the support of a competent leader

Recommended Timescale

12 Months+ Before the Venture Proposal Initiated

- Visit Leader recommended to attend a Royal Geographical Society ‘Overseas Expeditions’ Course
- Several companies approached
- Leader(s) identified
- Current provider risk management and research made available

- Visit Leader to request and obtain Outline Approval from their Line Manager
- Group formed
- Communication with parents
- Area/Location(s) proposed
- Itinerary options outlined
- Approval framework agreed e.g. leadership team requirements
- Contract agreed with Provider and deposit forwarded

Continuous Preparation

The EVC/Visit Leader can maintain contact with the OEA during the planning and preparation stages of the application. Please contact 01823 355089 or email oea@somerset.gov.uk if further advice or guidance is required during this phase of the overseas expedition.

Group Liaison & Communication

- Research continues
- Group training programmed
- Contact with major agencies, e.g. Royal Geographical Society (RGS)

4 Months Minimum (ideally 6 Months)

- Expedition Leader confirmed and agreed
- All final details agreed
- Training programme and preparation underway
- Medical and other requirements completed
- Specific risk assessment prepared

If issues still exist beyond that date:

- Agree alternative location
- Agree different Expedition Leader
- Consider postponement
- Cancellation (liaise with company/provider over liability)

Note: A shorter timescale may be appropriate for certain shorter duration expeditions that take place 'closer' to home, eg Europe.

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PURPOSE OF EXPEDITION

As with any other External Visit, the venture must have clearly defined and justifiable aims, which are appropriate to the needs of the group generally, and to individuals within the group specifically.

The school/establishment must consider whether these aims could be met more easily through a venture closer to home, for example in the UK or Europe, and if so should investigate this option.

Responsibilities

There must be clarity amongst all parties as to where the responsibility lies for each aspect of the venture, for example the preparatory stages, training programme, itinerary, transport, accommodation, rest & relaxation periods, etc. These responsibilities will lie with the provider, the school/establishment, or the LA. Some aspects will be delegated - for example, to the Expedition Leader or Visit Leader.

There will be many occasions where liaison between various parties is essential, but there will be few occasions where the (legal) responsibility is shared. Areas of shared responsibility should be identified, clarified and documented in advance of the venture.

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SELECTION OF PROVIDER

The school/establishment should consider a number of providers prior to the selection of a specific one. These include assurances that the overseas expedition provider they are looking to appoint is reputable and provides the service and educational benefits that your overseas expedition is designed to deliver. Somerset Council does not 'recommend' Overseas Expedition Companies/Organisations, but instead operates an EV4 process, a contract document that confirms the insurance, competencies and qualifications a provider has in place and is managed by the Corporate Health and Safety Business Support Team. Further advice on this process can be found in [Appendix A](#).

However, it is good practice to visit the provider website, contact or meet the provider, or discuss with other schools or establishments their experiences of the overseas expedition provider to ensure that the provider will meet the aims and objectives of your chosen overseas expedition.

In addition, your school/establishment may have used the provider previously and completed an [External Review](#) document detailing their experiences of the overseas expedition with the provider. Completion of such a document will help to inform whether your planned overseas expedition and the provider you are looking to appoint is appropriate.

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INSURANCE AND CONTRACTS AND LEGAL ISSUES

Insurance

The level of insurance provision must meet LA requirements. The school/establishment must check the insurance cover offered with the SC Insurance Section (01823 3556754) prior to making a commitment to the venture.

Whilst the Local Authority has a duty of care for pupils who attend an Academy school, it is the responsibility of the Academy school to seek and gain appropriate insurance cover for their overseas trip or activity. Academy Schools can contact the SC Insurance Section (01823 359582) or email insurance@somerset.gov.uk for further information on the School Activities Travel Insurance Package. Otherwise, insurance will need to be obtained through a reputable insurance provider.

Contracts & Legal Issues

There should be a written contract between the school/establishment (on behalf of the young people and their parents) and the commercial company. This contract should be similar to the contracts placed with other commercial providers, which agrees to the conditions as set out generally in the provider's brochure and for any specifications unique to the particular location or activity. The EV4 forms part of any contractual agreement.

