



Health & Safety on Educational Excursions

Supplement 2: Standards for Adventure



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Introduction

This is one of three supplements to *Health and Safety on Educational Excursions: A Good Practice Guide (HASEE)*. The other two supplements are *Standards for Local Authorities in Overseeing Educational Excursions* and *A Handbook for Group Leaders*.

HASEE Chapter 8, paragraphs 167-169, advises on establishment-led adventure activities. This supplement develops that advice and concentrates in particular on the responsibilities and tasks of the supervisor, establishment staff and the technical adviser.

Some 950 licences are held under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004 (which replace Regulations made in 1996). These Regulations are explained in paragraphs 153-157 of *HASEE*. Licensing follows inspection and advice from the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority's (AALA's) inspectors.

Adventure activities, in this supplement, have a twofold definition. First, they are the core activities as defined in the 2004 Regulations (climbing, caving, remote trekking, waterborne activities). Second, they include the range of other activities that present hazards over and above those in everyday life. These, equally, need to be controlled through careful supervision, normally by a competent person with specialist skills in the activity.

Some of the guidance in this part will be useful for all kinds of educational excursion, whether overtly adventurous or not. Tragedies can happen on ordinary excursions where the risks, such as those presented by road traffic, are not obvious. Routine educational excursions may seem safe but the requirement of good risk assessment and management remains.

HASEE and its supplements are available to print and download from www.scotland.gov.uk and www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk. Further printed copies are available free on request from the Scottish Executive Education Department, Schools Division, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ, telephone 0131 244 0943.

The supplement does not seek to replace local or other professional guidance or regulations. Local authority managed establishments should follow local authority guidance as a first recourse. No guidance should be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law. That is for the courts.

Like *HASEE*, the supplement can be adopted or adapted by local authorities or others for their own purposes. Please acknowledge the Department as the source for any such use and declare any local variation of the text.

The supplement draws heavily from material produced by the Department for Education and Skills.

Organisation of establishment-led adventure activities

1. The tasks associated with an establishment's fulfilment of its health and safety obligations for educational excursions fall to the head of establishment. In practice, heads of establishments may delegate some of their functions to other members of their staff, particularly where there are staff who have built up expertise in organising and leading certain activities. It is good practice for heads of establishments to encourage the development and sharing of this expertise.
2. Heads of establishments and other delegated staff should seek advice from the person nominated by the local authority to advise establishments on outdoor education issues, or an appropriately qualified technical adviser as necessary.
3. Many establishments are now using licensed facilities as offered by commercial firms, charitable organisations or local authorities. For details of current licence holders see the AALA website at www.aala.org.uk. A licence means that the Licensing Authority has inspected the provider, and is satisfied with their management of safety of adventure activities, as defined on the face of the licence.
4. Nevertheless, a significant number of establishments continue to organise and lead their own core adventure activities. Under current legislation these are not subject to national inspection and licensing. This is because establishments are not required to hold a licence when making provision to their own pupils.
5. Establishment-led adventure activities are subject to the management and approval of the education employer under health and safety law. This is because the employer must, in law, ensure the health and safety of both participants and staff. The local authority has this responsibility for establishments under their management. The proprietor is the employer in independent schools. *Standards for Local Authorities in Overseeing Educational Excursions* gives guidance on the role of the local authority, with read-across for other types of education employer.



Competence

6. A key role of the head of establishment or delegated staff member is to ensure that activities are supervised by people of suitable competence. Local authority guidance may prescribe the levels of competence required. In leading adventure activities, teachers or other establishment staff will have the great advantage of knowing their pupils or other participants well. But, unlike centre instructors, they may not regularly instruct an activity nor be as familiar with the activity site. This could affect their awareness of specific risks.
7. For some activities, establishment staff may need to hold a National Governing Body leader or instructor qualification. But paper qualifications will need to be supplemented by the verification of other qualities (such as maturity, general supervision skills, ability to supervise different types of group, relevant experience). For other activities, establishment staff may have their competence ratified in-house by a suitably competent person, if their employer considers that appropriate.

