

Temporary changes and further guidance on the Award Requirements

01 May 2020 - 31 July 2021

Award participants and adults delivering The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (the Award) around the world have been coming to terms with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives, work and study. Self-isolation, quarantine and social distancing measures mean that for many continuing the Award in their usual way has become increasingly difficult or impossible.

The Award plays a crucial role, now more than ever, in supporting the individual health and wellbeing of Award participants, as well as in underpinning social cohesion and creating a vital sense of community and connection for young people.

To support participants during this challenging time and to encourage young people to stay active, the Foundation has implemented some temporary changes to the Award Requirements. **These changes are temporary and valid for the period 01 May 2020 - 31 July 2021.**

The temporary changes are supported by further guidance that is designed to clarify existing Award requirements outlined in the International Handbook for Award Leaders (7th edition – 2019). For further information, please contact your relevant account manager.

Note to Award participants and Leaders:

The temporary changes and further guidance are a broad set of options for continuing the Award during COVID-19. These have been agreed at an international level and are not compulsory. Please check with your licensed Operator as to which measures are reasonable and required in the context of the social-distancing and public health recommendations in your location.

If you are an Award participant and have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, please ensure you speak to your Award Leader for support, and agree if and how you may adapt your activities to be able to continue and complete your Award. For ideas on how to stay active in your Award during COVID-19, please see [here](#).

Temporary changes to the Award Requirements

The temporary changes to the Award Requirements are designed to avoid interruption to Award progress during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as protecting each participant's experience and - as far as possible - maintaining the educational outcomes intended for each section of the Award.

They are specific and temporary. Unless stated otherwise, they are valid from **01 May 2020 - 31 July 2021**. They are not compulsory.

Maximum Age Limit

All participants who are due to reach their 25th birthday between April and December 2020 will have an extension applied; granting them time to complete their Award.

Because the current social distancing/COVID-19 measures are beyond the control of participants in affected countries, a blanket extension is in place for all participants in the relevant age range. These participants will be able to continue logging activities, on the ORB (or offline), until 31 July 2021.

Where possible, participants should be encouraged to continue their Award activities without interruption.



This change is applicable to participants at all levels of the Award.



Volunteering from Home

Where all other possibilities have been exhausted, participants are encouraged to volunteer from home to stay active in the Voluntary Service section.

The Award Leader should support and encourage a participant to provide meaningful volunteering for the benefit of others and the society around them. This is the key requirement for determining an appropriate activity.

Regular household duties or other menial responsibilities do not suffice. The participant must receive prior consent from their Award Leader; and must identify a suitable Section Assessor (not an immediate family member). The Voluntary Service hours must be structured, logged and evidenced; and the SMART Goal will need to be reviewed with the Award Leader for appropriateness.

This option is intended as a last resort. Please see our **'further guidance'**, for alternative ways to continue Voluntary Service during the pandemic.



This change is applicable to participants at all levels of the Award.

Adventurous Journey (AJ) Temporary Changes

1

Award Leaders can waive the requirement for a Bronze Practice Journey OR where a Practice has been previously completed, it can be counted as the Bronze Qualifying Journey.

The Practice AJ is intended as part of the process of preparing, training and learning for participants doing their AJ. Should the adults delivering the Award feel confident that the learning outcomes are being achieved in the absence of a Practice Journey; and that sufficient health and safety risk mitigation has been taken, the adults delivering the Award can choose to waive the Practice Journey.

The Award Coordinator / Leader must be confident that the group is able to do a Qualifying Journey, based on: a thorough health and safety risk assessment of the AJ; the team demonstrating acquisition of the required knowledge and skills from training and preparation; and the team having successfully come together (either virtually or previously in person) to establish their roles and norms.

Alternatively, if a standard Practice Journey was already completed by a team, and the Supervisor believes that the AJ 15 Requirements were met and the learning outcomes for the group and individuals were achieved on that trip, that Practice Journey can be considered as the Qualifying Journey.



This change is applicable to participants at Bronze level.

