

EEC Master Document

Intro

The Western Kentucky University outdoor program offers day, multi-day, and multi-week wilderness trips that teach outdoor skills and leadership. The health and well-being of our participants and staff and the effective education of our participants are priorities. The wilderness environments Western Kentucky University outdoor program trips live in and travel through are remote, dynamic, and physically and emotionally challenging. Our programs also require participants to be fully committed to and capable of working hard, taking responsibility for themselves, and working effectively in the group to achieve the goals of the trip.

As an institution, we value diversity – including persons with diverse abilities – in its programs. While we do not specialize in integrating persons with disabilities into activities we program, we encourage people of all abilities to consider participating in Western Kentucky University outdoor program activities. Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) is a list of the physical and cognitive requirements of activities. A qualified person is one who can meet the Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) for participation in the program activity. Please note that EEC, if not met, will disqualify a person from participating in a trip with the Western Kentucky University outdoor program. The Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC is intended to be a resource for anyone considering participating in our activities and is not intended to be exclusionary. The criteria exist for your own safety and that of all trip participants. None of the criteria are meant to discriminate on the basis of any physical or mental disability and are applied uniformly to all potential trip participants, irrespective of the presence or absence of any disability. The Western Kentucky University outdoor program is committed to making reasonable modifications to any trip for any persons with a disability, so long as they do not fundamentally alter the nature of the trip. All programs operate under the framework of challenge by choice, meaning if you register for a trip and decide to not partake in certain elements it may be feasible to spectate. Please inquire if you wish to attend a trip in a more passive role.

Universal EEC:

Each participant must be able to:

- Stay alert and focus attention during instruction.
- Perform self-care including maintaining nutrition and hydration, personal hygiene, and managing existing medical conditions independently or with the assistance of a companion, excluding the outdoor recreation staff.
- Follow verbal and/or visual presentation independently or with the assistance of a companion or adaptive equipment.
- Abide by and practice Leave No Trace principles.
- Maintain a positive attitude, even when challenged physically, mentally, and/or emotionally.

Risk and Safety

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently, or with the assistance of a companion, understand and follow directions and instructions given by others to avoid hazards and /or manage risks.
- Wear all required safety gear according to manufacturer standards as necessary including helmets, PFDs, etc.
- Be able to independently identify and recognize environmental hazards. These hazards may include, but are not limited to, falling objects/rocks, loose rock and unstable surfaces, rugged steep and uneven terrain, cliff edges, crevasses, moving water (fast or slow) such as rivers, creeks, surf, or tides; and potentially hazardous animals and insects.
- Recognize and understand the hazards and risks posed by other course members, which include, but are not limited to, fatigue, state of mind, and actions that may influence judgment and decision-making.
- Recall and understand the hazards and risks previously explained by instructors.
- Be able to effectively alert and warn others of potential or impending dangers such as falling rocks, aggressive animals, or other environmental hazards.
- Be able to effectively signal or notify course instructors or other course members of personal distress, injury, or need for assistance. Participant must be able to effectively provide these signals and notifications up to a distance of 50 feet and in conditions with limited visibility such as in darkness or inclement weather or with loud background noise, such as high winds or while near roaring rivers.
- Ability to understand instruction and directions, particularly when it comes to risk management (safety), is necessary. The predominant language used on trips is English. *Fluency is not required*
- Must be able to monitor and evaluate changes in personal health conditions including the onset of dehydration, hyponatremia, heat illness or stroke or hypothermia and must be able to communicate any changes in a personal health condition or safety concerns to the guide(s).
- Act reliably and responsibly around hazards and risks, even when not directly supervised.

Leadership and expedition behavior

Each participant must...

- Work effectively as a member of a team despite potentially stressful and difficult conditions.
- Expedition living is in close quarters with limited personal time. There can be a lack of, or variable, daily routines which likely change day-to-day. Expedition living may require problem-solving on an interpersonal or group level as well as a willingness to accept differences.

- Contribute to a safe learning environment – inappropriate verbal or physical behavior is not tolerated for any reason.
- Be able to willingly and equally share responsibility with tent mates in daily tent group chores. Each student may not do an equal share each day, but over a period of several days, each student should do a proportionate share. All students are learning the skills and being challenged by the conditions and activities; there can be no expectation that any other student will be able to continually assume a greater share of the work or that an instructor can continually focus a greater share of their energy and time on one student.
- Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on an individual and group level.
- Have the cognitive ability to learn necessary skills given normal time limitations of the Western Kentucky University outdoor program course.

Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC:

(Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC is relevant to all off-site Western Kentucky University outdoor programs. If you are attending an off-site program, read these in addition to the Universal EEC above.)

Each participant must be able to:

- Access and exit venue locations independently or with the assistance of a companion. Ease of access and exit might be impacted by weather changes.
- Adapt to venue terrain changes brought on by inclement weather and changing light conditions. This may include rain, snow, ice, cold, tree cover, etc.
- Meet the physical demands of the course within the time limits set by the course.
- Withstand environmental factors associated with the course (i.e., temperatures below freezing during winter activities, temperatures above 80°F or hotter during summer activities, or variable water temperatures during paddling activities). Conditions of this environment may vary depending on course location and season and may include, but are not limited to, rain, snow or hail, uninterrupted sun and/or wind, or the absence thereof.
- Able to wear/use any necessary provided program equipment so that it is properly fitting and in line with manufacturer standards.
- Breathe independently, without any assistance from medical devices and/or trained professionals.

In order to use university transportation:

- The participant must be able to enter and exit the 12 passenger van independently or with the assistance of a companion.

Companion Caregiver EEC

Note: The Western Kentucky University outdoor program will permit the attendance of a participant's companion caregiver at no additional cost to the participant. However, the companion caregiver will be responsible for purchasing their own consumable resources (e.g. food) and individual access fees (e.g lift tickets) required during the trip. For convenience, the Western Kentucky University outdoor program may provide these resources for the companion caregiver at cost, upon request. Companion caregivers must have the ability to complete the following requirements:

- Meet all of the Universal and Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC, and any activity-specific EEC.
- Be willing and able to assist in the physical and cognitive needs of the participant for whom you are providing care. Where applicable, this would include, but is not limited to, lifting, pushing, and pulling the weight of your participant for the distance and terrain involved in the specifics of each particular program; and
- Offer one-on-one support for your participant as needed.

Activity Specific EECs (Activity Specific EECs are relevant to each activity. Read the relevant sections in addition to the Universal EEC and Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC.)

Backpacking Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Meet Camping and Hiking EEC, and those listed here.
- Travel over varied wilderness terrain while carrying a backpack weighing up to or exceeding 40lbs, or 40%-45% of body weight.

Cycling Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Get on and off of the bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) independently or with the assistance of a companion.
- Travel and navigate independently on a bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) over a variety of uneven, steep, and challenging wilderness terrain, with travel distances ranging from 1 -10 miles per day, depending upon the program. This includes the ability to sit on, steer, stop and negotiate the bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) with the ability to slow down or stop and keep an appropriate distance between yourself and other riders or trail users.

Camping Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Travel about the campsite in order to participate in instructional sessions, attend to toileting needs in the wilderness, and contribute to individual and group-related tasks as necessary.
- Sleep in tents, on padded ground surfaces according to activity-specific environments. Adaptive equipment approved by Western Kentucky University outdoor program staff is allowed.
- Be able to perform, after being instructed, the above activities independently in cooperation with course mates without direct supervision.
- Live in a physically demanding, remote backcountry environment for the uninterrupted period of the course length, which can range from one night to several weeks. The remoteness is such that it may require a minimum 1-day travel, but perhaps in excess of 1 week's travel, to reach the nearest road head and advanced medical care.

Cavern Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Properly meet universal and Western Kentucky University outdoor program EEC requirements.

Caving (Horizontal) Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Properly wear all equipment required including, but not limited to: caving helmet, headlamp, backpack, kneepads, gloves, etc.
- When approaching the cave, negotiate through difficult off-trail terrain.
- Tolerate dark and confined spaces for up to 5 hours.
- Independently negotiate through confined spaces of wet, dark, and slippery terrain that is consistently at about 50°F.
- Be able to negotiate caves spaces by kneeling, scrambling, crawling, bending, army crawling, bracing, as well as lowering, pushing, lifting one's body weight over and under boulders.
- Independently communicate by whistle or verbally over a distance up to 50 feet.

Caving (Vertical) Class and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Meet all EEC criteria for horizontal caving.
- Must be comfortable working at a height in excess of 40 feet.
- When lowering and ascending on ropes must be able to protect themselves by bracing against rock structures in various conditions.

- Wear all required protective equipment, including a caving harness (seat, chest, or full body) and climbing helmet.
- Independently, or with the assistance of a companion, communicate necessary climbing signals. These signals may include spoken signals, hand signals, or a rope tug.

Challenge Course Programs (Ground-Based Initiatives)

Each participant must be able to:

- Follow safety instructions in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable setting; working independently or with others to negotiate problem-solving initiatives.