Means of verifying competence

8. The local authority, as employer, should set the standards required of leaders and supervisors for specific excursions and activities. For adventure activities the person nominated by the authority to advise establishments on outdoor education issues will be able to consider the following evidence of competence:
 - National Governing Body (NGB) awards/qualifications;
 - Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs);
 - local or in-house validation;
 - site specific assessment;
 - experience confirmed by assessment in the field.

National Governing Body awards/qualifications

9. Appropriate NGB and other relevant leader/instructor qualifications are listed in the matrices set out in *Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996* as follows:

ABRS	Association of British Riding Schools
BASI	British Association of Snowsport Instructors
SCU	Scottish Canoe Association
BELA	Basic Expedition Leader Award (CCPR)
BHS	British Horse Society
BMG	British Association of Mountain Guides
CIC	Cave Instructor Certificate (NCA)
CCPR	Central Council for Physical Recreation
SNSC	Snowsport Scotland
LCMLA	Local Cave and Mine Leader Assessment (NCA)
MLTS	Mountain Leader Training Scotland
NCA	National Caving Association

RYA	Royal Yachting Association
SRA	Scottish Rafting Association
SC	Scottish Cycling

Some of these may change over time. Further details about appropriate levels of competence are available from the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, telephone 029 20755715, website www.aala.org.uk

SVQs

10. SVQs are work-related, competence-based qualifications that reflect the skills and knowledge required to do a job effectively. SVQs represent national standards that are recognised by employers. They are based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and will be most relevant to outdoor learning where they incorporate the relevant NGB qualification.
11. The Level 2 Activity Leadership SVQ is intended for people who are supervised by someone qualified to lead groups on their own, and the Level 3 Outdoor Education SVQ is for people who can safely run activities solo and unsupervised.

In-house validation

12. In-house validations are approval systems that usually have local rather than national relevance. They are for restricted stated environments; they are for employees of the operating organisation (e.g. the local authority); they are not automatically transferable to other organisations.
13. The body responsible for granting the validation would normally be the local authority, commercial company or other employer. To ensure the robustness of in-house leader validation arrangements for adventure activities (particularly those in category C below) it is vital that these are monitored by a suitably qualified technical adviser.

Site-specific assessments

14. Site-specific assessment refers to a situation in which an individual is trained to cope with the particular demands of a named location or activity. This assessment will take place on location and will generally be in the charge of a suitable technical adviser for the activity. For activities that would be licensable (if not establishment-led) see *Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996* (which includes the text of the regulations). For activities not in-scope (such as a water-margin studies visit), a technical adviser would be a highly experienced practitioner in the field with knowledge of the venues, varying local environments and their likely effect upon the participant groups.
15. The responsible body for approving the assessment would normally be the local authority or other employer (who would use the appropriate technical adviser with the relevant site knowledge). For excursions or activities, such as a walk in the park, a site specific induction, rather than a formal assessment, might be sufficient so long as supervisory competence in general had been satisfactorily assessed, perhaps by a senior member of establishment staff. This assessment might include the ability to hold the attention of a group during the visit and to brief participants in a range of circumstances.



Experience

16. Competence in adventure activities derives from a balance of personal experience (trial and error and learning from errors) and related training. Technical competence can be attained through formal training. But safety judgements are most soundly based on enlightened experience, which takes time to accumulate.
17. Proof must, therefore, exist of suitable and sufficient experience in the activity. This will normally be verified by the person nominated by the local authority to advise establishments on outdoor education issues, typically with the help of the technical adviser.