2

Participants can continue to Silver or Gold without completing their Bronze or Silver qualifying AJ; and then be awarded their Award once their Silver or Gold practice AJ are completed.

The Bronze and Silver qualifier can be deferred for participants who are committed to continuing to the Silver and Gold level. These participants can move on to do all of their Silver and Gold Award activities. At a later date, the participant's Silver and Gold Practice AJ will count as their Bronze qualifier. Once this is complete, the participant will be awarded their Bronze or Silver Award.

This is intended for use where participants want to continue to the next level, but the Operator / Award Centre does not have the capacity to run additional Bronze and Silver AJs later on without limiting impact on new entrants.

This change is conditional on the licensed Award Centre / licensing body ensuring that the Award Leader and/or Assessor has approved the Practice Journey as meeting the requirements.



This change is applicable only at Bronze and Silver level; and only for those who are continuing to Silver and Gold level.

3

AJs may be organised in a familiar environment.

This change is intended for locations where AJs can be conducted while social distancing is in place. It will address health and safety concerns and limitations on travel and is most likely to be suited to AJs conducted as urban explorations. Participants will still be able to accomplish key learning outcomes, such as teamwork and leadership skills.



This change is applicable to participants at all levels of the Award.

4

Participants can use a home, school gym, etc. as accommodation during Adventurous Journeys. Further, a group's accommodation can be physically separated, e.g. participants all sleep in separate tents or accommodation.

This is only intended for locations where AJs can be conducted safely and in line with local government regulation, while social distancing is in place. It will address health and safety concerns and limitations on travel; and is most likely to be suited to AJs conducted as urban explorations.

In addition, it caters for times when some social-distancing measures are lifted, but where young people are not allowed to share sleeping accommodation due to hygiene reasons.



This change is applicable to participants at all levels of the Award.

5

Participants can now take part in a **Virtual Bronze Exploration (VBE)** and **Virtual Silver Exploration (VSE - practice only)**.

Virtual Bronze Exploration (VBE)

Where there is no prospect of delivering a practice or qualifying AJ and there is a time-sensitive desire for participants to complete Bronze, a Virtual Bronze Exploration (VBE) may be considered. The VBE is a virtual team experience that can be completed from home - subject to internet access - and broadly matches the learning outcomes of the AJ section.

The VBE is intended to be used where there is a need to support a current cohort of Bronze participants to complete their Award, so the next cohort of young people can begin at Bronze level. Adoption of the VBE for this period should reduce difficulties in organising multiple different Bronze and Silver AJs later. The VBE should be a last resort.

Virtual Silver Exploration (VSE) - Practice Only

Operators are now given the flexibility to explore using the virtual exploration approach for Silver Practice AJs. However, a physical component should be incorporated in the activity and the use is primarily restricted for the preparation, planning and team building components of the practice. Within reason and where public health restrictions require it, the physical component can be an activity that is solo i.e. not as a group and with a family member. Given the challenge of tailoring appropriate content to difference contexts, it is up to individual Operators to develop relevant materials for use at Silver Practice.

Please note: where the Virtual Exploration option is taken up for the Silver Practice, this cannot count as the Bronze qualifier (as per the other 'VBE' temporary change. This change does not relate to Silver Qualifying Journeys.)



This change is applicable to participants at Bronze and Silver level.

Note for participants

For help and support in adjusting your Award activities during the pandemic, please contact your Award Leader. And remember, the Award is a marathon not a sprint!

Further guidance on existing Award Requirements

Much of the flexibility required to address challenges faced by Award participants and their Award Leaders during COVID-19 is already contained in the International Handbook for Award Leaders (7th ed., 2019).

The further guidance listed below gives clarity on how some of the existing Award Requirements can be implemented, so that participants can continue and complete their Awards throughout this period.

In addition to this guidance, some temporary changes to Award Requirements have been recognised by the International Award Foundation (IAF). They are specific, and they are temporary; and the changes will be applicable only for jurisdictions where current isolation or social distancing measures require them.