Challenge Course Programs (Low Ropes)

Each participant must be able to:

- Participants should be comfortable with participating in activities at heights from 1 foot to 10 feet.
- Engage in a variety of different tasks or physical activities that may include walking, running, jumping, move up and down steps, and moving on uneven terrain.
- Follow safety instructions in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable setting; working independently or with others to negotiate problem-solving initiatives.
- Balance and climb over stationary structures.

Challenge Course Programs (High Ropes)

Each participant must be able to:

- Participants should be comfortable with participating in activities at heights from 10 feet to 50 feet.
- Participants must meet the following weight requirements for zipline, autobelay, and quick jump events — maximum weight: 300lbs.
- Follow safety instructions in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable setting; working independently or with others to negotiate problem-solving initiatives.
- Balance and climb over stationary and moving structures.

Flatwater Paddling (Sea Kayak, Kayak, Canoe) Classes and Trips - Easy Flatwater Day Trip

- Independently maintain sealed airway passages (i.e. mouth and nose) while underwater in order to prevent water from entering the airways.
- Independently hold head upright without neck/head support.
- Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket.
- Get in/out or on/off of a paddlecraft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance.
- Independently get out and from under a capsized paddlecraft.
- Reenter or remount the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance.
- Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities, and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation.

Flatwater Paddling (Sea Kayak, Kayak, Canoe) Classes and Trips - Intermediate + Flatwater Trip

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently maintain sealed airway passages (i.e. mouth and nose) while underwater in order to prevent water from entering the airways.
- Ability to remain balanced while seated inside the vessel.
- Wear a Type III Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (maximum chest size of 56 inches). Wearing leg straps may be required to ensure proper fit.
- Ability to independently or with assistance board and disembark a boat four to ten times each day. This requires stepping into the boat, sitting down on the low seat, and then maneuvering your legs into a comfortable position.
- Ability to independently, or with the assistance of a companion, navigate shoreline terrain, including safely maneuvering around and across boulders, rocks, and slippery and uneven surfaces, under low branches, and around vegetation. This includes the ability to maintain your balance near precipitous ledges or cliffs.
- For swift water, the ability to independently swim 100 yards in flat water while wearing a PFD. This includes being an active participant in your own rescue, including having the ability to (a) keep your airway passages sealed while underwater, and regain control of your breathing when being submitted to repeated submersion under waves or currents; (b) orient yourself to new “in-water” surroundings; (c) reposition yourself in the water to different swimming positions; (d) swim aggressively to a boat or to shore; (e) receive a rescue rope, paddle, or human assistance, and possibly let go of the same; (f) get out from under an overturned boat.
- Ability to carry personal dry bags and other personal gear (as heavy as 20-30 lbs) uphill from the boats to your camping location and back the next morning, independently, or with the assistance. (This only applies on multi-day trips).

Hiking/Orienteering Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Travel over and negotiate varied terrain for the duration of class/trip while carrying all personal equipment (i.e., pack, gear, shelter), independently or with the assistance of a companion caregiver.
- Carry a pack weight of 10-25lbs, including at least 2 liters of water, for at least two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.
- Must be able to manage all mobility during extended periods of exertion of 8+ hours per day, either independently or with the assistance of a companion or an approved assistive device.

Horseback Riding Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Participants/ Riders overall weight along with their height to weight ratio directly affects their ability to safely ride a horse. Rider must meet the weight/height requirements of the outfitter.
- Be able to sit upright for an extended period of time with legs stretched out below you.
- Be able to mount and dismount a horse independently or with aid such as a mounting block.
- Be able to rapidly dismount when directed to on short notice in any terrain in situations where a horse might be in distress and rapid dismount is necessary for the safety of the rider and horse. Assistance to remount may not be possible in such situations.
- Be able to balance independently in the saddle while traveling over rugged steep mountainous terrain and negotiating obstacles such as rocks, deadfalls, mud, and moving water.
- Control the horse by giving it signals to stop, move, turn left or right, and calm down. This is typically accomplished through leg, hand, and/or voice signals.
- Be able to lift minimally up to 35lbs in order to pack a horse.
- Be able to walk one to two miles on the trail when or if the horse is injured, ill, or unable to carry a rider.
- Be able to move self over uneven mountain or desert terrain at camp in order to attend to and care for the horses.
- Be able to perform an emergency one-rein stop by reaching down to the horse's neck, grabbing rein tightly on one side, and pulling it hard to your toe while maintaining balance on the horse.