School/establishment staff accompanying the expedition must do so as employees of the LA/school/establishment and should not sign a separate contract with the provider.

As with other visits the school/establishment should retain financial control of the contract by collecting monies due in staged payments from the young people and paying the company directly through the school/establishment accounting procedures. Parents should not sign separate contracts with the provider.

The provider should illustrate the financial systems that exist to protect all aspects of the expedition's finances, including training weekends, etc. Schools/establishments should also gain confirmation that the appointed tour operator is ATOL accredited.

The commitment by the provider to adhere to this section of the guidance (or any variation(s) agreed between the LA and Provider) is central to LA endorsement. Where a provider revokes on a significant previously agreed arrangement (for example, if the provider is unable to supply an Expedition Leader with the previously agreed level of competence) and it is not possible to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the school/establishment and the LA, then the school/establishment reserves the right to cancel the venture and for all monies paid to be refunded. However, there may be occasions where it is appropriate to make reasonable allowances for work carried out up until cancellation.

The provider's Cancellation Policy should be 'fair and reasonable'.

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INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS AND PARENTAL CONSENT

Parents should be invited to a meeting with the school/establishment and the provider, prior to being invited to make a commitment to the venture. Clear and detailed information must be given to parents. This is the school/establishment responsibility, following consultation with the provider. Parental consent must be based on a full understanding of the expedition characteristics and programme - (without this knowledge

regarding activities or the nature of the supervision, the ‘consent’ may not be valid in law.) This information must include:

- ALL planned or possible activities, including any contingency activities (i.e. Plan B)
- Rest & relaxation periods
- Supervision arrangements
- Codes of practice
- Communication systems during all stages of the expedition
- The pace and level of intensity of the expedition
- Injury, illness, incident, emergency and evacuation procedures
- Insurance arrangements
- Transport
- Accommodation
- Likely additional costs to participants, e.g. clothing, inoculations, visas, spending money, etc

It is recommended that parents are advised that whilst every step will be taken to ensure the safety of the young people, such activities are by their very nature potentially hazardous. It is important to identify the risks and have them acknowledged by parents on a fully informed basis.

As with any other External Visit, it is the responsibility of the school/establishment to request and retain details of parental consent. Where appropriate, the school/establishment must liaise with the provider regarding relevant matters, for example medical issues, swimming ability, etc.

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RISK MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Risk Management

Written risk assessments must cover all elements of the programme. They should be current, and prepared by someone with an appropriate level of competence and experience, and must include:

- All activities, including possible activities, and contingency plans
- Route choices
- Transport
- Accommodation, including suitability, security, safety precautions, and emergency evacuation

- Rest and relaxation periods
- Emergency procedures and evacuation
- Any other areas where a known significant hazard exists
- Culture: including food/drink, local customs, religion, expected behaviour/dress, gender issues, sanitary arrangements, corruption, political stability, local financial information

Written confirmation that generic risk assessments are in place (up to date, appropriate and sufficient) and available upon request from the provider should be obtained at an early stage in the planning process and prior to the school/establishment and parents making a commitment to the venture.

In the final stages of planning, the generic risk assessments should be supplemented where appropriate including Specific Risk Assessments. This final risk assessment process is the responsibility of the Expedition Leader, following liaison with the Visit Leader. It must take place before the commencement of the expedition, but by definition can only take place when:

- Training sessions have been completed
- The Expedition Leader has been appointed and has worked with the group
- The medical information of participants is known
- Participants' fitness levels, etc have been assessed
- Other relevant information about participants is known (e.g. swimming ability)
- The current situation in the country to be visited is known (e.g. political, etc)

Where young people are required to make decisions (e.g. regarding accommodation, transport, guides, etc) all risk assessments must have been carried out in advance by the provider, although this may be unknown to young people (The journey into the unknown should only apply to young people, not to staff.)

Ongoing Risk Assessment

Risks must be monitored throughout the visit and where appropriate activities modified or curtailed to suit changed or changing circumstances. The responsibility for this rests primarily with whoever has the duty of care of the participants at the time. In the majority of instances, including where technical issues are concerned, this will usually be the responsibility of the Expedition Leader. School/establishment staff are not excluded from the on-going risk assessment and should use their professional judgment to ensure the safety and welfare of them selves and group members. See [Leader Competencies](#) below.

