

## Oxfordshire Outdoors

### One Service: defining your course aims / purpose

#### Aims or Purpose?

Is 'aim' the correct word to use? Might it be better if we changed this to 'purpose', so that you identify the purpose of the residential and unpick the detail around that?

So, instead of asking for your course aims, if we ask you to state your course purpose and what specifically you and your students want to achieve from it, would it be easier to define with more accuracy?

What we do know is that visit leaders who define aims and involve their groups in the setting of them, definitely get more out of their courses. It correlates with achievement levels and overall satisfaction.

The importance lies with creating a framework for the course, a set of 'touchstones' to achieve and measure against, which at individual and group level provides that extra satisfaction of knowing they have been accomplished.

We are sometimes asked to deliver the same course as last year, since the centre; its activities and venues probably won't have changed much, if at all. Following this line could mean missing the opportunity to really maximise the opportunities and benefits of your course. Is that really what you want from your course? Are you missing the point?

#### What to include?

As a prompt, the suggestions below might be useful to help frame specific elements.

The list is yours to decide, but as a starter how about something around:

- The residential context - taking responsibility eg for a bedroom; the dining room
- The social context - defining the 'rules' for how social cohesion is to be achieved eg empathy; support; sharing success
- The 'can do' context - character and resilience eg facing challenges
- The personal context - participants managing themselves at an individual and group level
- The behaviour context – defining acceptable social standards eg at individual and group level
- The personal context - set by each participant eg defining what s/he wants to really achieve during the course
- The 'classroom' context – taking the learning away to create a significant impact on your return to base



As your school will have its own clearly defined aims, so your course should mirror, support and enhance your school and classroom ethos. That way you can tie it all together and maximise the benefits. It might also help you in 'selling' the course to colleagues and parents too.

## Shaping

As your group will change year on year, so the 'same as ...' request isn't tight enough.

Your students are different personalities who will have their own ideas and perceptions of what they want to get out of the course, so it's important to listen to their ideas too.

As the visit leader you should be asking the group about their views, what they are excited about; what their concerns are; what they want to achieve and weave these into your course planning.

And remember, your staff team might change too, which might also have a more significant impact.

In shaping your thinking, have you thought about including staff CPD? It's a golden opportunity to develop different competencies that are not directly classroom driven, for example outdoor skills or visit organisation related. These could have a significant impact on your return.



## Working with you

At an Oxfordshire Outdoors centre we look at your planning and develop the day around these, identifying and allowing for individual differentiation and progression.

By providing your thinking in advance, the centre will discuss and agree your programme content with you, so that we all have the same level of expectation

Oxfordshire Outdoors Tutors are very skilled at weaving the key developmental elements into an activity session, at both personal and group levels. It's one of the reasons why we plan for a full day, rather than a mix of shorter sessions with less participant involvement.

In defining the purpose of your course, it's important to also ensure we deliver it for you. We will monitor progress through daily meetings between Centre tutors, yourself and your team as well as working directly with your groups. By doing this we can steer the course to meet your needs and, of course, it provides you with a realistic measure of progression and development.



We look forward to working with you; your colleagues and your group to create a high quality and ultimately successful course.

If you need any help or advice, contact the Course Director at the Centre you are going to.