

THE YOUNG EXPLORERS' TRUST

EVALUATION OF VENTURE PLANS



with BS 8848 Conformity (if requested by the Venture Provider)

INTRODUCTION

When The Young Explorers' Trust was formed in 1972 it took over from The Royal Geographical Society the services offered by the RGS to youth overseas expeditions. Prime amongst these was the RGS Seal of Approval for youth overseas expeditions, together with Grant Aid for some expeditions. The YET Approval and Grant Aid Scheme has been in operation now for over 30 years, during which time almost 1000 overseas youth expeditions have had their plans screened by the Trust, and around 20,000 young people have returned safely from their experiences on a YET Approved Expedition.

The Trust does not itself organise expeditions, but offers its skilled services to voluntary youth groups, to schools, to all Venture Providers (voluntary or commercial) of ventures outside the UK, to scouts / guides / cadet and other uniformed groups, and to all other groups which are involved in the provision of challenging and adventurous ventures outside the UK for young people.

This revised YET Evaluation Scheme may be used to provide external validation of conformity with BS 8848 (*Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities, outside the United Kingdom*).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Any Venture Provider may apply for YET Evaluation of Venture Plans, which process may include conformity with BS8848. Although YET is in position to advise any Venture Provider that seeks its help, YET cannot give its Approval to every type of youth venture outside of the UK. From 2008 onwards, the YET is in a position to evaluate the corporate processes of a Venture Provider order to assess its overall conformity to BS 8848. In order to apply for YET Evaluation, the planned venture must meet the following criteria:

A Aim and Objectives of the Venture

The overall aim of a venture shall be to provide personal development opportunities for the participants. Additionally the venture must have one or more specific objectives drawn from scientific fieldwork, physical challenge and adventure, or a community or environmental project. The venture plans must demonstrate how these specific objectives tie into the overall objective of personal development. These objectives must be appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the young participants, once training has been completed, and within the competence and experience of the Leadership Team.

B. Type of Venture

1. Expeditions outside the UK

Ventures outside the UK where considerable self-reliance is required (see Note 1).

2. Other Ventures

These must be self-organised activities which take place outside the UK and which are designed to promote personal development through self-reliance.

C. Safety

All matters of safety will be regarded by the Evaluation Panel as being of prime importance in the assessment of the venture plans submitted for Approval. A full Threat Analysis and Risk Analysis must be undertaken and be ongoing, and a written copy produced for scrutiny by the Panel. Venture Providers must be in a position to provide a full Major Incident Plan which includes the necessary support from a Home Agent and which has been shared with all participants, the parents of under 18 participants, and other stakeholders on request.

D. Leadership

The Venture Leader and Leadership Team must be selected so that they possess personal qualities and communication skills relevant to the nature of the venture and shall be assigned roles and responsibilities within their proven competence. The Leadership Team must be of a size to ensure that all activities may be undertaken in safety (see Note 2).

It is expected that Venture Providers will have made arrangements for all of the Leadership Team to have undergone background checks, which should include (where relevant) Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Record Bureau or equivalent.

E. Age of participants

Normally the lower age limit is 14, with the majority of the party (excluding the Leadership Team) aged between 14 and 25 (see Note 3).

NOTES on EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. This implies that the venture is largely dependent on its own resources in respect of equipment, in its ability to cope with minor emergency situations, and in implementing the venture's programme through its Leadership Team.
2. Leader Definitions:

Venture Leader:	the individual taking overall responsibility for all or a pre-determined period of the venture, and the nominated representative of the Venture Provider for this venture outside the UK.
Leadership Team:	the team, including the Venture Leader, of leaders and activity specialists approved by the Venture Provider to deliver the venture.
Trainee Leader:	a person learning the skills of leadership under the close supervision of an assigned member of the Leadership Team.
3. Normally undergraduate fieldwork ventures should apply directly to The Royal Geographical Society and not to The Young Explorers' Trust, although those undergraduate ventures with no fieldwork aims but meeting the age and other criteria may apply to YET. **Such ventures should not apply to both the RGS and the YET**, for the two bodies liaise closely with each other and will transfer applications between themselves for consideration by the more appropriate organisation.
4. YET publishes "*Safe and Responsible Expeditions*" (2nd. Edition 2002) and "*Environmental Responsibility for Expeditions*" (2nd. Edition 2002), freely downloadable from the Publications page of the YET website (www.theyet.org). These guidelines are brought to the attention of ventures applying for Evaluation, and the Venture Provider shall undertake to manage the venture in the light of these guidelines. Additionally, YET publishes various Good Practice