Role of the technical adviser

18. The term “technical adviser” was introduced by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and is someone who is deemed competent through appropriate experience and qualifications to advise on safety matters. Technical advisers have a high level of competence in a particular activity and will usually hold the relevant NGB award where it exists. They will be able to make judgements about the technical and supervisory competence of others within their area of expertise in relation to a particular participant group. Typically, they will have a record as a trainer and assessor of the activity. For adventure activities that would be licensable (if they were not establishment-led), technical advisers should be qualified to the level recognised as satisfactory by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (see *Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996*).
19. Suitable technical advisers may be found within a local authority or a commercial or other provider and may be contacted through the authority’s nominated person, NGBs, or professional or trade associations.
20. In general, a technical adviser should give advice only on activities within their own level of competence. Otherwise he or she should obtain the view of a more specifically competent technical adviser.
21. An employer who is unsure about assessing the competence of an individual to lead a particular activity should seek the guidance of a technical adviser.

Adventure and adventurous activities categories

22. It is useful to consider categories of activities when determining an appropriate course of action in respect of activities presenting different levels of potential risk. The following categorisation may prove useful. However, accidents can happen in any activity regardless of whether it is classified as high or low risk. It is important to be aware that low risk does not mean no risk.

Category A

23. These comprise activities that present no significant risks. They should be supervised by a member of staff who has been assessed as competent by the local authority, the head of establishment or competent delegated staff member as appropriate, to lead this category of educational excursion. There is no need for NGB or other accreditation, but the activities should be conducted following the local authority's or establishment's standard excursions' procedures. Some local authorities classify these as activities needing level 1 supervisory skills. Examples might include:

- walking in parks or on non-remote country paths;
- field studies in environments presenting no technical hazards.

Category B

24. These comprise some higher risk or higher profile activities. Safe supervision requires that the leader should, as a minimum, have undergone an additional familiarisation process or induction specific to the activity and/or the location. He or she will be approved as appropriately competent under the local authority's in-house validation arrangements.

25. An NGB award such as the Trail Cycle Leader Award or the Activity Leadership SVQ may be relevant as a measure of competence for staff leading certain activities in category B. Examples of activities might include:

- camping;
- cycling off road (non-remote);
- low level initiative challenges.

26. Guidance on the activities to be included in category B may be available from the local authority. Where a staff member has been validated for leadership of category B activities, he or she should be experienced in leading the activity and should seek the advice of a suitably qualified technical adviser. He or she should also be aware of the responsibilities that are integral to such leadership. The establishment and the authority's nominated person should agree which of these higher risk excursions should be approved by the establishment, and which by the local authority. Some local authorities classify these as requiring level 2 supervisory skills. Note: several of the educational excursion incidents in recent years have happened on visits that might be deemed category B or even category A.



Category C

27. This is the most demanding category. It includes all those activities that, if not establishment-led, would be in scope of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004. It also includes activities that fall outside the scope of licensing, such as high ropes courses, sub-aqua activities or canoeing in placid waters. In these cases, a leader's competence should normally be demonstrated by the possession of the relevant NGB award or an in-house assessment conducted by an NGB qualified technical adviser. A Level 3 SVQ in Outdoor Education, supplemented by one or more NGB awards, would be an appropriate paper qualification.

Environmental considerations

28. In assessing the appropriate category in which to place an activity, the establishment and the authority's nominated person should take account of the environment in which the activity will take place. An activity might be rated in a higher category if it takes place:

- in or near water;
- in winter conditions;
- on or near cliffs or steep terrain;
- in remote areas and/or at height;
- in an area subject to extremes of weather or environmental change.

29. For example, field study activities next to open water, such as pond dipping, might rate as category B. Winter camping might rate as category C, as might off-road cycling over steep terrain.