Note to Award participants and Award Leaders:

We ask Award Leaders and participants to prioritise protecting your Award experience.

Please always choose an option which provides the least disruption to your existing activities.

Assessors, Award Assessors and Section Assessors



VOLUNTARY SERVICE



PHYSICAL RECREATION



SKILLS



ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY



GOLD RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

Assessors cannot be family members:

Assessors will often be known by the participant, but they must not be an immediate relative.

This requirement remains. However, operators may wish to convey the following:

- Anybody, other than a family member, who knows the subject better than the participant can act as Section Assessor.
- The Section Assessor does not have to be present in the room while the participant is doing their activity.
- Nor does the Section Assessor have to be actively providing instruction to the participant (although commonly they are doing so).
- The Assessor can keep track of a participant's progress remotely, with updates from the participant. In this case, a participant should keep photo / video / diary evidence of them doing their logable hours of activity.
- Where an existing Assessor has become uncontactable, the participant can change Assessor mid-way through a section.
- If a participant changes their section activity mid-way through, they will likely need to change their Assessor too.
- Award Leaders should be flexible in helping participants to identify a new Assessor – in some cases, an Award Leader may be able to act as Assessor themselves if appropriate, or some NAO/OP staff could make themselves available to act as Assessors.
- Please ensure your staff, Award Leaders and other adults delivering the Award continue to operate in accordance with local safeguarding and child protection legislation.
- For more information on the role of Assessors, please see the International Handbook for Award Leaders (7th ed., 2019) pages 41 – 45.

Retaining participants continuing to the next level



VOLUNTARY SERVICE



PHYSICAL RECREATION



SKILLS



ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY



GOLD RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

Participants are currently allowed to register for and move on to the next Level of the Award without completing all sections at their current Level, as long as they have completed some of the sections:

Participants should be encouraged to complete all sections of their current Award level before progressing to another level.[...] If it proves difficult to complete the whole Award in a reasonable time, then they may start a section at the next level provided they:

- have completed that section in their current level;
- have reached the minimum age of entry for the new level, and;
- are not working on all three levels at the same time.

Participants who are prevented from completing a section(/s) due to COVID-19 restrictions, should be encouraged to register for and start their activities at the next level of the Award, before returning to finish the outstanding activity at their current level, when feasible to do so.

For example: where a participant cannot do their Qualifying AJ at Bronze level but they have finished all their other sections, they can register and begin working towards their Silver Award, logging their activities under Skill, Voluntary Service and Physical Recreation. When restrictions have eased, the participant can then do their Qualifying Bronze AJ and achieve their Bronze Award, before moving on to prepare for their Silver AJ.

Minimum age requirements



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GOLD RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

The minimum age requirements for beginning each level of the Award are 14, 15 and 16 years respectively.

However, since the update to the Operational Guidelines in July 2018, there is some flexibility built into the Award framework in this regard:

- **At Bronze level** – discretion is allowed if a young person, who is younger than 14, is part of a peer group where the majority are 14 or older and wishes to start their Bronze with their peers. Under such circumstances the participant must have reached their 13th birthday.
- **At Silver level** – young people who have completed their Bronze level may start their Silver level without a delay being imposed, even though they are not yet 15.
- **At Gold level** – no activities can be counted before a participant's 16th birthday to ensure it is more of an adult challenge.

Operators who have not previously adjusted their minimum age requirements may wish to do so now, to support continued engagement from current and future participants at all levels and align with the changes made in 2018.

Breaks in activity for an extended period



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Participants are allowed to take a break in their activity:

Subject to the maximum age limit, participants can take as long as they want to complete their Award on average, participants must spend at least one hour, in a single period, per week on their chosen activity. [...] If a participant has a break for an extended period of time due to illness, studies or other important reason, then they will need to extend the minimum overall time taken to complete their Award.

Should it be necessary, a participant can allow for a gap in their activity logs for a section(/s). Once they resume activity, they will need to complete extra time so as to have logged the required amount of hours and shown sufficient progress towards their SMART Goal.