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EXTERNAL REPORTS AND POST-EXPEDITION REPORTS

In the preparation for and following completion of an overseas expedition, periodical reports and a post-expedition report from the group to stakeholders that have contributed or are interested in the venture is an important tool to demonstrate that the overseas expedition is well planned and was successfully completed, meeting all the objectives.

In preparation for the overseas expedition, parents, senior leadership staff and sponsors will require assurances that all arrangements (i.e. finance/insurance/accommodation/travel) for the overseas expedition have been considered, the provider has been carefully selected (if one is appointed), and the group of young people have completed the necessary training before departure.

Once the overseas expedition is completed and everyone has returned a report completed by the young people in the form of a presentation, video report or journal acts as a thank you to everyone that helped organise and support the overseas expedition. In addition, a leader's report (i.e. an [External Visit Review](#) document) to the senior leadership team will also be expected to evaluate the success of the overseas expedition and determine whether ventures of a similar nature in the future are suitable.

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LEADER COMPETENCIES

It is essential that the technical and pastoral aspects of the expedition leadership are understood:

- **Technical competence** - To plan, lead and manage activities undertaken in an active, on-going risk management context. This is normally the Provider's Expedition Leader. This person would have the level of experience and qualifications outlined in the Expedition Leader Matrix (see [below](#)).
- **Pastoral competence** - To manage the care, welfare and experience of young people successfully according to their age, experience and needs. This is normally the Visit Leader. This person would have a nationally recognised qualification: teacher or youth worker, for example.

Just as pastoral competence is developed through positive experience, technical competence must be complemented by the experience of making active judgements/risk assessments in realistic contexts, gaining and developing the leader's experience. The LA recognises the importance of this process.

In all but technical decisions relating to the welfare of the group, it is normally the (pastoral) Visit Leader who has the final say - for example:

- The (technical) Expedition Leader may decide the group is not able to go on and explain their reasoning. The (pastoral) Visit Leader may ask for and challenge their reasons, but would not override any such technical decisions.
- The (pastoral) Visit Leader may ask for an activity to stop, or request a rest or an alternative where their greater knowledge of the group health and welfare leads them to such a decision. The (technical) Expedition Leader may ask or challenge their reasons, but would not override any such decisions (unless there was a clear health and safety reason for doing so).

Should a leader have both technical and pastoral competence, they need to be very clear about their responsibilities. Dual competence cannot mean a reduction in ratios; a competent assistant would be needed.

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LIAISON WITH EXPEDITION LEADER

Where the Expedition Leader is external to the group then sufficient time in training must be made available for that leader to:

- become personally acquainted with the young people and their leaders to decide if they can work together, as well as to formulate aims, expectations and mutual understanding
- make a proper assessment of individual, group, and assistant leader competences

The Expedition Leader should be appointed to the group no less than 4 months (ideally 6 months) prior to the expedition, and work with the group soon after appointment, ideally as part of their training programme.

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EXPEDITION LEADER MATRIX

The competence of the (technical) Expedition Leader is a very important factor in ensuring a successful and safe expedition.

The school/establishment and the Visit Leader may not be specialists in the area of Overseas Expeditions, and as such they cannot be expected to have the expertise necessary in order to assess the competence of the Provider's designated Expedition leader. Therefore this section is aimed primarily at the Provider.

In presenting the matrix of **Expedition Leader competencies**, its principles need to be understood. The matrix focuses on expeditions on foot. Where the matrix does not cover the exact terrain, activity or circumstances, the below principles must be applied.

The basic principles are that:

- The Expedition Leader should be able to demonstrate an appropriate level of competence, in line with current good practice.
- There should be evidence of that competence through an assessment or judgement, made by a person of sufficient status, qualification and/or experience to make that judgement, and be recognised as being able to do so.

Two principal routes are taken in this matrix:

1. Recognised qualifications PLUS additional experience and local knowledge. The matrix accepts and promotes the value of a base line of technical competence given by a national governing body award such as a mountaineering qualification). It also accepts that in these contexts this is insufficient without additional experience of the activities in the region concerned, and the need for essential local knowledge. These elements need to be seen as complementary requirements.