30. Category C includes any activity in water.

Risk assessment

31. Risk assessment is a process. It would be good practice for a group leader to first draw up a plan and timetable for the excursion (Why? Who? What? When? Where? How?). The group leader would consider what could go wrong and how to avoid the risks or, for overtly adventurous activities, how to manage them. The plan will need modifying until the control measures are satisfactory. Any new information arising out of an excursion should be fed back into the process. There should be regular re-assessment.
32. Risk assessment for educational excursions can be usefully considered as having three levels (see *Standards for Local Authorities in Overseeing Educational Excursions* for further details):
- **generic activity risk assessments**, which are likely to apply to the activity wherever and whenever it takes place;
 - **excursion/site specific risk assessments** which will differ from place to place and group to group; and
 - **ongoing/dynamic risk assessments** that take account of, for example, illness of staff or participants, changes of weather, availability of preferred activity.

Forms of written risk assessments

33. The local authority's nominated person or the establishment may need to consider whether existing written procedures will suffice as a risk assessment. Good practice allows for a wide range of written evidence to be used as part of the risk assessment procedure. This is likely to include:
- the approval form, as completed by the group leader, is so designed as to lead him or her through a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks. See, for example, model form 1 in Chapter 11 of *HASEE*. This can be modified as necessary.
 - minimum evidence of risk assessment could comprise: a reference to the generic risks associated with that activity; the corresponding qualifications and experience of the leader (who should be included on the local authority's register of approved leaders for this activity); a list of site-specific hazards (e.g. accident black spots); and a corresponding list of control measures to be applied which takes account of the age and abilities of the participant group. See *Standards for Local Authorities in Overseeing Educational Excursions*.
 - for higher risk activities, a comprehensive induction would establish the significant hazards and how these will be met. An appropriately completed induction check-list (measures which each party leader will have adopted prior to being added to the register of approved leaders) would be a useful part of the risk assessment.
34. It could also include NGB guidelines etc. especially if only NGB qualified staff will be deployed.
35. The Young Explorers' Trust has a well-established system of scrutinising the plans of overseas expeditions of young people and offering advice to their leaders. For further information see www.youngexplorerstrust.net



Acknowledgement of risk

36. *HASEE* offers advice on what parents and participants need to know before the excursion. It is good practice for establishments to share aspects of the risk assessment with parents and participants. Both should be made aware of the likely risks and their management so that consent can be given or refused on an informed basis. Some excursion organisers ask parents to formally acknowledge the risks of an excursion. Neither this nor parental consent absolves the local authority or establishment staff of their responsibilities under health and safety law.

Reviewing risk assessments

37. Assessing risks also means re-assessing them. Re-assessment might be necessitated by objective observation (for example, changing the route of a mountain walk because of adverse changes in the weather) or by reason of subjective feelings (for example, where someone in the group becomes frightened or over-tired).

Equipment

38. The safety and suitability of equipment is primarily the responsibility of the employer. However, the employer will expect the employee to be vigilant, to address and report defects and to maintain a system of scheduled inspection. A logbook is an effective means by which to note the movement of a piece of equipment. Users can make comments in the log. The logbook can also show when an item was last checked, who checked it, and when it should be checked again.

Supervision

- 39.** For every educational excursion there should be a group leader who manages the whole excursion (see *HASEE* Chapter 3). However, for individual activities within the visit, it is better for groups to be small, each with a supervisor, who will normally be a member of the establishment or employer's staff. Further advice is available in *A Handbook for Group Leaders*.
- 40.** Supervision is most effective when:
- the aims and objectives of the excursion are clearly understood by all the supervisors and ideally the participants;
 - the excursion and activities have been carefully risk-assessed and will be managed safely;
 - supervisors and participants have contributed to the overall plan, including the risk assessment and risk management;
 - the group leader has laid down clear guidelines for standards of behaviour and everyone on the excursion has agreed them;
 - supervisors have a reasonable knowledge of the participants, including any additional support needs, medical needs or disabilities;
 - each activity has a bad weather alternative (plan B).
- 41.** If a supervisor is not a member of the establishment staff, he or she will have provided evidence of appropriate competence and Disclosure Scotland clearance as appropriate. Such clearance is usually expected for residential supervision but may not always be necessary in other circumstances. See *HASEE* Chapter 3, paragraphs 65-74, which discusses this issue at greater length.
- 42.** Supervision can be close or remote but is always 24 hours:
- close supervision occurs when the group remain within sight and contact of the supervisor;
 - remote supervision occurs when, as part of planned activities, a group works away from the supervisor but is subject to stated controls (e.g. during certain Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions). The supervisor is present though not necessarily near or in sight, but his or her whereabouts are known;
 - down time or recreational time – for example during the evenings – may involve close or remote supervision, but should not be unsupervised – the supervisors continue to be in charge.
- 43.** Close supervision normally means that all supervisors:
- have prior knowledge of the group;
 - carry a list/register of all group members;
 - regularly check that the entire group is present;
 - have appropriate access to first aid.



