

Organisation of External Visits/Activities: Notification, Approval and Endorsement System

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The Outdoor Education & External Visits website is at
<https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/sccoea/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

INTRODUCTION

SCC aims to promote, support and enable the use of Outdoor Education and External Visits by establishments to enhance the learning experiences of its young people. This document outlines the process to follow when organising a trip, including the appropriate approval and endorsement procedure depending on the type of trip or activity, to ensure national guidelines for best and safe practice are followed.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Whenever young people (or vulnerable adults) go offsite to participate in an external visit/activity authorisation must have been given and recorded prior to them doing so. This could be done through an individual application or by way of a 'series' approval (see [Series Approval](#) below).

Schools/establishments must adopt a clearly defined procedure for approval of all visits including a procedure for outline approval by the EVC/Head before planning or any commitment takes place.

When the necessary planning is completed the necessary forms should be passed to the EVC/Head for initial approval.

The EVC should then forward the necessary application along with any appropriate supporting information to the Head for approval and processing within the timescale outlines in the [Classification of External Visits](#) table (see below).

The [External Visits Planning Checklist](#) is a tool which acts as an aide memoir and can be used for any visit. This checklist is available from the [Templates and Forms](#) page in the [Start Here](#) section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website.

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SERIES APPROVAL

It is recognised that whilst the principles of this guidance apply to all visits, schools/establishments should adopt the concept of proportionality of the approval process surrounding each visit.

For regular, repeated visits Heads/EVCs may consider granting series approval. Series approval may be appropriate for activities where the risks and control measures remain the same and is undertaken over a specified time period i.e. month/term or another academic period. A series approval application would be suitable for activities including sports fixtures, or a training course where participants gain new skills i.e. sailing/DofE training walks. A series application is also suitable for staff that provides activities that hold LA External Visit Leader (EV3) approval.

If series approval/endorsement is granted, the visit leader must review the risk assessment prior to each individual visit and record any additional risks/control measures which deviate from the original risk assessment recorded for the planned series of visits. Significant additions/changes to the original risk assessment must be agreed with the Head/EVC prior to the visit going ahead. For every visit, the visit leader must ensure the emergency contact(s) has details of the venue, activity, group and start/finish times for the visit.

For further guidance on Sports Fixtures and Events, please see the document [Sports Fixtures and Events](#) available from the Specialised Guidance section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website.

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LOCAL AUTHORITY ENDORSEMENT DECISIONS

For trips and activities that require Local Authority endorsement (i.e. Category B or C), decisions will be based on supporting the establishment Head's/Senior Manager's approval and satisfactory compliance with this guidance.

Somerset County Council's OEA team (Managed by the County Health and Safety Unit) will confirm the endorsement or will explain why the endorsement has been refused and what needs to be done to meet approval through the [EEC Health and Safety website](#) endorsement process.

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MONITORING OF EXTERNAL VISITS

It is a statutory duty of the employer (Local Authority for maintained schools; Governing Body/Trust for academies) to monitor health and safety arrangements within their respective school/educational establishment. The Local Authority will closely monitor, with the help and

support of Heads/Senior Managers and EVCs, the following elements of all external activities and visits:

- the school, academy or educational establishment has a signed and up to date off-site visits policy
- that planned off-site visits and activities have clearly defined educational objectives and outcomes
- risk assessments are effective, shared and acknowledged by everyone involved in an off-site visit or external activity
- the school/academy/educational establishment has plans in place for dealing with emergencies and critical incidents
- appointed professional activity providers and tour operators have been approved by the Local authority (e.g. EV4/AALA/LoTC for providers); Transporting Somerset for vehicle operators
- the training needs and requirements of staff e.g. an appointed External Visit Coordinator, External Visit Leaders, and where relevant, staff within a school setting have the relevant training and qualifications to lead on an Adventurous Activity as listed below.

and, where necessary, will intervene in individual establishments when the management of external activities/visits appears to be less than satisfactory. The LA will then make recommendations, which:

- may affect the establishment only
- may affect all educational establishments
- may call for further training
- may call for a revision of specific guidelines

The monitoring methodology will use a sampling approach of Category A activities and visits, and of all Category B and C visits. Some Category B and C visits will be monitored in detail owing to the 'higher risk' of these activities. This may include a visit to the establishment and/or the activity/visit to discuss and observe how external visits are managed and supervised.

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CLASSIFICATION OF EXTERNAL VISITS

See [Appendix A: Classification of External Visits](#).

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ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES

The following list of activities are Category B visits and require LA endorsement.

Important note: This list is not exhaustive. New activities are continually developed and introduced.

Any visit leader unsure of whether or not an activity is adventurous, and a Category B visit which requires LA endorsement, should seek advice from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit on 01823 355089 or by email to oea@somerset.gov.uk.