2. Where there is no recognised qualification (in the specific terrain, region, or culture) then it is most important that the principals are applied as realistically as possible.
 - Where is the evidence of current good practice/competency? For example, the person should be an experienced leader known to recognised expedition groups or major agencies. Their competence would have been evidenced by others able to make a judgement.
 - The person(s) making the judgement would need to be nationally recognised or recognised by others of such a standing; or part of an organisation that has such a clearly recognisable standing. In the absence of the moderation of an award, this person should be external to the expedition group or company concerned. (Applying the principles in this way allow for a realistic comparison to the first route in terms of the consistency of judgements made).

If the Provider is unable to meet the above criteria relating to the competence of the Expedition Leader then this must be discussed with the SC Outdoor Education Adviser, and resolved, prior to the school/establishment entering into a contract with the Provider.

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Leader Competencies for Overseas Expeditions

Expedition Type	Terrain	Leader Qualification	Assistant Leader Qualification	Experience	Considerations
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Walking terrain in summer conditions	Mountain Leader (ML) Award (Summer)	Assessed competence in this terrain, eg ML (Summer) training where assessment of competence available or Walking Group Leader (assessed)	Journey or expedition in the region concerned	The availability and efficiency of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport systems • Medical facilities • Emergency support • Guides • Accommodation Local culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages/ issues • Crime • Gender • Religions
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Scrambling terrain requiring the use of ropes or fixed cables; in summer conditions	Mountaineering Instructor Award (MIA)	MIA training or ML (Summer) plus SPA	Journey or expedition in the region concerned	Important note: Jungle travel
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Walking terrain above the snow line (non glacial)	ML (Winter) or European Mountain Leader (EML) Award where a winter component has been assessed	ML Winter training EML training with winter component	Journey or expedition in the region concerned	In order to obtain an equivalent to the 'assessed competence' in other activities, a MoD qualification or similar endorsement would be required from a recognised source, which in turn would need to be able to provide evidence of their ability and experience to make such an assessment. (This could be true of other journeys, e.g. arctic travel.)
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Scrambling terrain requiring the use of ropes or fixed cables including snow and ice conditions (non glacial)	Mountaineering Instructor Certificate (MIC)	MIA with Winter ML	Good awareness of the region and its scrambling routes	
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Mountaineering requiring the use of ropes or fixed cables including glaciated snow and ice	UIAA Mountain Guide	MIC	Good awareness of the region and its mountaineering routes	
Day Treks and Trekking to fixed or mobile camps	Jungle travel	Suitable MoD qualification or specific evidence of competence	Suitable MoD qualification or specific evidence of competence	Journey or expedition in the region concerned	

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RATIOS

Ratios will vary considerably, based on risk assessments in the particular environment and if the Technical/Pastoral roles are split. The major considerations are:

- A minimum of two leaders (see Technical/Pastoral comments in Leader Competencies above) at all times, at least one of whom must be from the school/establishment.
- A staff/student ratio in line with current good practice for similar expeditions, taking into account all variables, e.g. route, participants, possible weather conditions, Plan B, emergency procedures, competence of staff, equipment, etc.
- A balance of gender to reflect the makeup of the group.

FIRST AID COMPETENCIES

The Expedition Leader must hold as a minimum a 16-hour (assessed) First Aid Award issued by an HSE approved Training Organisation (or the Country's equivalent). Where appropriate, the Expedition Leader should also have competency in 'remote' First Aid, and knowledge of First Aid relevant to the environment(s) to be visited.

The Visit Leader should hold a First Aid qualification and any supporting school/establishment staff should, as a minimum, possess 'a good working knowledge' of First Aid.

In addition, visit leaders may be required to maintain a first aid qualification to ensure continued validation of a specific qualification they hold, ie mountain leader, canoeing, sailing, climbing, caving etc. It is recommended that any visit leader with a recognised qualification is aware of additional qualifications/courses required to maintain this qualification.