- 44.** In addition, when supervision is remote:
- groups must be sufficiently trained and assessed as competent for the level of activity to be undertaken, including first aid and emergency procedures. Remote supervision will normally be the final stage of a phased development programme;
 - participants will be familiar with the environment or similar environments and have details of the rendezvous points and the times of rendezvous;
 - clear and understandable boundaries will be set for the group;
 - there must be clear lines of communication between the group, the supervisor and the establishment. Do not rely exclusively on mobile phones;
 - the supervisor should monitor the group's progress at appropriate intervals;
 - the supervisor will be in the expedition or activity area and able to reach the group reasonably promptly should the group need support in an emergency;
 - there should be a recognisable point at which the activity is completed;
 - there should be clear arrangements to abandon the activity when it cannot be safely completed;
 - groups should not operate in numbers of less than 3 per group.
- 45.** It is essential that everyone involved in the excursion understands the supervision arrangements and expectations. Potential danger points can occur when rearranging groups, in particular:
- when a large group is split into smaller groups for specific activities;
 - when groups transfer from one activity to another and change supervisor;
 - during periods between activities;
 - when small groups re-form into a large group.
- 46.** It is, therefore, important that the supervisor:
- clearly takes responsibility for the group when their part of the programme begins, particularly making certain that all group members are aware of the changeover;
 - clearly passes on responsibility for the group when their part of the programme is concluded, together with any relevant information ensuring that the group members know who their next supervisor is.
- 47.** There may be some benefit in differentiating between a group leader/supervisor (i.e. the establishment representative), and an activity leader (who may, for example, be an instructor at an outdoor centre).

Supervision ratios

- 48.** *HASEE* discusses ratios in various places, notably in Chapter 3. Ratios may vary in the course of the excursion. The ratios will normally be determined by the defined educational objectives and the risk assessment. The factors to be taken into consideration will include the:
- particular activity;
 - experience of the group involved, and the needs of individuals within the group including those with additional support needs;
 - environment and conditions in which the activity will take place;
 - experience of the staff (e.g. newly qualified staff);
 - nature of the venue.
- 49.** Supervisors may include other establishment staff (e.g. support assistants or bursars), activity provider's staff or parent volunteers. All supervisors must be assessed as competent to undertake the role.
- 50.** Supervisors who are not employed by the local authority or establishment cannot hold the same responsibility as establishment staff. They should not normally be given sole charge of any participants in the group unless, perhaps, for a short time in clearly defined circumstances where the staff member is readily to hand.
- 51.** It is not unknown for a participant assessed as competent to become a supervisor of younger participants in certain staff member-controlled circumstances or for a technically competent participant to instruct (but not to supervise) a staff member who will remain as the participant's supervisor.
- 52.** A condition or set of circumstances may be hazardous to one group, or to one group member, more than to another. No assumptions should be made, especially where the participants' individual levels of knowledge are uncertain.
- 53.** Supervision also involves the establishment management, typically through the head of establishment or delegated staff member. For each excursion it is good practice for the head of establishment or delegated staff member to ensure that:
- the group leader and supervisors are provided with a named contact of someone who is not on the excursion and is contactable at all times (the home base contact);
 - there is an intermediary between the group, establishment and parents. This is generally the home base contact;
 - the group's progress is monitored by or on behalf of the head of establishment;
 - an alert is provided should groups not report back when expected;
 - appropriate emergency back-up services are provided where necessary.



