A Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning and The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award

This briefing builds on the information provided in the policy Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning, April 2010, which highlighted the importance of outdoor learning as the organising framework for the new curriculum, and as a way of helping educators to enhance the quality of teaching and learning throughout the 3-18 age range.

It states the following vision for outdoor learning in Scotland:

- All children and young people are participating in a range of progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences which are clearly part of the curriculum.
- Schools and centres are providing regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging opportunities for all children and young people to learn outdoors throughout their school career and beyond.
- Teachers and educators embed outdoor learning in the curriculum so that learning in the outdoor environment becomes a reality for all children and young people (p7).

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award can play a significant role in offering opportunities to young people. The flexibility of DofE programmes enables educators to use models of practice that suit the systems, and structures, of any environment or establishment.

About this briefing

This briefing demonstrates the links between the Expedition section of The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE) and Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning (CfE through outdoor learning). These connections are made through highlighting links with subject areas and interdisciplinary learning, the experiences and outcomes with core principles and statements.

Page numbers are in reference to the relevant pages in the CfE through outdoor learning policy document.
Myth busting:
The Expedition section gives young people the opportunity to explore their outdoor environment while developing skills for learning, life and work. Through active learning they can develop key skills:
- Initiative
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Compassion
- Organisational skills

“I’m enjoying choice in S3 and there is a better balance between practical and written work.”

DofE participant, Dornoch Academy

Curriculum areas and interdisciplinary learning

To achieve the goals of CfE the Outdoor Learning publication acknowledges that:

“opportunities for outdoor learning exist across all curriculum areas.” (p.8)

and identifies three curriculum areas with the strongest connections.

Learning in the outdoors can make significant contributions to literacy, numeracy and health and well-being. In literacy there are opportunities to use: different texts the spoken word, charts, maps, timetables and instructions. In numeracy there are opportunities to measure angles and calculate bearings and journey times. In health and wellbeing there are opportunities to become physically active in alternative ways and to improve emotional well-being and mental health.

Interdisciplinary learning

Ensuring outdoor learning is embedded in the curriculum is a key message from the vision. The Expedition section of DofE programmes offers many opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and can make much of the learning more practical and real for those involved.

A selection of the opportunities for interdisciplinary learning are highlighted below. This diagram shows how DofE programmes can play a role in all areas of a young person’s learning.
“I'm more confident in working in groups and joining new teams.”

DofE participant, Queen Margaret Academy

### The Expedition section delivering experiences and outcomes

The Expedition section covers many of the level 4 experiences and outcomes which are the responsibility of all. The links provided below are just highlights of what can be achieved through the DofE and the Expedition section in particular. They are achieved through activities in the following areas:

- Expedition planning and preparation
- The DofE expedition training framework.
- The practice and qualifying expeditions
- Debrief, reflection and presentation of project work.

### Experiences and outcomes of CfE through Outdoor Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences and outcomes of CfE through Outdoor Learning</th>
<th>Links to the DofE Expedition section and training framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations. HWB 4-14a</td>
<td>Learn the value of sharing responsibility for success, through leadership, teamwork, self-reliance and co-operation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am developing my understanding of the human body and can use this knowledge to maintain and improve my wellbeing and health. HWB 4-15a</td>
<td>Through the training framework and practice expedition participants are made aware of the physical as well as mental challenge the final expedition will entail.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible. HWB 4-16a</td>
<td>Gain an appreciation of and respect for the outdoor environment. Learn to manage risk through experiential and active learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can research, compare and contrast aspects of time and time management as they impact on me. MNU 4-10a</td>
<td>Learn the importance of attention to detail in planning an expedition and organisational ability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can use the link between time, speed and distance to carry out related calculations. MNU 4-10b</td>
<td>Through route planning and use of route cards groups will use calculations in a practical way. The use of Naysmiths rule is widely used to calculate distance travelled and height gained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can independently select ideas and relevant information for different purposes, organise essential information or ideas and any supporting detail in a logical order, and use suitable vocabulary to communicate effectively with my audience. LIT 4-06a</td>
<td>Through discussing and developing the Expedition section aim participants gain research and oral presentation skills and well as the ability to work effectively to assign tasks to each member of the team.</td>
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<td>When I engage with others I can make a relevant contribution, ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and encourage them to take account of others' points of view or alternative solutions. LIT 4-02a</td>
<td>In all aspects of the expedition process participants are able to recognise the needs and strengths of others and use their initiative to make effective decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can convey information and describe events, explain processes or concepts, providing substantiating evidence, and synthesise ideas or opinions in different ways. LIT 4-28a</td>
<td>Young people are required to provide an oral or written account of their experiences in any format they choose, learning the necessity of changing their delivery depending on audience.</td>
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Visit the website to learn more: [www.DofE.org/expedition](http://www.DofE.org/expedition)
**Our impact**

**Young people doing a DofE programme develop skills for work and life and become better citizens.**

Independent Impact Research, carried out from 2007-2009 by The University of Northampton and supported by The Pears Foundation, showed:

- 93% of participants developed teamwork skills
- 82% of participants want to continue volunteering after they’ve achieved their Award
- 74% of participants developed their self-esteem
- 81% feel their DofE makes them more adventurous
- 84% of participants felt they became more responsible
- 84% felt more able to stick at tasks
- 81% had increased motivation.

We have a lasting impact on young people’s behaviour, skills and life chances.

**Progression in practice**

Curriculum for Excellence outlines the importance of progressive learning for young people. The DofE provides the models and structure that allow young people to learn outside of the classroom. The programme challenges the resilience and teamwork of young people getting them ready to take their learning to the next level.

**School or centre grounds**

All of the DofE expedition training framework can be delivered within a classroom setting or close to the centre grounds. Leaders can deliver introduction to navigation sessions within the classroom, practical scenarios on first aid, budget and menu planning and the importance of good nutrition. There are also numerous opportunities to start to develop teamwork skills through practical tasks and games.

**Local area**

It is important to prepare young people as to what to expect from the outdoors in relation to terrain, weather and equipment. This can be delivered through orienteering practice in the local woods, day walks from school grounds and to try out kit on practice or qualifying expeditions in the local area.

**Wild country and abroad**

In Scotland there are vast areas of wild country (remote from habitation) which provide young people with significant challenges both physically and mentally. Through experiencing these types of environments young people are able to put their skills into practice and continue to develop leadership and decision making skills. They also reinforce the ‘hard’ skills they have learned through their training e.g. navigation, first aid and their understanding of the access code. Some young people have the opportunity to go abroad for their expedition. In these cases often additional skills in budgeting, languages and planning skills are developed.

With thanks to Pete Allison, The University of Edinburgh and Debbie Dickenson, Forfar Academy for their help in developing this document.

**Important opportunities and skills identified through CfE through Outdoor Learning, delivered through the DofE.**

- Develop resilience, by having individual and group ownership for learning, community living and sharing free time.
- Develop a sense of adventure, by exploring new places and new environments.
- Develop an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity.
- Develop confidence, by living more independently and making their own decisions.
- Develop a chance to reflect on experiences and learning.

“I’m much more resilient and have confidence in my ability to be independent.”

DofE participant, Carrick Academy