Land Based Activities

- Rock climbing and abseiling
- Mountaineering
- Snow/Ice climbing
- Gorge or coastal scrambling, tombstoning
- Underground exploration - cave or mine (excluding public show caves/mines)
- Skiing/snowboarding (snow/dry slope)
- Air activities (except commercial flights)
- Shooting and archery
- Horse riding and pony trekking
- Ropes courses (including zip wires)
- Indoor climbing walls
- Indoor Skydiving
- Quad biking/ATVs/motorcycling/motorcar driving or training
- Go-karting
- Competitive Orienteering in adventurous locations
- Mountain and off-road cycling
- Camping
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expeditions/Training (Category-C activities)
- Mountain and Moorland walking
- Paint balling and war games
- Gliding/Hand gliding
- Parachuting
- Trampolining (at trampoline parks)
- Forest Schools (involving fires, cooking, cutting, sawing, shelter building etc)
- Unconventional activities
- Other activities (e.g. problem-solving exercises) involving skills and risks inherent in any of the above activities

Water Based Activities

- Kayaking and canoeing
- Sailing and windsurfing
- White water rafting
- Water-skiing
- Snorkel and Scuba diving
- All forms of boating (excluding commercial transport)
- Swimming in open water, e.g. canals, rivers, lakes and sea
- Improvised rafting
- Kite surfing
- Surfing and body boarding

- Coasteering
- Other activities (e.g. problem-solving exercises) involving skills and risks inherent in any of the above activities

Please see [Adventurous Locations](#) (below) for 'adventurous location' definitions.

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ADVENTUROUS LOCATIONS

Important note: Classification of locations is subjective. Any visit leader unsure of whether a location requires LA endorsement should seek the advice of their EVC and, if necessary, the OEA. **The activities do not need to be adventurous – for example, field studies could take place in hazardous locations.**

Location	Definition	Approval/Notification Procedure
Normal Countryside	<p>Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which have clearly recognised boundaries such as fences or walls which help to prevent visitors from straying into remote or hazardous terrain • which are close to vehicle access. This must be less than 30 minutes' walking time (allowing for uphill sections) of any part of the route for any part of the group • where there will be no contact with significant environmental hazards (in either a planned or unplanned situation), e.g. cliffs, precipitous slopes, rivers and river gorges, bogs, section of coast exposed to ocean swell, areas exposed to rapid flooding • which do not require the use of a map and compass to safely navigate in normal and adverse conditions, e.g. poor light, poor weather 	<p>Category A Location</p> <p>LA endorsement not required.</p> <p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent or Delegated Authority + Head or Equivalent + EVC.</p>

Location	Definition	Approval/Notification Procedure
Open, Remote or Demanding Environments	<p>Areas in which the group could encounter significant hazards presented by any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the environment, e.g. cliffs, precipitous slopes, rivers and river gorges, bogs, sections of coast exposed to ocean swell, areas exposed to rapid flooding • remoteness from help, i.e. any venue which more than 30 minutes' walking time is (allowing for uphill sections) from vehicular access on any part of the route for any of the group • difficult escape, i.e. locations where groups could be trapped, e.g. by rising water levels, where specialist techniques would be required to evacuate a casualty • exposure to severe or rapidly changing weather systems • open areas where navigation skills is required to avoid natural hazards, including straying into more remote or hazardous areas i.e. moorland/mountainous areas 	<p>Category B Location</p> <p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by LA endorsement.</p> <p>This definition/approval procedure also applies to Category C – Duke of Edinburgh's award activities</p>
On, In or Near Hazardous Water	<p>Any activity which takes place on, in or near hazardous water (other than life-guarded swimming pools):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where there is a significant risk of falling in or • where entry into the water is planned 	<p>Category B Location</p> <p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by LA endorsement.</p> <p>This definition/approval procedure also applies to Category C – Duke of Edinburgh's award activities</p>

For further information on the Duke of Edinburgh's award, please contact

SCC The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) Office

Tel: 01278 741270

Email: dofe@somerset.gov.uk

Please see [Adventurous Activities](#) above for a list of Category B visits which require LA endorsement.