Altitude Sickness and Use of Diamox

Altitude Sickness is caused by reduced oxygen pressure and hence reduced amounts of oxygen in the blood (hypoxia). Altitude Sickness is a failure of acclimatisation to high altitude (above 2,500m) and mainly occurs in those who ascend too high, too fast.

The symptoms of Altitude Sickness include headache, loss of appetite, nausea, difficulty sleeping and dizziness. Rarely (approximately 1-2% of those who ascend to 4,500m) AMS may progress to potentially fatal forms - high altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE) and high altitude cerebral oedema (HACE).

The treatment of all forms of altitude-related illness is to increase oxygenation of the body tissues by descending to a lower elevation where there is a higher partial pressure of oxygen.

Prevention of Altitude Sickness

Acclimatisation is best achieved by a slow ascent, allowing the body to adjust before further ascent. Current guidelines suggest that above 3,000m sleeping altitudes should be increased by 300-600m per day, with a rest day for every 1,000m of elevation gained. Slower ascent may be necessary for some individuals, but others may be able to ascend much faster without symptoms of AMS. A flexible itinerary is important to allow days of rest without further ascent if needed.

Acetazolamide (e.g. Diamox) may only be used for prophylaxis against mountain sickness where an appropriate medical officer has approved this. It is not licensed in the UK for treating or preventing altitude sickness, and guidance from your GP is recommended before travelling to a location where Altitude Sickness may occur.

Full guidance on Altitude Sickness can be found on the NHS Choices website: [Altitude Sickness](#)

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EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

The provider must use the most suitable emergency communication system that is active in the region(s) to be visited.

Where mobile or satellite phones are known to operate in a region then this is the preferred choice. In remote locations, where there is only partial phone coverage, then this must be supplemented by another form of emergency communication, such as radio net and runner.

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EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND EVACUATION

Written and agreed emergency procedures and contingency plans should be fully understood by all involved in the expedition. It is the responsibility of the Expedition Leader and provider to ensure that appropriate emergency and evacuation procedures are in place.

It is essential:

- To have an accurate knowledge of the scope and limitations of the rescue services before making a decision on the viability of an area or specific route and its suitability for the group concerned.
- To understand the full implications of any individual or group evacuation if an incident or injury occurs. The evacuation of a participant will require an accompanying teacher/establishment member of staff, which has implications for the remaining group members.
- That in the risk assessment of an area or route that the rescue and evacuation procedures are fully considered. Where a life-threatening injury or illness could not be evacuated with some efficiency and effectiveness, then the area is inappropriate.
- That the assistant leader's competence should be sufficient to successfully apply the emergency or incident management strategies should the leader become incapacitated.

Note: School/Establishment staff should be familiar with the procedure for complying with the SC Major Incident Plan.

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SWIMMING

Prior to swimming activities taking place, there must be clarity as to whether the overall responsibility for the activity rests with the school/establishment or the provider. This cannot be a shared responsibility.

- If the responsibility for swimming rests with the provider, then the Expedition Leader must ensure that the chosen venue is suitable, and that an appropriate level of supervision, including lifeguarding, exists throughout the activity.
- If the responsibility for swimming rests with the school/establishment, then the activity may only take place if either:
 - the activity takes place at an appropriately life guarded swimming pool or
 - the member of school/establishment staff is qualified in supervising the activity and has been specifically approved by the OEA in advance via the EV3 form.

Note: If swimming is planned then prior to the trip taking place the swimmers must be assessed for their actual swimming ability and leaders must not rely on the participant's self-assessment.

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OTHER ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES

The Expedition Leader is responsible for all adventurous activities, unless a member of school/establishment staff has been specifically approved in advance by way of completion and return of the Local Authority's [EV3](#) form. For more information please contact the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

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REMOTE SUPERVISION

It is assumed that the young people will be directly supervised throughout their expedition. Should the aim of the expedition include more self-reliant activity, the decision to move to indirect supervision must only be made on observed evidence of the competence of the whole group, and is the responsibility of the Expedition Leader, following liaison with the Visit Leader.

Indirect supervision still requires considerable monitoring, and the ability to intervene quickly and directly must be considered as part of the planning process and be risk assessed and managed accordingly.