Remember, the Award is referred to as a marathon, not a sprint!

Changing activities



Participants are allowed to change their choice of activity mid-way through a section:

If the initial choice of activity proves to be unsuitable, participants may choose another activity and count the time spent towards their overall minimum time requirement. This needs to be done in consultation with their Award Leader who should use judgement on how often this can happen.

Therefore, in the context of COVID-19, participants should be allowed to change their chosen activity in any section if their original activity is not suitable to continue from home or under social distancing. This may require them to change their SMART Goal and/or their choice of Assessor too. Award Leaders should continue to recognise previously logged hours that related to the participant's original activity; and if appropriate allow them to switch back to their original activity once lockdown/social distancing is over, if they wish.

Change of major section for direct entrants



All participants at Bronze level, and those who are direct entrants at Silver and Gold may change their choice of 'major' section:

- **Bronze:** All participants must do an extra 3 months in one of the following: Physical Recreation; or Skills; or Voluntary Service
- **Silver / Gold:** All participants must do an extra 6 months in one of the following: Physical Recreation; or Skills; or Voluntary Service

Award Leaders may allow participants to change their choice of major section, if continuing an alternative section at home is more feasible. In this case, the SMART Goal in each relevant section should be reviewed for suitability.

Voluntary Service in the community



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Voluntary Service activities; working with a local, national or global community organisation on a cause supporting people, the environment or animals - can be done from home.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an opportunity to use the Voluntary Service section to make a meaningful difference in communities. Participants should be encouraged to continue engaging with community organisations. Where safe to do so, participants may wish to be involved directly in their community or national response to COVID-19. Alternatively, participants can continue volunteering by doing roles that do not require the participant to be in public locations. Activities can be conducted on or offline.

For more information on Voluntary Service, see the International Handbook for Award Leaders.

Please ensure Voluntary Service continues to be carried out in accordance with national legislation, and that any participant who volunteers with children or vulnerable adults has signed the relevant Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

AJ preparation and provision of training



ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY

The AJ section requires months of preparation and training by Award participants. Some may be conducted online; so in many cases progress may continue uninterrupted under isolation or social distancing.

The development of technical skills relating to the chosen route, journey type and mode of transport; as well as universal skills such as planning, teamwork and leadership, can be facilitated using online resources or through remote group work. Please visit the **AwardCommunity.org** for examples of suitable digital resources. Further to this, AJ teams can collaborate remotely to agree and develop their shared Adventurous Journey Aim.

Award Leaders may wish to reconsider the planned AJ environment and route, if the intended preparation cannot be delivered remotely; or if a revised risk assessment deems the health and safety risk too high.

Urban explorations



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The Adventurous Journey does not need to take place in a rural environment.

Urban environments are suitable for AJs, especially where participants choose to conduct an Exploration ('a purpose with a journey').

During an Exploration, an AJ team's primary focus is on observing and collecting information relevant to their Adventurous Journey Aim. The journeying aspect remains significant, with broadly one third of the hours of purposeful effort dedicated to journeying, with the remaining two thirds spent on exploring/researching.

The average minimum hours of purposeful effort per day are:

- **At Bronze level** - 6 hours per day / 2 days. For an exploration, this would mean 4 hours of exploring/researching, with 2 hours of journeying per day.
- **At Silver level** - 7 hours per day / 3 days. For an exploration, this would mean 4 hours 40 minutes of exploring/researching, with 2 hours 20 minutes of journeying per day.
- **At Gold level** - 8 hours per day / 4 days. For an exploration, this would mean 5 hours 20 minutes of exploring/researching, with 2 hours 40 minutes of journeying per day.

An Urban Exploration may be an appropriate AJ to undertake under social distancing conditions. Please refer to the Temporary changes to Award Requirements for other advice on conducting AJs during the pandemic.

The above guidance reflects the Award Requirements and associated guidance in the International Handbook for Award Leaders (7th ed., 2019) and in the Operational Guidelines.