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PROCEDURES TABLE

The External Visit Approval/Endorsement procedure is as follows:

Visit Type <i>(See Appendix A: Classification of External Visits for definitions of visit categories)</i>	Summary of Procedure	Using the online system to complete the following Procedure <i>(Templates are available from the Templates and Forms page in the Start Here section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website)</i>
Category A Visits within the UK (but not Adventurous or Residential)	Planned by Visit Leader Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent or Delegated Authority + Head or Equivalent + EVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the Visit Information Sheet (or similar) to be held by the school office or an online application using the EEC External Visit Application • Participant numbers and Supervisors (the school to maintain a separate register of participants and leaders) • Event Specific Risk Assessment (EEC system) • If your school/organisation currently does not have access to the EEC site, you can apply for your visit by completing the Visit Information Sheet (link above) once the application has been approved by your Chair of Governors/Head and EVC. • Complete a Review of your external visit <p>plus, if using an independent provider (see EV4 – Contract for External Providers on the Templates and Forms page in the Start Here section of the Outdoor Education and External Visits website for further guidance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An EV4 completed and signed by the provider
Category B Visits Adventurous Activities and Any Residential within the UK Overseas and Residential Overseas and Residential and Adventurous	Planned by Visit Leader Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC and Local Authority endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEC External Visit Application • Participant numbers and Supervisors (the school to maintain a separate register of participants and leaders) • Event Specific Risk Assessment (EEC system) • If your school/organisation currently does not have access to the EEC site you can apply for your visit by completing a Visit Information Sheet and submitting it to OEA@somerset.gov.uk once the application has been approved by your Chair of Governors/Head and EVC. • Complete a review of your external visit <p>plus, if using an independent provider (see EV4 – Contract for External Providers on the Templates and Forms page in the Start Here section of the Outdoor Education and External Visits website for further guidance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An EV4 completed and signed by the provider (or evidence that they are endorsed by AALA/LoTC) <p>If SCC school/organisation staff are leading adventurous activities, they need to be EV3 registered and been approved by the Local Authority (CHSU) before the visit is planned.</p>

Visit Type <i>(See Appendix A: Classification of External Visits for definitions of visit categories)</i>	Summary of Procedure	Using the online system to complete the following <i>(Templates are available from the Templates and Forms page in the Start Here section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website)</i>
Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expeditions (Category C)	Planned by Visit Leader Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC and Local Authority endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEC External Visit Application • Participant numbers and Supervisors (the school to maintain a separate register of participants and leaders) • Event Specific Risk Assessment (EEC-system or SCC template) • If your school/organisation currently does not have access to the EEC site you can apply for your visit by completing the Visit Information Sheet and submitting it to DofEApprovals@somerset.gov.uk once the application has been approved by your Chair of Governors/Head and EVC. • Complete a review of the external visit <p>If SCC school/organisation staff are leading the Expedition/Practice Expedition/Training activity they need to be EV3 registered and been approved by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit team before the visit is planned.</p> <p>Otherwise, if using an independent provider (i.e. an approved activity provider) an EV4 should be completed and signed by the provider (check 'What are the Key Requirements for Enabling an External Visit to Take Place' document or the EEC Health and Safety Website for current EV4/AALA/LoTC registered providers)</p> <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copy of route (electronic or hard copy to be available) plus • copy of green D of E Wild Country Panel notification form sent to the Panel (Expeditions on Exmoor to be sent to the DofE South West Regional Office) if relevant • copy of blue D of E form if going abroad sent to SCC D of E office

Contacts

Category B Activities/OEA queries SCC Corporate Health and Safety Unit

Tel: 01823 355089

Email: oea@somerset.gov.uk

SCC Insurance Department

Website: <https://www.somerset.org.uk/sites/sccinsurance/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Tel: 01823 359892 (schools)

Email: insurance@somerset.gov.uk

Category C (Duke of Edinburgh's Award Activities (endorsements))

Steve Dorrall (Senior Safety Officer/Outdoor Education Advisor)

Tel: 07811 309112

Email: dofeapprovals@somerset.gov.uk

Other related Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) enquiries

Carol Authers – DofE Coordinator (based at Kilve Court)

Tel: 01278 741270

Email: dofe@somerset.gov.uk

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appointed Person	A person who has responsibility for establishing control and have accurate understanding of the procedures following an incident/accident. This includes calling for any emergency support. They are responsible for any first aid equipment provided. It should not be assumed that an appointed person will hold a first aid qualification. Therefore, they should not administer any first aid treatment for which they have not been appropriately trained. For further information on first aid for educational visits, see the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel National Guidance on First Aid .
CHSU	The Corporate Health and Safety Unit. This team provides advice and guidance on all health and safety matters relating to outdoor education and offsite activities and visits. This team now administers the role of the Outdoor Education Adviser, endorsing trips and activities that require Local Authority approval.
D of E	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
EVC	The External Visits Coordinator (normally the Head or an appointed person that has completed EVC training). This is an essential role with the responsibility of monitoring and providing the approval mechanism within the school/establishment for all visits.
EVL	The External Visits Leader. This is the person who plans and leads the visit. They'll have overall responsibility for managing the health, safety and welfare of the participants and group leaders/assistants who are supporting and supervising the external/off-site visit.
First Aider	A person who has been trained and holds a current first aid certificate recognised by the HSE (Health & Safety Executive).
Governors	This term is used for Governing Bodies, Management Groups or Committees or any group of persons exercising a management function for an educational establishment.
Heads	This includes all Headteachers, Managers, Principals, Senior Youth Workers and all others who manage or are in charge of a school, establishment, centre or unit.

