



## Gaisce Guide for Parents, Guardians and Carers

**YOUR WAY: YOUR AWARD**

## What is Gaisce?

Gaisce – The President’s Award is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 14-25. It is the most prestigious youth award in Ireland and is a challenge to young people from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins to dream big and realise their potential.

## How Gaisce Works

Gaisce provides a structured approach to measuring and recognising a young person’s personal development. Gaisce is delivered in a broad range of organisations, including: schools; third level institutions; youthreach; training centres; youth services; uniformed organisations; youth justice; migrant groups and many more.

The Structure of the Gaisce Award is designed with young people at its heart, supported by dedicated President’s Award Leaders or PALs.

### STRUCTURE OF THE GAISCE AWARD



## About the Programme

There are three Gaisce Award levels - Bronze, Silver and Gold.

In accordance with the progression of each Gaisce Award level (see grid below), participants need to complete activities for at least one hour a week in each of three challenge areas which include Personal Skill, Community Involvement and Physical Recreation. 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 Gaisce Award cannot be achieved in a shorter time-frame by working more intensely or compressing hours; the core objective is to develop a sense of commitment to an activity over time - finding their stickability!

Participants must also undertake an Adventure Journey with their peers. Gold participants are also required to complete an additional Residential Project and Portfolio.

All participant activities must be confirmed as complete in their record sheet by an independent party e.g. PAL, football coach, volunteer or community leader, music teacher etc.

### How Gaisce - The President's Award Programme Works

Gaisce Awards	 Personal Skill	 Community Involvement	 Physical Recreation	+	 Adventure Journey	 Residential Project	 Portfolio	 AWARD	
<b>Bronze Award</b> Participants aged 15+ Registration €15	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	Additional 13 weeks of activities in any one of the Challenge Areas	2 days, 1 night (Expedition or Exploration)	X	X		
▶ 13 WEEKS + 13 WEEKS + 2 DAYS, 1 NIGHT = BRONZE AWARD									
<b>Silver Award</b> Participants aged 16+ Registration €20	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	Non-Bronze Awardees undertake an additional 26 weeks in any one of the Challenge Areas	3 days, 2 nights (Expedition or Exploration)	X	X		
▶ 26 WEEKS + 26 WEEKS + 3 DAYS, 2 NIGHTS = SILVER AWARD									
<b>Gold Award</b> Participants aged 17+ Registration €25	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	1 hour per week	Non-Silver Awardees undertake an additional 26 weeks in any one of the Challenge Areas	4 days, 3 nights (Expedition or Exploration)	4 nights, 5 days Residential Project	Portfolio		
▶ 52 WEEKS + 26 WEEKS + 4 DAYS, 3 NIGHTS + 4 NIGHTS, 5 DAYS + PORTFOLIO = GOLD AWARD									

Note: • If you already have a Bronze Award, there is no need to do an additional 26 weeks at Silver. • If you already have a Silver Award, there is no need to do an additional 26 weeks at Gold.

PAL's (President's Award Leader's) are the frontline communicators with your child on their Gaisce journey. They uphold the values and integrity of the Gaisce Award programme. PALs are adults (18+) trained and vetted by Gaisce to deliver the programme to young people they work or volunteer with. The support, guidance and encouragement of each dedicated PAL is vital to ensuring young people have the opportunity to achieve a Gaisce Award. The PAL has the responsibility to approve participant activities to ensure young people have a high quality Gaisce experience that meets the Gaisce Award standards. The PAL pre-approves activities, signs off on record sheets and approves the award completion. Parents/Guardians/Carers should speak directly with the PAL around any questions relating to their child's Gaisce Award.

## Benefits to Young People

In 2015 Gaisce published independent research towards a doctoral thesis by Dr. Niamh Clarke McMahon on the impact of participation in Gaisce for young people. The research proved that the Gaisce programme, through its structure, operation and outcomes, was found to have successfully meet the inclusion criteria to be classified as a Positive Youth Development programme. The research highlights the very positive impact participation in Gaisce has on young people with respect to a variety of competencies and psychological attributes summarised as follows:

- Enhanced positive relationships - participation in the Gaisce Award 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 Gaisce Award 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 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. 4
- Personal growth - participation in the Gaisce Award 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 Gaisce Award framework promotes the ethos that chosen activities are balanced in such a way as to encourage the complete development of the young person. In many cases young people say that they would never have considered certain activities if it had not been for undertaking their Gaisce Award, and more often than not, they continue to engage with activities they initially discovered whilst they were participating in the Gaisce Award. The Gaisce experience provides young people with vital life skills (soft skills) that can be of huge benefit to them as they progress to jobs and education, develop relationships and networks, prioritise personal health and wellbeing, as well as engaging with their peers, communities and society as active citizens.

## Benefits to Parent & Guardians

Gaisce was specifically designed to help young people through the transition from child to adult, a time when research shows they can tend to disengage from positive activities such as sport.

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 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.

## How to support a Young Person to get involved in Gaisce

Gaisce is something that a young person chooses to do for themselves, it is important that they volunteer to undertake the programme as they will be more likely to complete a Gaisce Award.

Encourage young people to choose something they are interested in and passionate about. They can even choose to create a new goal for an activity they are already involved in.

If any queries about the programme arise, encourage the young person to get in contact with their President's Award Leader (PAL) directly, who is trained and approved to deliver the Gaisce programme and best placed to advise on activities. Regular check-ins with PALs will ensure the participant is on the right path to achieving their Gaisce Award.

## Safeguarding and Welfare and Insurance

The safety and welfare of participants is the primary responsibility of PALs and their organisation, the Gaisce Award Partner (GAP). If PALs have participants under the age of 18 they must ensure they are familiar with their own organisations Safeguarding policies and procedures, which should be followed in the event of an incident or disclosure. As an additional support, Gaisce also has a Safeguarding Guidance document for PALs available on [www.gaisce.ie](http://www.gaisce.ie). All PALs must complete the Children First E-Learning programme.

Gaisce Award Partners should have employer's liability insurance and public liability insurance with limits of indemnity of no less than €13m and €6.5m respectively. Gaisce PALs and participants should have an appropriate personal accident policy in place.

Gaisce has a public liability policy in place, as a contingency measure, for all PALs and Gaisce Award participants who are registered and whose registration fees have been paid at the time of carrying out activities.

Travel Insurance for trips outside of Ireland (including NI) is the responsibility of the Gaisce Award Partner and/or participant/parent/guardian, as appropriate. The PAL should ensure participants are aware of this for all award levels.

Given the breadth of Gaisce Award activities, your child may choose to undertake activities that are not directly managed or organised by their GAP. If this is the case, you, as their parent/guardian/carer, are responsible for ensuring that the activity is properly managed and insured, and that the adults are suitably qualified and checked. This activity must be approved by the PAL, in consultation with your child, to ensure it meets the Gaisce Award standards.

## Parental Consent

Written parental consent is required for each participant undertaking the Gaisce Award if they are under the age of 18. Template consent forms are available on the 'PAL Resources' page of [www.gaisce.ie](http://www.gaisce.ie) and should be completed by the participants' parent or guardian and returned to the PAL/Gaisce Award Partner for safekeeping. The consent form should be kept for as long as the participant is actively pursuing the Award.

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(CRO 251020) and with a CHY and CRA number (8482 and 20020903 respectively).

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Gaisce - The President's Award

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