



GAISCE
THE PRESIDENT'S
AWARD

Handbook



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One of Ireland's most prestigious youth awards, Gaisce - The President's Award (referred to as 'the Award') is for all young people in Ireland aged between 15 and 25.

'Gaisce' is an old Irish word which means 'a great achievement', and the Award programme is a challenge from the President of Ireland to all young people to dream big and fulfil their potential.

The Award is a self-directed personal development programme in which participants set and achieve their own personal goals in four different sections of activity: Community Involvement, Personal Skill, Physical Recreation and an Adventure Journey.

Each Gaisce Award challenge is an individual one: the only person participants compete against is themselves. There are three levels of the programme which when successfully completed lead to a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Gaisce Award.

Gaisce Award participants are supported and mentored by an adult called a President's Award Leader (referred to as a 'PAL'), who helps to set and achieve their challenge over a period of time.

Over 300,000 Awards have been achieved since the Award programme was founded in 1985, with over 20,000 young people signing up each year to take on the challenge.

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History and Principles

History of the Award

The Gaisce Award programme was established in 1985 (International Youth Year) and launched in Áras an Uachtaráin by the President, Dr. Patrick J. Hillery, who was the Award's founding patron.

Initially the Award programme was piloted in five areas: Monaghan, Galway, Kilkenny, Cork city and north Dublin with a total of 300 participants. In 1988 the Award programme was extended to the 26 counties with almost 3,000 participants. Currently there are over 20,000 new applicants to the Award programme each year.

In 2005 under an agreement initiated by Gaisce and the Duke of Edinburgh Award in the UK and brokered by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Award Association, the Gaisce Award became available to young people in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Joint Award Initiative (JAI).

This allows participants on the Duke of Edinburgh programme in Northern Ireland to choose to receive a Gaisce Award Certificate on completion of their programme and to have Gold Gaisce Awards presented to them by the President of Ireland.

Guiding principles

The Gaisce Award programme is built upon a number of principles which are an intrinsic part of its success:

Individual

Individuals design their own programme, which can be tailored to suit their personal circumstances, choices and local provision. They start at whichever level suits them best and they can take as long as they wish (within the age limit) to achieve their chosen level of the Award.

Non-competitive

Pursuing the Gaisce Award is a personal challenge for each participant and not a competition against others. Every participant's programme is tailor-made to reflect their individual starting point, abilities, and interests.

Achievable

The Gaisce Award is achievable by any individual who chooses to take up the challenge regardless of ability, gender, background or location, with the right guidance and inspiration.

Voluntary

Whilst the Award programme may be offered within school, college, work time, custody or extra-curricular activity, individuals choose their own challenges and must commit some of their free time to undertake these activities.

Development

Participating in the Gaisce Award programme fosters personal and social development. Individuals gain valuable experiences and life skills, grow in confidence, and become more aware of their environment and community, transforming them into responsible adults.

Balanced

The Gaisce Award provides a balanced framework to develop the individual's mind, body, and community spirit by engaging them in a range of activities in four different sections.

Progressive

At each level of engagement the Gaisce Award programme demands progressively more time, commitment, and responsibility from the participant.

Inspiration

The Award inspires individuals to extend their expectations of themselves. They are encouraged to set their own challenges and goals before starting an activity. They achieve the Award by striving to achieve their goals and by showing that they have learned and developed in the process.

Persistence

The Award programme requires persistence and cannot be completed with a short burst of enthusiasm. Participants are encouraged to continue with activities and to maintain their interest even after achieving the Award so that they will continue to grow and develop.

Enjoyable

Participants and PALs should find the Gaisce Award programme enjoyable, fulfilling and rewarding.

Impact and Benefits

Benefits to young people

Research conducted into the impact that participation in the Gaisce Award programme can have on young people found a number of significant benefits that accrue to those who take part:

- **Enhanced positive relationships:** participation in the Award programme offers the opportunity to grow both new and existing relationships, to develop new social networks, and to enhance communication and social skills through the programme's teamwork elements.
- **Increased empathy and altruism:** participants gain a better understanding of the positive impact that they can have on the lives of others through helping and volunteering, and gain greater levels of understanding and patience when working with others.
- **Greater mental fortitude:** taking part in the Award programme enhances a young person's ability to motivate and push themselves, to have the confidence to set goals for themselves that lie outside their comfort zones, and to persevere to reach those goals.
- **Increased positive emotions:** the Gaisce Award programme gives young people the opportunity to discover new activities that they enjoy, and to have fun while also gaining the satisfaction of achieving their goals and fulfilling their potential.
- **Self-efficacy:** through setting their own goals and working towards achieving them, participants gain a sense of fulfilment and a belief that they can achieve tasks and replicate their success in the future.

- **Personal growth:** participation in the Award programme gives young people the opportunity to learn and experience new things, and to enhance positive thinking in young people by giving them greater confidence and self-esteem through fulfilment of the challenge.

The programme of activities is balanced in such a way as to encourage the complete development of the young person. In many cases young people tell us that they would never have considered certain activities if it hadn't been for the Award, and sometimes they go on to work in areas which they initially discovered while they were participating in the Award programme.

Benefits to PALs

Choosing to become a PAL within your organisation can be hugely beneficial and rewarding for individuals across a wide range of professions, as it can provide you with an opportunity to:

- Develop your mentoring and coaching skills
- Contribute towards your local community by assisting in the development of young people
- Acquire additional skills and/or professional qualifications
- Meet new people and gain new skills and experiences through your interaction with participants and volunteers

Benefits to parents / guardians

Encouraging young people to stick with activities that they may have started years previously can be a challenge for many parents and guardians as interests wane and other distractions arise during teenage years.