LA	Local Authority.
OEA	The Outdoor Education Adviser. Now administered by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.
SCC	Somerset County Council
Schools/ Establishments	All educational establishments and functions of the LA. This includes schools (Local Authority and Academies), nurseries, children’s centres, special units attached to schools, special education services, young people’s provision etc.
Staff/Leaders	Includes teachers, youth and early years workers, learning mentors, learning support staff, early years practitioners, peripatetic staff and others who are employed within an educational establishment.
Volunteers	Adults who are not in paid employment within the school/establishment running the visit but have offered to help. There are implications for training, competence, DBS clearance, supervision and other responsibilities.
Young People	All children, pupils, students, youth or children’s centre members, etc, for whom the Local Authority has a duty of care.

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Appendix A: Classification of External Visits

Visits have been classified into two main categories for notification/approval reasons and for insurance purposes. A third category, Category C, is also available and relates to Duke of Edinburgh’s Award expeditions and activities.

Category A: External visits within the UK but not adventurous or residential.

Category B: Any *adventurous* (this may be a non-adventurous activity in an adventurous location – see below), *overseas* or *residential* visit.

Category	Description	Notification/Approval/Endorsement
A		
Non-Adventurous Visits	<p>Activities and visits in which the element of risk is similar to situations encountered in everyday life, i.e. not <i>adventurous</i>.</p> <p>Category A visits include sports fixtures away from the school/boundary.</p>	<p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent or Delegated Authority* + Head or Equivalent + EVC.</p> <p>* See the document Organisation of External Visits and Activities: Roles and Responsibilities, published in the Organisation of External Visits/Activities section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website.</p> <p>Recommended submission deadline for school/establishment to utilise is 14 days minimum prior to activity/visit, or as advised by your off-site visits policy.</p>
B		
Adventurous Activities & Any Residential Within the UK	<p>Any Residential or activity that involves an overnight stop within the UK.</p> <p>Any visits involving either of the following: Adventurous Activities or Adventurous Locations</p> <p>(See definitions of Adventurous Activities and Adventurous Locations above.</p>	<p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by <i>notification</i> to SCC Insurance Department and <i>endorsement</i> by the CHSU (who now administer OEA duties).</p> <p>Advised submission deadline 14 days prior to activity/visit.</p>
Overseas & Residential	<p>Visits outside the UK but not adventurous.</p>	<p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by <i>notification</i> to SCC Insurance Department and <i>endorsement</i> by the CHSU (who now administer OEA duties).</p> <p>Advised submission deadline 14 days prior to activity/visit.</p>
Overseas & Residential & Adventurous	<p>Adventurous overseas.</p>	<p>Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by <i>endorsement</i> by the CHSU (who now administer OEA duties) by forwarded completed application.</p> <p>Final submission deadline for trip 14 days prior to visit.</p>

Category	Description	Notification/Approval/Endorsement
Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expeditions (Category C)	Any D of E Expedition, Day-walk, Practice or Activity.	Utilising External Visit (EV) templates provided by SCC. All visit information once completed must be held by the EVC for auditing and reference. Approval by Chair of Governors or Equivalent + Head or Equivalent + EVC followed by notification to SCC Insurance Department and endorsement by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit (CHSU). Advised submission deadline 14 days prior to activity/visit.

ALL VISITS must be approved internally by the management of the establishment.

Category B visits **must** be approved by the Chair of Governors and endorsed by the Corporate Health and Safety Unit (who now act as the Outdoor Education Adviser). The same approval process is required for all D of E applications (Category C).

Local Authority endorsement will be based on satisfactory compliance with this guidance.

It is recognised that whilst the principles of this guidance apply to all visits, schools/organisations/centres should adopt the concept of proportionality of approval process surrounding each visit. The processes to support a month-long foreign expedition will be proportionately different to a programme of visits and external activities organised by the school or educational establishment in line with its curriculum or extra-curricular provision. For example, schools or establishments may consider a multi-activity application consisting of a series of Category-A activities that takes place during the normal school day over a term or academic year where Heads/EVCs can give 'series approval' (see [Series Approval](#) above).

Visits that require Local Authority endorsement (Category B or C) must not proceed until this endorsement has been given.

If there are any aspects of the planning relating to the external visit/activity which appear not to follow the safe practice guidance the endorsement will be withheld. Full details of why a visit application has not been endorsed will be communicated via email to the Head/EVC for their attention.

When the planning has followed the safe practice guidelines confirmation of endorsement will be sent to the EVC/Head by e-mail.

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