Guidelines and offers further written advice in its Expedition Manual; both freely downloadable, as above.

5. YET Approval indicates that the venture has provided evidence to show that its plans meet the standards set by The Young Explorers' Trust. These plans must cover the safety of the participants, risk analysis and management systems (RAMS), major incident planning, the competence and experience of the Leadership Team, the budget, environmental concerns, and the value of the venture to participants in terms of personal development through one or more of adventurous activities, fieldwork, community or environmental projects.

6: Definitions:

Venture Provider an individual or organisation having overall responsibility for all aspects, of the venture. There can be only one Venture Provider for any one venture.

Third Party any Provider of one or more contracted service to the Venture Provider

Participant a person taking part in the venture, normally aged 14 to 25, but not a member of the Leadership Team nor a Trainee Leader.

Indirect Supervision supervision where a Venture Leader manages participants during all or part of the venture without the ability to intervene in person immediately.

RAMS a system by which a venture is assessed and managed to ensure the safety and well-being of all members on the venture and which encompasses all aspects of the Risk Analysis and Safety Management process.

Threat Analysis a written analysis of any present threat in the destination country including security, political, health and natural hazards.

Home Agent the Venture Provider's point of contact within the UK.

Stakeholder a person with an interest in the expedition.

Personal Time time during the expedition when an activity is not being undertaken but participants remain under the supervision of the Leadership Team.
NB: "Down Time" is time beyond the jurisdiction of the Venture Provider and this shall not occur on a venture with participants who are under 18.

The Young Explorers' Trust can accept no responsibility for the outcome of any part of the Evaluated Venture. The Trust's sole role is to examine, advise on and approve (or otherwise) the plans of the Venture.

THE OPERATION OF THE EVALUATION SCHEME (See Flow Chart on Page 6)

1. An Evaluation Coordinator is appointed for a term of office by the Council of The Young Explorers' Trust.
2. The Venture Provider, either direct or through delegation to the Venture Leader, submits the plan on the electronic form to be returned to the Evaluation Coordinator [evaluations@theyet.org]. The form must be obtained by downloading from the website [www.yet.org.uk]. If this presents problems, then the Coordinator may be emailed for advice

3. Applications should be submitted at least six weeks before the first choice Evaluation interview date (see application form).

Note: *YET would prefer to receive applications as early as possible once expedition plans are sufficiently advanced; YET accepts that this is a matter of judgment, and will return applications for further completion if it feels that the information provided is insufficient for a viable Evaluation process*