Mountain Biking/Road Biking Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Get on and off of the bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) independently or with the assistance of a companion.

- Travel and navigate independently on a bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) over a variety of uneven, steep, and challenging wilderness terrain, with travel distances ranging from 1-10 miles per day, depending upon the program. This includes the ability to sit on, steer, stop and negotiate the bicycle (or other adaptive equipment) with the ability to slow down or stop and keep an appropriate distance between yourself and other riders or trail users.

Paddleboard Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently maintain sealed airway passages (i.e. mouth and nose) while underwater in order to prevent water from entering the airways.
- Independently hold head upright without the use or assistance of a neck and/or head support.
- Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket.
- Ability to independently or with assistance board and disembark a paddlecraft four to ten times each day. This requires stepping or climbing onto the paddlecraft from shallow or deep water and stabilizing the paddlecraft.

Rock Climbing/Rappelling Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently maintain one's braced position on a climbing wall when lowering.
- Grip a rope firmly and grasp the rock face.
- Must be able to negotiate uneven outdoor terrain approaching the climbing site.

Whitewater Paddle Sports (Canoe/Kayak/Raft) Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Wear all required safety gear, such as approved personal flotation device, spray skirt, Neoprene gloves, wet suit, approved helmet, etc.
- Control a paddle and pull it through the water in order to steer and propel the boat forward. Some options may exist for seated pedal boats.
- Independently maintain sealed airway passages (i.e. mouth and nose) while underwater in order to prevent water from entering the airways.
- Independently hold head upright without the use or assistance of a neck and/or head support.
- Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket.

- Be able to perceive, understand and respond to audible or visual commands given by a boating partner or communicate such commands to boating partners (such as in a tandem canoe, double sea kayak, or paddle raft) to maneuver a boat to maintain proper heading or avoid obstacles.
- Be able to exit a capsized boat, fend for self while in the water away from the boat, attain and maintain correct body position if out of the boat in rapids or rough water, grab onto another boat or rope for rescue purposes, and/or perform self-rescue or cooperate with an assisted rescue.
- Independently maintain a seated body position with limited back support while paddling raft in turbulent whitewater. Personal adaptive equipment may be used; if needed this equipment cannot impede nor lessen the effectiveness of safety procedures or equipment. No participant may be strapped or belted into a raft or adaptive equipment while on water.
- For all canoeing: weigh 250lbs or less.
- For sea kayaking: (a) weigh 250lbs or less; and (b) have the physical strength and agility to re-enter kayak in the event of a capsized, either assisted or unassisted, in order to avoid prolonged immersion in cold water.
- For rafting: reenter the raft on the water independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance. Get in and out of raft from shore independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance.

Shooting sports (Archery/firearms) Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Must be able to hold bow/firearm while aiming at a target.

Snorkeling Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently maintain sealed airway passages (i.e. mouth and nose) while underwater in order to prevent water from entering the airways.
- Independently hold head upright without the use or assistance of a neck and/or head support.
- Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket.
- Must be able to swim with the assistance of a floatation device.
- Independently, or with the assistance of a companion, transition from land into the water.

Snow Sports (Skiing/Snowboarding/Snowshoeing) Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Independently, or with the assistance of a companion, put on and take off equipment.
- Independently travel over and negotiate varied terrain for the duration of class/trip (i.e., different snow depth and density encountered while snowshoeing).
- After falling down while skiing, be able to get off the trail and get into the position necessary to continue skiing.
- Move on snow equipment (skis, snowboard, snowshoes) over a variety of terrain conditions, including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- Carry personal and group gear required for the specific activity for at least two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.
- Travel distances at a slow or moderate pace for up to 1 hour between rest breaks.
- Properly put on and take off skiing or snowboarding equipment independently, or with the assistance of a companion caregiver.
- Load, ride, and unload chair-lifts while wearing ski or snowboard equipment independently, or with the assistance of a companion caregiver.
- Recognize and navigate through in-bounds terrain and other snow sport participants independently, or with the assistance of a companion caregiver.

Trail Work/Service Classes and Trips

Each participant must be able to:

- Meet all Hiking EEC in addition to the following.
- Engage in service-learning projects such as building, digging, lifting, painting, construction, and clean-up for 4-8 hours per day.
- Wear all protective gear recommended or required for the work/service. Gear may include but is not limited to protective eyewear, face mask or face shield, gloves, helmet, and footwear.
- Willingly share equally the responsibilities and tasks required of the group.

Bike Maintenance Classes

Each participant must be able to:

- Comfort working in small groups and potentially 1 on 1 with an instructor.