Any remote working where the group, or part of the group, does not have quick and direct access to the Expedition Leader or Visit Leader is inappropriate for this type of expedition and should not occur.

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THE USE OF GUIDES

The ultimate responsibility for the selection and use of guides rests with the Provider/Expedition Leader, even though the young people and Visit Leader may be involved in the process.

If the use of guides is to be considered as a part of the leader competency in that they supply some local knowledge, then the following questions must be asked as far as is practical:

- Where is the evidence of current good practice/competency of the actual guides to be used?
- Are they a recognised company or an individual guide? Have they been used before and to what effect? Evidence would need to be collected, in particular where there is no recognised guiding system.
- Guides are normally employed for specific route-finding and technical knowledge, and should not have any direct pastoral responsibility.
- It needs to be remembered that a good guide can complement the Expedition Leader, but must not replace the Expedition Leader.
- Where there is not good evidence of their competence, then the Expedition Leader should have sufficient experience and local knowledge to manage without a guide. This must be considered before routes are agreed.
- Where an additional risk assessment is required to manage changing circumstances such as weather, fitness, injury, local conditions, etc, the Expedition Leader must satisfy him/herself that the guide and local information are of sufficient quality for them to go ahead, or the Expedition Leader must use an already planned contingency alternative.

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THE USE OF PORTERS

Where the length of the expedition requires porters to support the carrying of equipment, the Expedition Leader must ensure that sufficient numbers are available.

The experience and fitness of the young people within the group allied to the demands of the terrain, environment and weather should determine the weight of the pack or load each can carry.

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CHILD PROTECTION

Written child protection procedures and evidence of policies in action should be available, for example:

- Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks (enhanced disclosure)
- List 99
- male-female leader ratios for mixed groups
- accommodation
- camp security

Other individuals joining the group in a country who have not been DBS checked must not have direct unsupervised contact with the young people within the group.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The provider should be able to illustrate the known impact of their own and other groups in the same area, ie number of expeditions, expedition 'overload'.

Further guidance can be found via the publication: [*Environmental Responsibility for Expeditions and Safe and Responsible Expeditions*](#) published by the Expedition Advisory Centre on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society (2002).

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Appendix A

Using an External Provider or Tour Operator and the Requirements of Form EV4

1. Whenever a school/establishment intends to employ the services of an External Provider and where there is an element of instruction, staffing, or guiding included an EV4 must have been successfully completed and returned to the Corporate Health and Safety Unit prior to the trip/activity commencing (time consideration for this process must be allowed for by visit leaders).

GENERAL

2. The Outdoor Education & External Visits website and the EEC Health and Safety website contain a list of all current providers/tour operators who have completed an EV4 applicable for this academic year. Please check this prior to requesting an EV4.

PROCEDURE IF AN EV4 NEEDS TO BE SENT TO THE PROVIDER

Firstly confirm that they are not already on either the list of providers that have completed an EV4 or the list of the providers which have been sent an EV4 but have not yet returned it to the OEA office.

(A list of providers who have a current EV4 can be found in Appendix B of the document **What Are The Key Requirements For Enabling An External Visit To Take Place?**, available from the [Templates and Forms](#) page in the [Start Here](#) section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website.)

If your chosen provider is not on either list:

Do not send an EV4 yourself.

Please contact the Corporate Health and Safety Unit directly on 01823 355089, or by email at oea@somerset.gov.uk with the provider's details. Alternatively, you can complete the 'new provider' application, found in the External Visits Management section of the EEC website (this online application will be sent automatically to the Corporate Health and Safety Unit).

Once the Corporate Health and Safety Unit has the new provider request they will send an EV4 to the provider on your behalf.

Once the provider appropriately completes and returns the EV4 they will be added to the SC list (shown on the guidance website and the EEC website).

The Corporate Health and Safety Unit will hold all completed EV4s. Should any visit leader require a copy of the EV4 specific to their visit they can request this from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

The EV4 procedure alone is not sufficient for Overseas Expeditions (ie those which typically take place in remote areas of the world and/or in developing countries). If you require further advice or guidance when organising a trip through an independent tour operator, please contact the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

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