The Gaisce Award programme provides a structure for working towards and achieving a distinctive award that is recognised around the world and which can be a positive indicator for future employability.

To many it is a huge honour and an immense source of pride to witness their child receiving a Gaisce Award.

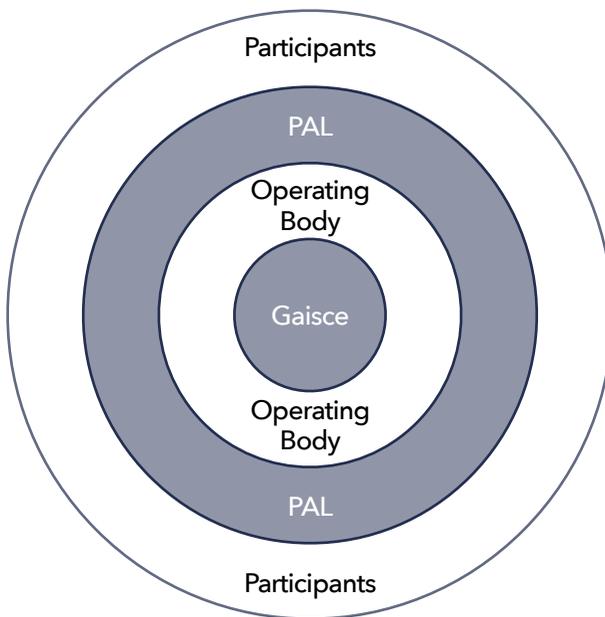
Benefits to community

The Gaisce Award programme provides a practical way for young people to connect with their community and begin a habit of positive contribution to society. This is achieved by using the Community Involvement section to encourage volunteering in ways that might not have been considered previously. This section is based on the understanding that in order for young people to be active citizens and play a positive role in the community, they must get the opportunity to take on responsibility, to contribute to society, and to be respected and show respect for others.

Structure

Structure

The structure of the Award programme is designed to support young people through their participation and to ensure that participants are always the priority.



Availability

The Award programme is a non-formal education tool operating successfully in both the formal and non-formal education sectors through many youth and education organisations across Ireland.

The Award programme is also increasingly available across a range of organisations working with young people, such as groups with additional support needs, prisons, youth justice projects, young members of the Traveller Community, uniformed organisations, and third level education. In business the programme is operated by a number of organisations alongside young manager development programmes, which allows the programme to support attaining enhanced job skills and improve employability.

Our goal is to make the Award programme accessible to as many young people as possible throughout Ireland. Our experience shows us that it is flexible and can be adopted by many different types of organisations and youth bodies in a variety of contexts. The programme can provide an external validation that can help youth organisations to achieve their own strategic goals.

Levels

There are three levels of the Award programme: **Bronze**, **Silver** and **Gold**. At each level, participants must set themselves personal goals in each of the four sections. These goals should be achievable and progressive, and ultimately allow the young person to feel a sense of achievement when they complete each section. It is important that the PAL helps the participant to identify and achieve these goals.

Sections

There are four sections within each level of the Award, designed to provide a balanced programme of personal development.

- **Community Involvement** is all about making a difference to other people's lives and developing social skills. Everyone is unique and has something they can contribute to make their community a better place.
- **Personal Skill** is all about developing practical skills and interests. Developing a particular skill boosts self-esteem, enhances skill sets, and is good fun too.
- **Physical Recreation** is about becoming physically stronger and improving your physical fitness. Getting out and moving is a sure way to improve health, encourage positive thinking, and live longer.
- **Adventure Journey** takes participants out of their regular setting and encourages them to explore the wider world with a team of their peers.

There are also two additional requirements at Gold level: a Residential Project designed to broaden the participant's experience through involvement with others unknown to them in a residential setting; and a Gold Award portfolio, which allows participants to fully reflect on all that they have experienced and achieved while participating in the Award programme.

Participant Registration

Registration in the Award programme can begin once a participant has found a Gaisce-trained and -approved PAL who is willing to take on responsibility for seeing them through the challenge. The PAL and participant will then determine what activities the participant will pursue in each section of the Award programme.

Participants can then register on Gaisce's online system (award.gaisce.ie), which will require payment by either the participant or PAL (on the participant's behalf) of the registration fee. These are:

Bronze level: €15

Silver level: €20

Gold level: €25

Only activities undertaken after the participant has registered will be considered as part of the Award programme. The participant will keep a record of participation in their activities on record sheets, which should be signed off by the activity supervisor for each session, and then approved by the PAL for each section when the minimum time requirements have been fulfilled.

Participant Age Requirements

The Award is available to young people aged 15 to 25. Participants are required to register with Gaisce before they reach their 26th birthday.

The minimum starting ages for each level are:

Bronze level: 15 years

Silver level: 16 years

Gold level: 17 years

Once participants have reached these minimum ages, they may choose to enter the Award programme at any level.

Starting another level

Participants can choose to take part in any level of the Award programme, regardless of whether they have achieved any Gaisce Award previously. However, if the participant has not completed the previous level of the Award, they will be required to spend extra time on one of their activities. These participants are referred to as direct entrants.

Participants who have completed the previous level of the Award can avail of the merit system, so that it is only necessary for them to spend the minimum time requirements on each activity. To be eligible for this participants are required to complete all sections of one level of the Award programme, and be marked as approved for completion on the Gaisce online system, before progressing on to the next level. Details on the merit system and minimum time requirements are outlined below.