Other guidance

Health and Safety Executive

Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (HSC £9)

A Guide to Risk Assessment Requirements – (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg218.pdf)

Avoiding ill health at open farms: Advice to farmers with teachers supplement – Agricultural Information Sheet no.23 (revised 2002)

Five Steps to Risk Assessment – (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)

Adventure activities centres; five steps to risk assessment (£4.50)

Managing Health and Safety: Five Steps to Success – (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg275.pdf)

Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools revised edition 1999 (HSC 179 £10.50)

Reducing Risk Protecting People 2001

Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC): *Statement of Risk Perception in Adventure and Outdoor Activities*

Everyone's Guide to RIDDOR 95 – HSE 31 – free leaflet or available in priced packs. ISBN 0 7176 1077 2

Others

The Administration of Medicines in Schools – Scottish Executive Education Department – (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/amis-00.asp)

For guidance on Farm Visits, see Scottish Executive website – (www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/health/ecsip-00.asp)

Work Experience: A Guide to Promoting Quality and Work Experience: Case Studies of Scottish Schools – (www.ltscotland.org.uk/edresources/publications.asp?cat=pub&educationkey+Enterprise%20in%20Education)

Health Advice to Travellers Anywhere in the World – Available free from most Post Offices, travel agents and local libraries or Free Phone 0800 555777

Safe Practice in Physical Education – The British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education – (www.baalpe.org/publications.htm)

Information about adventure activity providers covered by the Adventure Activities Licensing Scheme – (www.aala.org.uk)

Self Assessment and Guidance – Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) – (www.aala.org.uk)

Supplement 2 – Standards for Adventure

The Wales Tourist Board, VisitScotland and the British Activity Holiday Association provide voluntary inspection schemes to complement licensing for providers of activities that are out of scope of licensing

Get Safe for Summer – Amateur Swimming Association – (www.asa-awards.co.uk)

Safety on British Beaches – Joint publication by the Royal Life Saving Society and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) £13.49. Available from RoSPA

Safe Supervision for Teaching and Coaching Swimming – Amateur Swimming Association and others. 2nd edition 2001 Tel: 01509 618700

Group Safety at Water Margins – Central Council for Physical Recreation – (www.ccpr.org.uk)

Minibus Safety: A Code of Practice – RoSPA and others 2002 – (www.rospa.com/pdfs/road/minibus.pdf)

A Practical Guide to Safe School Trips – Scottish School Board Association – (www.schoolboard-scotland.com)

Guidance published by the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for various adventure activities. NGBs also maintain leader training and assessment programmes

Safe and Responsible Expeditions and Guidelines for Youth Expeditions – Young Explorers' Trust, c/o RGS-IBG Expedition Advisory Centre. £5 inc. p & p or free from website – (www.rgs.org/eacpubs)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'s Expedition Advisory Centre, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR provides advice, information and training to anyone planning an overseas expedition. Tel 020 7591 3030 – (www.rgs.org/eac)

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has its own clear structure, procedures and guidelines – (www.theaward.org)

Guidance is produced by many of the voluntary youth organisations

Quality, Safety and Sustainability – Field Study Centres: A Code of Practice – National Association of Field Studies Officers (NAFSO) – (www.nafso.org.uk)

The Waterways Code (leaflet) and *The Waterways Code for Boaters* (video) are available from British Waterways – hq@britishwaterways.co.uk – Tel: 01923 201120

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has produced a range of guidance on personal safety, including booklets, videos and training courses – (www.suzylamplugh.org)



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