4. The Coordinator will carry out an initial assessment of the application, request further information where necessary, and may forward the plans for comment to a selection of YET approved assessors experienced in an aspect of the plans, particularly for the region to be visited, the projects to be undertaken, or the adventurous activities to be pursued. After further consideration the Coordinator may offer assistance to the Venture Provider to develop the application sufficiently for the Evaluation process to be successful.
5. In addition to the Coordinator there is a Chairman of Evaluation with a team of Vice-Chairmen throughout the UK, appointed by the Council of The Young Explorers' Trust. The Chairman, or one of the Vice-Chairmen, will chair an Evaluation Panel and will be assisted at each Evaluation by between two and four other members. Each Panel will appoint one of its number to act as Secretary, who will be responsible for recording comments, advice, and Panel decisions, and who will communicate the above to the Coordinator and the Chairman of Evaluation if either or both was not present at the interview.
6. These Panels meet with the Venture Provider and Venture Leader (who may be one and the same person), sometimes with young participants present. The application form offers the opportunity for the applicant to notify preference as to time and place, but in exceptional circumstances arrangements may also be made outside of these dates and locations. It is unlikely that any interviews will be arranged between June and September, inclusive. The Coordinator will confirm the arrangements for the interview with the Venture Provider and Venture Leader.
7. Panel members are drawn from a pool of leaders who have offered their voluntary services to YET, all of whom have considerable experience in leading youth ventures, and who between them possess a wide knowledge of all aspects of youth ventures outside the UK. It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to recruit the Panel members.
8. Ventures applying for Approval will normally be required to meet one of the Evaluation Panels.
9. To gain YET Approval the venture plans must be seen to be safe and appropriate to the needs and abilities of the participants and within the competence and the experience of the Leadership Team. The Panels will offer advice, where necessary, on the plans submitted, even where Approval is awarded. It is not mandatory for such advice to be followed by the approved venture. Any plans which fall below the standards required by YET to gain Approval may be resubmitted once the plans have been amended in line with the recommendations given.
10. The Panel will not grant Approval to any venture which plans do not meet YET standards, as above. In these cases the Venture Provider and the Venture Leader will be given the reasons for the decision. In most of these cases, approval will be deferred, as below.
11. The Panel may defer Approval where in its view plans are insufficiently developed, or when the advice given to the Venture Provider and the Venture Leader by the Panel is mandatory and evidence is needed to be seen that the advice is being followed before Approval can be given. In this instance, the authority for upgrading to Approval rests with the Chairman of Evaluation in consultation with the relevant Panel Chairman and the Coordinator.

12. At interview the Panel will consider all aspects of the venture as detailed in the application form.
13. Decisions: once the above process has been completed the Panel through its Chairman will submit recommendations to the Chairman of Evaluation for confirmation. Only in exceptional circumstances will the recommendation of the Panel be overruled. Ultimately, the Council of The Young Explorers' Trust holds the right and responsibility of confirming or rejecting the Approval decision, should there be any appeal (see 17 below) against the decision of any Panel as confirmed by the Chairman of Evaluation, or against his / her decision should it over-ride the recommendation of the Panel.
14. The outcome of the Evaluation will be one of the following:
 - **Approval:** all aspects of the plans reach the required standard; although the Panel may well give advice as to possible ways of improving on the experience to be gained by the participants; such advice is not mandatory for the venture to follow.
 - **Deferral:** one or more aspects of the venture plans need further development, which when carried through satisfactorily and informed to the Coordinator will result in upgrade to Approval after consultation with the relevant Panel Chairman and the Chairman of Evaluation. *On request, YET will be prepared to offer support for this upgrading procedure.*
 - **Rejection:** the plans have significant shortfalls at the time of the interview in that they are considered by the Panel to be unsafe or beyond the capabilities of the Leadership Team and / or the participants. *On request, YET will be prepared to offer advice for the resubmittal of the application.*
 - **Out of Scope:** as a result of the interview process it is realized that the venture does not fall within the established criteria for Approval; such ventures normally would not reach interview stage.
15. Once the decision of the Panel to grant Approval is confirmed by the Chairman of Evaluation, as above, the Coordinator will communicate that decision (along with the Panel's report on the venture plans) to the Venture Provider and the Venture Leader, normally within a fortnight of the date of the Panel meeting. An Approval Acceptance Form will be forwarded, and YET's Approval does not become valid until that signed completed form has been returned to the Coordinator, who will then issue an Approval Certificate and an Approval slide image to be used in Presentations.
16. Any reasons for deferral, rejection, Out of Scope or failure to meet YET criteria will be conveyed in writing by the Coordinator to the Venture Provider and the Venture Leader, normally within a fortnight of the date of the Panel meeting.
17. Should the Venture Provider wish to appeal against the Evaluation decision as conveyed by the Coordinator, then appeal may be made to the Chairman of The Young Explorers' Trust through the Coordinator.
18. A copy of any advice given to the Venture Leader and Venture Provider will be retained by the Evaluation Coordinator in YET records.