Participant time requirements

As the Award programme is formulated around self-directed personal development, participants are encouraged to work at their own pace. The perseverance required to fulfil all aspects of the Award is not

insubstantial, and so participants may need to take more than the minimum time period to complete the challenge.

In the Community Involvement, Personal Skill, and Physical Recreation sections, participants are required to show regular commitment to their chosen activities. The Award programme requires that participants spend at least one hour per week on each of their activities for a specified number of weeks. There is no rule as to how frequently participants should be engaging in their activities, and the participation does not need to occur in consecutive weeks.

The following are the minimum periods of participation for each level of the Award:

Level	Direct Entrants	Award Holders
Bronze	26 weeks	N/A
Silver	52 weeks	26 weeks (if Bronze Award holder)
Gold	78 weeks	52 weeks (if Silver Award holder)

As detailed previously, a merit system operates for participants who already hold the Award at the previous level. Those participants are not required to participate beyond the minimum time period in each section. Direct entrants (participants who do not hold the Award at the previous level) are required to spend extra time in one section of the Award:

Level	Community Involvement	Physical Recreation	Personal Skill	Plus...	Adventure Journey
Bronze	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	All participants must do an extra 13 weeks in one of Community Involvement, Physical Recreation, or Personal Skill	2 days, 1 night
Silver	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	Direct entrants must do an extra 26 weeks in one of Community Involvement, Physical Recreation, or Personal Skill	3 days, 2 nights
Gold	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	Direct entrants must do an extra 26 weeks in one of Community Involvement, Physical Recreation, or Personal Skill	4 days, 3 nights
	Plus additional requirements of minimum 5 days / 4 nights Residential Project, and Gold Award Portfolio				

The Award Process

The role of mentoring and supporting a participant throughout the Award programme is probably the most significant role of anyone involved with the Award. The direct contact and support that participants receive from PALs can be a huge factor in determining whether participants persevere in the Award programme, and how much they benefit from their participation.

The day-to-day commitments of a PAL are to support and mentor participants to help them in achieving their Award. This involves:

- Agreeing participants' activities
- Assisting participants' registration
- Remitting the registration fees
- Ensuring that all participants and the Operating Body are adequately insured for the Award programme
- Guiding and continually reviewing with participants
- Guiding and supervising participants in planning and completing the adventure journey section
- Assessing and approving the participant's completion of activities
- Presenting the Award

Agreeing participants' activities

The choice to participate in the Gaisce Award programme is entirely voluntary, and as such each participant chooses what activities they want to take part in for each section. They have the freedom to progress

through the Award programme according to their personal needs and abilities.

When agreeing activities with your participant there is no set syllabus or common standard to achieve, rather a personal goal to set and work towards. The PAL's role is to guide and help participants to find suitable activities and to find adults who are knowledgeable and experienced in the chosen activity, who will supervise or support the activity (referred to as 'activity supervisors').

It is also important for the PAL to ensure that the participant has set goals for themselves that are achievable and realistic but also challenging for the period that they will be taking part in the Award programme. PALs should encourage their participants to take up new activities or to investigate new opportunities where possible, and be open to new suggestions from participants. If you are unsure of whether a particular activity is suitable for the Award programme, feel free to get in touch with Gaisce to check. Activity supervisors should also be aware of the goals being set so that they can best help the participant to reach them within the specified time period.

When the participant has identified their goals and activities, each section of the Award should be assessed for safety risks. For each activity, discuss with the participant to make sure they have parental consent and knowledge of the activity being undertaken and any risks associated with this. If in doubt, contact your Development Officer at Gaisce to discuss this and the appropriate risk mitigation.

The purpose and nature of the Adventure Journey should be determined by the team of participants journeying together, and with

the PAL / Adventure Journey Supervisor. For more information on the Adventure Journey, see page __ and our Adventure Journey Policy.

If the participant is pursuing a Gold Gaisce Award, the Residential Project activity will also need to be agreed by the participant and PAL.

Written parental consent is needed for each participant doing the Award if they are under the age of 18. Consent forms, which can be downloaded from our website, should be completed by the participants' parent or guardian and returned to the PAL. The consent form should be kept as long as the participant is actively pursuing the Award.

Participants' Registration

Participants register on the Gaisce online system, a web application that helps PALs and participants manage their involvement with the Award programme.

Payment for a participant must be made within 30 days of registering online. Participants can pay during registration, or can pay within the 30 day period. If the fees are being collected by the Operating Body and / or the PAL is submitting payment, the PAL can generate an invoice on the online system to pay for all registered participants directly.

Guides to participant registration and management in the online system are available for download from our website, and video tutorials are available on our YouTube channel.

Insurance

Gaisce has in place a public liability insurance policy for registered and paid participants, and trained and activated PALs. It is advisable that all PALs and participants have an appropriate personal accident policy in place.

Gaisce also highly recommends that all Operating Bodies have employer's liability insurance and public liability insurance with limits of indemnity of no less than €13m and €6.5m respectively.

Carrying out activities

Once fully registered, participants can begin to carry out their activity and pursue their chosen goals.

Participants are required to record each session of their activity so that it can be reviewed by the PAL or Gaisce. This requires the participant to fill out the date, duration, and details of the activity, and to have it signed by the activity supervisor.

If an activity is found to be too easy or too challenging, the participant should review this with their PAL and if necessary change their goals to ensure that they are achievable and an adequate challenge.

If an activity is not suitable or is hugely unenjoyable for a participant, they may choose another activity and count the time spent on their initial activity towards the Award. This change should be discussed with the PAL, and it is at the PAL's discretion as to whether this change can take place. Gaisce hopes that participants might be able to discover

lifelong interests through participation in the Award programme, and so it can be more beneficial to change activities than stick with something that is not generating any interest or enjoyment for the participant.

Ideally, participants would continue to carry out one activity for the entire duration of the Award programme in order for the participant to gain the highest level of improvement and achievement in the activity.

Reviewing participants' activities

PALs should arrange to meet their participants regularly to check their progress and find out about any difficulties they might be having in progressing with the Award programme. Without the PAL's continued support it could be easy for a participant to get discouraged and they might give up. This also allows for the participant to raise any issues or concerns that they might have regarding their activities.

Once the participant has completed the minimum time requirement for their activities, a final review should take place to allow the participant to reflect on what they have achieved and learned through the Award programme.

Reviewing and approving the participant for their Award

Once all activities and the Adventure Journey have been completed, the PAL should verify that the participant has been showing regular commitment in their activities over at least the minimum time

requirement, and to assess whether the goals that were initially set have been achieved.

For Gold Gaisce Award participants, this includes the Residential Project and their Award Portfolio.

Participants are approved for completion on the Gaisce online system. A full walkthrough of this process is available as part of the guide to our online system which is available for download from our website, and video tutorials are available on our YouTube channel.

Authorisation of an Award

Participants qualify for a level of the Award when they have completed the four sections (along with the Residential Project and Gold Award Portfolio at Gold level), and have been marked as approved by their PAL. Gaisce carries out random audits to ensure that the quality and standard of the Award is being maintained, and can request to see documentation (such as record sheets) as part of this.

Once Gaisce is satisfied that the requirements for the specified Award level have been met, Gaisce will issue the Award for presentation. Bronze Awards are presented within the Operating Body in which the participant registered for the Award. Silver Awards are presented regionally by Gaisce, and Gold Awards are presented by the President of Ireland.

Community Involvement

Aim: To connect with your community and give time to others, and to be civically, socially, and environmentally conscious and engaged.

Ethos

Community Involvement is all about giving back to the community. Whatever passions young people may have – whether it is care and concern for the environment, a love of animals, a desire to make a difference to the lives of those less fortunate than themselves, or a wish to help the sick or elderly – the Community Involvement section offers the structure to fulfil these.

Community involvement offers a young person the opportunity to engage with society and gain an understanding of the importance of their role within both their immediate and global community. It gives participants the chance to connect with individuals and groups they may have previously overlooked or not been aware of, and to make a real difference to their wider community.

Impact and Benefits

Some of the benefits gained through participation in the Community Involvement section include:

- Learning patience, tolerance, and compassion

- Overcoming ignorance, prejudice, apathy and fear
- Increasing awareness of the needs and problems of others
- Exploring and improving interpersonal skills and self-development skills
- Trusting and being trusted
- Making a real difference to the lives of others
- Taking on a responsible role and commitment within the community
- Realising their ability to change things in a positive way and how this community role is of value and is respected

Requirements

For this section, participants must:

- Undertake a meaningful activity regularly where they are donating their time to that cause for the required length of time.
- Meet the minimum time requirements for the Award level, and undertake their activities substantially in their own time. This means that whilst some activity may take place within school, university or work hours, most of it should occur outside of these scheduled times
- Show regular commitment, progress and improvement in their chosen activity.
- Understand regular commitment means at least one hour per week.

In some activities requiring technical expertise such as first aid, a training course or courses will be a significant part of the overall time spent completing the Community Involvement section. In these cases the people delivering the training will need to be made aware that

participants are doing the Award programme and that this training is being counted towards their Community Involvement requirements.

Some community activities will not require formal training or have any particular legal requirements and participants will learn through practical experience. In these activities it is important for the PAL and activity supervisor to be aware of the need to encourage and facilitate meaningful opportunities for questions and reviewing of the tasks undertaken so that learning takes place. The Community Involvement section is not free labour and should not be treated as such.

Time Requirements

The time requirements for the Community Involvement section are largely identical to those for the Personal Skill and Physical Recreation sections. Bronze level participants and direct entrants at Silver and Gold levels are required to spend extra time on one section, and for this they can choose Community Involvement.

Level	Minimum Time	If extra time in Community Involvement is chosen
Bronze	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	...for 26 weeks
Silver	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	...for 52 weeks (if not a Bronze Award holder)
Gold	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	...for 78 weeks (if not a Silver Award holder)

The minimum time to be spent on the Community Involvement section over the time period is one hour per week.

Examples of Community Involvement

The starting point should be looking directly at the participant's locality or community. Examples of activities that can be considered include:

- Working with people in the community: visiting people in need; voluntary work in hospitals; prisons or detention centres; helping with a local community radio or newspaper.
- Sports & leadership: doing a first aid course and providing first aid support; coaching your local junior team; refereeing at local matches.
- Youth work: acting in a leadership role in a youth club, school or uniformed youth organisation; helping others participate in the Award programme by becoming a PAL (if over 18).
- Charity work: fundraising for a charity; producing a newsletter or website for a charity; or helping with a charity clothing store.

Assessment

A Participant satisfies the requirements of the Community Involvement section if the PAL is satisfied that:

- The participant's commitment was substantially in their own time outside of school, university or work hours.

- Regular commitment has been shown during the period of participation.
- Progress has been made based upon the participant's initial knowledge and ability, and the participant has strived to meet their goals.
- Minimum hours and time requirement have been met and the record sheet completed and signed by the activity supervisor.

Personal Skill

Aim: To unleash hidden talents and broaden personal interests and skills, achieving full potential through learning and development.

Ethos

The aim of the Personal Skill section is to encourage young people to improve on an existing skill or to try something new. Commitment over time to progress in a skill leads to a sense of achievement and well-being.

The Personal Skill section should stimulate the development of new interests or improve existing ones. These interests are typically of a non-physically demanding nature and may be hobbies, vocational or job-related skills, social or individual activities, cultural activities or life skills. Participants should be encouraged to interact with people who are experienced in the activity and so can share their enthusiasm and knowledge.

Participants not only have the opportunity to take part in an activity that truly interests them, but to develop skills that they may have previously thought out of their reach. Activities chosen should be enjoyable and the goals set realistic, so that at the end of the section participants feel a real sense of achievement and the desire for life-long learning.

Impact and Benefits

Through the completion of the Personal Skill section young people can benefit by:

- Developing personal interests, creativity and practical skills
- Working toward developing their full potential
- Experiencing a great sense of achievement
- Improving employability through achieving new skills

Requirements

For this section, participants must:

- Either take up a completely new activity or seek to improve their ability in an activity that they are already engaged in.
- Spend at least one hour per week on the Personal Skill activity.
- Select an activity that can be pursued for a period of time, setting goals and targets.
- Ensure that there is structure to the learning and a method of validating that (noting that there is no requirement to pay for classes).
- Keep balance in the programme by selecting activities that are not too similar to those chosen for the Community Involvement or Physical Recreation sections – in particular, the Personal Skill activity cannot be of a sporting nature.

Time Requirements

The time requirements for the Personal Skill section are largely identical to those for the Community Involvement and Physical Recreation

sections. Bronze level participants and direct entrants at Silver and Gold levels are required to spend extra time on one section, and for this they can choose Personal Skill.

Level	Minimum Time	If extra time in Personal Skill is chosen
Bronze	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	...for 26 weeks
Silver	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	...for 52 weeks (if not a Bronze Award holder)
Gold	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	...for 78 weeks (if not a Silver Award holder)

The minimum time to be spent on the Personal Skill section over the time period is one hour per week.

Examples of Personal Skill

The list of possible activities is almost limitless, and some possible choices include:

- Music: learning to play a musical instrument; singing; management of a music event; DJ-ing.
- Arts & crafts: dressmaking; woodwork; calligraphy; restoration work; design; painting; pottery.
- IT: participating in the Young Scientist of the Year Competition or another recognised competition or event; learning to code at a Coder Dojo; achieving an ECDL.

- Communications & enterprise projects: film and video making; film studies; sign language; Braille; foreign languages; newsletter and magazine production; reading; writing; presentation skills; public speaking and debating; setting up a mini business or commercial venture.

Assessment

A Participant satisfies the requirements of the Personal Skill section if the PAL is satisfied that:

- The participant's commitment was substantially in their own time outside of school, university or work hours.
- Regular commitment has been shown during the period of participation.
- Progress has been made based upon the participant's initial knowledge and ability, and the participant has strived to meet their goals.
- Minimum hours and time requirement have been met and the record sheet completed and signed by the activity supervisor.

Physical Recreation

Aim: To improve physical fitness and wellbeing, and to get active.

Ethos

Involvement in physical recreation should be an enjoyable experience regardless of physical ability, and this section is based on the belief that physical exercise is good for both body and mind and is essential for a person's well-being. By introducing young people to enjoyable physical activity they may develop long-term beneficial habits and may lead to improved physical performance through training and perseverance in their chosen activity.

As in the Personal Skill Section, participants may either seek to improve their ability in an activity that they already do or take up a completely new activity. They can also find themselves developing skills they previously thought out of their reach. Activities chosen should be enjoyable and the goals set realistic, so that at the end of the section participants feel a real sense of achievement.

Participants may choose a physical activity that they do on their own or as part of a team: although the Award programme itself is non-competitive, competitive sports are perfectly acceptable. In the case of a team sport, it is the individual participant's personal effort and commitment that counts.

The requirements apply equally to all young people, regardless of physical ability. Participation, persistence, and improvement are the key outcomes. It is often helpful to link in with a club or follow a programme of a sport's national governing body in order to provide structure to the activity. This is not a requirement, but it can be very helpful for participants and their activity supervisor to come up with a meaningful and measurable target.

Impact and Benefits

The Physical Recreation section provides a framework for:

- Health education and promotion of healthy lifestyle habits
- Improving fitness
- Interacting socially, especially in a team sport, but also through meeting people with interest in a similar individual sport
- Enhancing self-discipline, perseverance and self-motivation
- Experiencing a sense of achievement

Requirements

For this section, participants must:

- Either take up a completely new physical activity or seek to improve their ability in an activity that they are already engaged in.
- Choose an activity regularly that requires physical exertion, for the required minimum length of time.

- Show regular commitment (spending at least one hour per week on the Physical Recreation activity), progress, and improvement in their chosen activity.
- Undertake activities substantially in their own time. This means that while some activity may take place within school, university or work hours, most of it should occur outside of these scheduled times.

Time Requirements

The time requirements for the Physical Recreation section are largely identical to those for the Community Involvement and Personal Skill sections. Bronze level participants and direct entrants at Silver and Gold levels are required to spend extra time on one section, and for this they can choose Physical Recreation.

Level	Minimum Time	If extra time in Physical Recreation is chosen
Bronze	At least 1 hour per week for 13 weeks	...for 26 weeks
Silver	At least 1 hour per week for 26 weeks	...for 52 weeks (if not a Bronze Award holder)
Gold	At least 1 hour per week for 52 weeks	...for 78 weeks (if not a Silver Award holder)

The minimum time to be spent on the Physical Recreation section over the time period is one hour per week.

Examples of Physical Recreation

The list of possible activities is almost unlimited but participants should be careful not to pick activities that are considered, in Award terms, to be a Personal Skill or a Community Involvement activity. Some possible choices include:

- Ball sports: football, rugby, soccer, Gaelic, volleyball, basketball, netball, handball, cricket.
- Athletics & Fitness: running, aerobics, cycling, gymnastics skipping, walking, weight training, dancing.
- Water sports: canoeing, kayaking, swimming, water polo, sailing, surfing, windsurfing, kiteboarding, water skiing, diving, synchronised swimming, rowing, canoe polo.
- Bike sports: cycling, BMX.
- Martial arts: karate, aikido, judo, kickboxing, boxing, tae kwon do, kung fu, fencing, kendo.
- Adventure sports: rock climbing, mountaineering, parachuting, caving and pot holing, hang-gliding.

Assessment

A Participant satisfies the requirements of the Physical Recreation section if the PAL is satisfied that:

- The participant's commitment was substantially in their own time outside of school, university or work hours.
- Regular commitment has been shown during the period of participation.

- Progress has been made based upon the participant's initial knowledge and ability, and the participant has strived to meet their goals.
- Minimum hours and time requirement have been met and the record sheet completed and signed by the activity supervisor.

Adventure Journey

Aim: To inspire young people to develop a spirit of adventure and discovery, by planning, training for and completing an outdoor Adventure Journey as part of a team.

Ethos

The experience opens possibilities for new pathways to be explored and brings together much of the learning that has taken place during the Gaisce Award programme, providing participants with a unique, challenging, and memorable experience.

The key element of the Adventure Journey is the teamwork involved in the planning and execution of the journey against the background of the real challenges posed by an unfamiliar environment. The Adventure Journey can be either an Expedition or an Exploration. An Expedition is a journey with a purpose, and an Exploration is a purpose with a Journey, see examples of these below.

Impact and Benefits

The Adventure Journey is great fun and provides real benefits such as:

- Learning how to plan, prepare, undertake and complete the journey as part of a team.

- Working as part of a team, understanding group dynamics, and the roles within a team
- Recognising the needs and strengths of others
- Developing and enhancing leadership skills
- Improving planning and organisational ability and attention to detail
- Learning to make real decisions and accept real consequences
- Obtaining a sense of achievement and satisfaction by overcoming challenges and obstacles
- Developing self-reliance and independence
- Experiencing and appreciating the outdoor environment and gaining the appropriate knowledge and skills to journey safely in that environment
- Reflecting on personal performance

Requirements

The Adventure Journey Policy sets out the core elements which all adventure journeys are expected to incorporate. We would highly encourage all Adventure Journey helpers to read the full policy, which is available on our website. Some of the requirements include that:

- The journey, with an agreed purpose, should be undertaken ideally in small teams of between four and ten people.
- All the team members should be involved in the planning and preparation. Not all participants on the journey need to be pursuing the Gaisce Award programme, but the team should operate as peers / equals making decisions together.

- The participants must stay in a self-catering hostel, camping, or in another suitable pre-approved form of accommodation. They must cook at least one substantial meal per day.
- The journey can take place on land or water. Participants can travel by their own physical efforts (foot, cycle, canoe, etc), by animal (horse, camel, etc) or by other non-motorised assistance (sail, etc).
- Participants must source and transport all gear and equipment that they will require with them on the journey
- The environment chosen should be challenging but within the capabilities of the team
- The days on the adventure journey must be consecutive and must involve a journey going from point A to B to C etc. Participants must spend the entire specified period of time exclusively on the adventure journey.
- All Adventure Journeys should be supervised and evaluated by the PAL or an Adventure Journey Supervisor
- On completion, participants are required to present a report to their PAL. This report can be written, photographic, verbal, a video diary, or by other imaginative means.

Time Requirements

Level	Days	Nights	Hours of Purposeful Effort	KMs Indication
Bronze	2	1	12	25
Silver	3	2	21	48
Gold	4	3	32	80

Purposeful effort means time spent towards accomplishing the specific purpose of the expedition or exploration and journeying. Time associated with sleeping, cooking and eating is in addition to this time.

Examples of Expeditions

- Walk a number of stages of the Wicklow Way following the guide written by J. B. Malone the founder of the Wicklow Way.
- Plan a hike on Achill Island following the footsteps of one of the many artists who sought inspiration for their work on the island.
- Hike on the Burren, considering the impact of tourism on the flora, fauna of the Burren.
- Hike on the Slieve Bloom Mountains, keeping a detailed account of how as the group followed the Leave No Trace principals. Create a guide for other adventure journey groups in the future.
- Hike in the Comeragh Mountains using photography to record the journey. Some of the photographs could be later used in your school/ group calendar or newsletter.

- Identify a Way Marked Way trail and research how many megalithic tombs or markings are along the chosen route, using photography or sketches to record them.

Examples of Explorations

- Exploring the natural world: glaciation, erosion, geology, coastal studies, river valleys, plant studies, bird studies, animal studies, insect studies etc.
- Exploring historic land use: prehistoric man, historical periods
- Investigating the evolution or extinction of a language
- Exploring human impact: visitor pressure in national parks, litter studies, pollution monitoring, surveys of numbers of walkers in remote areas etc.
- Personal artistic expression or aesthetic appreciation
- Carrying out health surveys or health education in remote areas
- Investigating group dynamics in challenging conditions
- Preparing a wheelchair users guide to Glendalough National Park including the hostel and local hotels.

Assessment

Participant satisfies the requirements of the Adventure Journey Section if the PAL / Adventure Journey Supervisor is satisfied that:

- The participant's commitment was substantially in their own time outside of school, university or work hours.

- The participant has met the preparation and training requirements, and has completed their journey meeting the requirements set out in the Adventure Journey Policy.
- Progress has been made based upon the participant's initial knowledge and ability, and the participant has strived to meet their goals and achieved the Adventure Journey purpose.
- Minimum hours, distance travelled, and time requirements have been met; the journey report(s) submitted to the PAL; and the Record Card completed and signed by the Adventure Journey Supervisor.

Residential Project

Aim: The Residential Project offers participants unique experiences that truly broaden horizons and challenges their outlook.

Ethos

At the heart of the Residential Project is the undertaking of a purposeful experience with people who are not the Participant's usual companions, working towards a common goal. Adding to this, the young person is also outside of their usual place of residence, often in an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar people.

Impact and Benefits

The Residential Project rewards Gold Award participants with a sense of personal achievement, enhanced social connection with new people, and an opportunity to have a life changing experience through:

- Learning how to plan, prepare, undertake and complete the journey as part of a team.
- Broadening their experience through their involvement with others
- Experiencing an unfamiliar environment
- Experiencing a sense of shared purpose with people who are not their usual companions
- Working towards a common goal
- Developing the attributes of determination and perseverance

Requirements

For this section, participants must:

- Be undertaking the Gold Award and choose the experience themselves
- Undertake shared purposeful activity which provides opportunities for broadening their interests and experience.
- Reside away from their usual place of residence for a total period of no less than five days and four nights.
- Be in the company of others who are, in the majority, not their usual companions.
- Undergo briefing and/or training (if required) prior to or during the residential period so that they are able to contribute fully to the activity and derive full benefit from the experience.
- Not gain materially from the experience, although assistance may be sought for transport, accommodation and meals.

Time Requirements

Level	Days	Nights
Gold	5	4

In exceptional circumstances, the commitment may be spread over two separate weekends in the same calendar year.

Examples of Residential Projects

The list of possible activities is almost limitless, and some possible choices include:

- Residential Training Courses - Language course such as Gaelteacht, Camps for children such as Barretstown Summer Project or Sunshine House, Parish Pilgrimages such as visits to Lourdes and so forth.
- Summer School - Any skills based course that is residential
- Environment and Conservation - examples such as Unesco, Bird Watch Ireland, environmental clean-up projects and restoration projects.

Assessment

A written evaluation from a member of the residential project management should be completed and included within the Gold Award Portfolio.

Resources

Social Media

Gaisce is always contactable through social media channels and by email. Our Facebook and Twitter accounts are constantly monitored, so feel free to send a query in through those. Alternatively you can contact our office by email at mail@gaisce.ie or by phone on 01 617 1999.

Online and Print Resources

A number of resources are available from Gaisce. The PAL Toolkit on our website contains digital versions of all of our available resources for you to print or view as you need them.

Alternatively you can order print versions of many of these from Gaisce, for a small fee – please contact us or check our online store to see details and pricing.

Training Workshops

If you ever feel that you need a refresher in being a PAL, please come to one of our PAL Training Workshops. Upcoming workshop dates are available on our website, and are added to all the time.

As well as receiving a full day of training, when attending training you will receive a PAL Pack with a number of resources included.

Code of Conduct

Gaisce – the President’s Award is committed to providing a consistent and quality Award programme throughout Ireland. In order to achieve this we ask that all our staff, PALs, and volunteers operate within our code of conduct and adhere to the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Safety Statement
- Adventure Journey Policy & Risk Assessments
- Audit Policy
- Complaints procedures
- Data Protection
- Equality Policy

These policies are based on both legal requirements and best practice. Many organisations will also be bound by existing policies and procedures and PALs employed in these organisations should also abide by these policies.

Gaisce – the President’s Award commits to the following:

- To provide adequate information and training so that PALs and volunteers may meet the expectations as described in the role description.
- To explain what is required and to support and provide encouragement for PALs and volunteers to achieve the desired results.

- To assign a Development Officer who will provide PALs with regular support and act as a 'go-to' person for them.
- To treat our PALs and volunteers with respect and courtesy at all times.
- To be receptive to any comments and feedback.
- To value and recognise our PALs and volunteers as a significant resource in achieving the goals of our organisation.

The President's Award Leaders and volunteers commit to the following:

- To fulfil the role as outlined in the role description.
- To perform the role to the best of their ability.
- To follow the organisation's policies and procedures.
- To meet time and task commitments and to provide sufficient notice when not available.
- To act in a way that is in line with the aims and objectives of the Award programme and that enhances the work of Gaisce.

The following is a summary of the policies that comprise Gaisce's Code of Conduct. The full text of all of these policies are available from Gaisce's website. We would highly encourage all involved with the Award programme to familiarise themselves with these policies.

Child Protection Policy

Gaisce is committed to safeguarding the well-being of participants in the Award programme. In all matters concerning child protection, the welfare and protection of a young person is paramount.

A complete copy of Gaisce's Child Protection Policy is available for download from our website.

Safety Policy

Gaisce - The President's Award recognises its responsibilities under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the General Application Regulations 2007 and any relevant Codes of Practice and Guidelines as may exist. The safety and welfare of Award participants is of the utmost importance.

A complete copy of Gaisce's Safety Policy is available for download from our website.

Adventure Journey Policy & Risk Assessments

All sections of the Award should be assessed for safety risks. Typically this will be during the conversation between PAL and participant when selecting the activities to be completed during the challenge. For each activity, the PAL should ensure that the participant has parental consent and knowledge of the activity being undertaken. Parental Consent is needed for each participant if they are under the age of 18. Consent forms can be downloaded from our website and should be completed, signed, and returned to the PAL.

Gaisce requires that all Adventure Journeys take place in an environment that is as safe as possible for participants, PALs and Supervisors, and other volunteers. It is recognised that owing to the

nature of the Adventure Journey, it is extremely difficult to eliminate all risks. Safety is the responsibility of PALs, Adventure Journey Supervisors, and participants. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring any risk that cannot be eliminated is managed adequately.

A copy of Gaisce's Adventure Journey Policy is available for download from our website.

Audit Policy

To maintain the standard of the Award, Gaisce periodically and randomly selects Operating Bodies for assessment.

More detail will be posted on our website.

Equality Statement

Gaisce respects and values the diversity of its participants, PALs, volunteers, and of society in general. It is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that does not discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, race or ethnic origin, and membership of the Traveller Community.

Gaisce - The President's Award is committed to treating all members in an equitable and fair manner. Participants and PALs with additional support needs should be involved in Gaisce activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside others.

Complaints Process

We understand that there will be times when things go wrong, or when someone wants to voice their concerns about our programme or activities, including the services we provide and/or the behaviour of a member of our staff. A complaint is the first step in helping us to put matters right and gives us an opportunity to learn and improve.

A complete copy of Gaisce's Complaints Policy is available for download from our website.

Data Protection Policy

During the course of your involvement you may have access to confidential information regarding Gaisce participants and other volunteers. This information must not be disclosed to third parties during or after involvement with the organisation.

A complete copy of Gaisce's Data Protection Policy is available for download from our website.

Retaining personal records

Gaisce retains information on all service users, PALs, volunteers, and staff. The information retained relating to PALs and volunteers is: your application form; information relating to your application; references; Garda clearance; record of training you have undertaken including

induction training; and any other information relevant to your involvement with Gaisce.

You are entitled to view any information retained and to ask for amendments to be made where it is inaccurate. All information retained by Gaisce is done in accordance with data protection legislation. It is important that you notify us of any changes in personal address or contact details.

Glossary

Adventure Journey: the Adventure Journey is a section of the President's Award programme. It is an activity that involves an accepted element of risk, challenge, or adventure and requires specialist skills for its safe management.

Activity supervisor: a suitably skilled, experienced and/or qualified adult who can assist a challenge being undertaken for a section of a Participant's Award and completes a report in the Participant's Record Card to verify that they have completed the agreed challenge.

Adventure Journey Supervisor: a suitably qualified and experienced adult volunteer who is responsible for a group's safety throughout their Adventure Journey, for supervising, for assessing the ability of an individual or team to carry out their journey and for signing off on the actual journey once it has been completed. The role of the Adventure Journey Supervisor can be carried out by a PAL who has the necessary safety and / or technical qualifications to do so. This is reviewed in more detail in the Adventure Journey section of this handbook. This aspect of the programme is currently being rolled out – please look out for more information from Gaisce in the near future.

Awardee: a person who has gained an Award at any level.

Award Level: refers to the three levels of the Award: Bronze, Silver and Gold.

Bronze: The Bronze Award level is often referred to as Bronze.

Code of Conduct: This comprises a set of policies and procedures which are based on both legal requirements and best practice, and constitute Gaisce's Code of Conduct for all staff, PALs, volunteers, and participants.

Community Involvement: a section of the Award programme which is completed at all levels.

Direct Entrant: a participant who starts the Gold or Silver Award without having first completed a Silver or Bronze Award respectively.

Gold: The President's Award at Gold level.

Merit System: Award holders moving to the next level of the Award can avail of the Merit System.

Minimum Time Requirements: The minimum length of time taken to achieve an Award. This will vary based on Award level and whether the participant is a direct entrant or not.

Mode of Travel: method of transport used by participants in their Adventure Journey. Examples include walking,, canoeing and cycling. For further details refer to the Adventure Journey Policy.

Online System: used to take participant registrations, PAL approvals, payments, and completions.

Operating Body: an organisation that delivers the Gaisce Award programme, and has an active PAL who oversees the participants who are taking part through the Operating Body.

President's Award Leader (PAL): the PAL is an adult who has been vetted and trained by Gaisce, and who is the contact and mentor for a participant or group of participants. The PAL is responsible for engaging young people in their chosen Award challenges: inspiring, guiding and assisting them from start through to completion. The PAL signs off on the entirety of a participant's Award at completion stage but can also sign off on individual sections of the Award.

Participant: a young person who is registered to participate in the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

Personal Skill: a section of the Award programme which is completed at all levels.

Physical Recreation: a section of the Award programme which is completed at all levels.

Purposeful Effort: time spent towards accomplishing the specific purpose of the expedition or exploration and journeying. Time associated with sleeping, cooking, and eating is in addition to this time.

Record Sheet: used to record a participant's time spent completing the Award. Also acts as a tool for PALs to manage the approval process of an Award and of each Section

Regular Effort: consistent effort by participants logged towards a section of their Award. Regular effort is defined as a minimum of one hour's activity per week.

Residential Project: Residential Project is a section of the Award programme that is completed at Gold level only.

Section: the Award programme contains four sections: Personal Skill, Physical Recreation, Community Involvement, and the Adventure Journey. At Gold level, the Residential Project and a Project Portfolio are also mandatory.

Silver: The President's Award at Silver level.

Volunteer: an activity supervisor, or Adventure Journey Supervisor. All volunteers who assist Gaisce must be over the age of 18.

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