

AWARD HANDBOOK

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Introduction by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

The most difficult period in the lives of young people are the years of transition between adolescent and adult. This is precisely the period which the Award Programme is intended to cover. It is for this reason that the chosen age range is between 14 and 25, and it is for this reason that only activities commenced after receiving a Record Book should count towards qualifying for an Award.

Experience suggests that adults occupy their leisure time in one or more of different ways. They undertake some voluntary service to the community, such as a team game, golf or fishing; they pursue a personal interest or hobby, such as stamp collecting or photography; and they take part in some sort of expedition, even if it is only going on holiday to a foreign country.

Young people cannot make a choice between such activities unless they have a chance to try them out, the purpose of making the four sections of the programme compulsory is to ensure that each participant is given the chance to gain some experience of each of the groups of opportunities.

Adults share their enthusiasm for their subject with the participants and this gives them an important influence upon those they are helping. The selection of leaders, trainers, instructors and assessors is therefore extremely important.

The purpose of the three levels of achievements - Bronze, Silver and Gold - is to provide a progressively more adult challenge. Experience suggests that many young people look upon activities undertaken at school as “childish” and not worthy of their more “grown-up” status. The standard of performance demanded at each level of the Programme, is therefore, intended to be a real challenge and to give a genuine sense of achievement.

With the very wide choice of subjects available in the four Sections, it means that each individual participants is able to pursue a programme unique to themselves. This places a particular responsibility on leaders, trainers and assessors to relate the purposes of the Programme to the individual, both in helping participants to make realistic choices, and in assessing their progress with the syllabus against their efforts and capabilities.

The very flexibility of the Programme means that its success depends on the understanding of its general principles. It is not automatic, bureaucratic system capable of being checked and the conditions enforced. It can only work if the Award Authorities have complete trust in the leaders, trainers, instructors and assessors to operate the Programme in such a way as to achieve the proposes for which it was designed”.

Historical Development of the Award in Mauritius

Mauritius was one of the first African countries to adopt the programme in 1966 through the Youth Organiser of the then Youth Service of the Department of Education. Subsequently, the International Office delegated two volunteers of the International Voluntary Service to help in its implementation.

The first Award presentation was held in 1968, on the eve of the accession to independence of Mauritius to 300 young Mauritians. Since then, the Programme has proved so appealing that young people joined in increasing numbers. In 1976, about 6,000 participants were enrolled in the Programme and to date over 50,000 young people have taken the Award.

The personal commitment of the then Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Michael Glover, one of the pioneers of the Programme in Mauritius, the support of the Government and the private sector account to a large extent for the success of the Award.

The Programme has always been managed by a National Award Committee, comprising of representatives of Ministries, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

In 1978, a Gold Award Holders' Association was founded and regional Award committees were set up to extend the Programme's reach still further by involving a maximum number of young people and adults taking an active part in the implementation of the Award.

In 1983, Mauritius hosted the 5th International Gold Award Training where 75 Gold Award Holders from 24 countries experienced a challenging programme of training, visits and community service during five weeks. Eleven years later, in October, 1994, Mauritius again hosted a very important Award event; the 5th International Award Forum with the presence of Programme's founder, His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, and Prince Edward, Chairman of the International Award Council.

In 1987, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Mauritius became the National Youth Award. The Programme thus continued to gain popularity at a time when the Mauritian Government was laying emphasis of productivity and self-reliance.

In 1989, through the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of French Speaking Countries CONFETES and the intervention of the then, Minister of Youth and Sports, the Programme was introduced to the French speaking countries of Africa with the assistance of the International Secretariat. To-date, more than 20 of these countries are successfully operating the Programme under able guidance of Mr Amine Mamode, ex-Senior Youth Officer of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The National Youth Achievement Award, as it is called today, is run under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports through the Award Secretariat.

Each year, about 2,000 new recruits join the Award and as many Bronze and Silver recipients are presented with their badges and certificates. An annual Gold Award Ceremony is organised at the State House where the President of the Republic, in the presence of the Minister of Youth and Sports present some 100 young people with their Gold Awards amidst dignitaries, parents, assessors, sponsors and supporters.

With Michael Glover as International Trustee, Mauritius as a member of the International council and Amine Mamode as the Francophone Consultant, we may conclude that the Award in Mauritius is very secure and this is a great pride for our country. Mauritius has been also been chosen at the 7th International Award Forum held in November 2000. Award in the country for Indian Ocean Region and Africa.

The future of the Award is therefore very promising, especially for the development of our young people. It is a venture which brings the Government, the Private Sector and the people to work together, in close partnership, enabling young people to reach for their best, to live their life fully, and to share the Award culture, with lots of confidence.

The International Declaration

“The Award concept is one of individual challenge. It presents to young people a balanced, non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encourages personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance, responsibility to themselves and service to their community”.

The Fundamental Principles

The criterion for gaining an Award is individual improvement through persistence and achievement, taking into account the participant’s initial capabilities and without any element of competition between participants.

Participation is entirely voluntary and the individual participant has a completely free choice in the selection of locally available options within the four Sections specified below.

There is no discrimination against participation on grounds of sex, race, religion or political affiliation.

The Operational Principles

Participants must be between the ages of 14 and 25.

The basic structure of the Award Programme consists of the four mandatory Sections: Service, Expeditions, Skills and Physical Recreation.

There are three (3) levels of Award : Bronze, Silver and Gold.

The minimum period of participation to qualify for an Award is 6 months for Bronze, 12 months for Silver and 18 months for the Gold Award.

The Code of Practice

To maintain comparable standards of operating practice as advised by the International Secretariat.

To manage the Award Programme fairly and impartially in all respects.

To ensure that the Award Programme is freely available to all young people of the appropriate ages, without regard to sex, race, religion, political affiliation or any other personal circumstances.

Opportunity and Challenge

The Award Programme is about Challenge. It is also about providing the opportunity to accept a challenge. The Award offers young people the opportunity to set a personal goal and achieve it. Along the way, they learn about themselves and about qualities like responsibility, trust and ability to plan and organise themselves.

There is no competition between participants. The only people with whom they compete are themselves. Self-motivation is fundamental to the Programme. There are no set standards to achieve, the criterion for gaining an Award is based on individual improvement based on each participant's starting point and potential.

Participation in the Programme is entirely voluntary. Participants choose their own activities within the four (4) Sections and set their own goals. Each challenge requires a special dedication, both physical and mental, and while the structure of the Programme provides specialist help in different skills, the onus is on individual participation to make their own way as best they can. Success in the Award comes through a conscious decision to accept and take up the challenges.

There is no such thing as failure in the Award. Even if an Award is not attained, just being involved brings new friends, new knowledge and new adventures which are, above all, enjoyable.

Anyone between the ages of 14 and 25 can take part in the Award Programme. The only entry qualifications are the determination to improve oneself and the desire to have fun.

How the Programme works?

The Award is a programme of cultural, practical and adventurous activities covering four different areas: Service, Adventure, Skills and Physical Recreation. The four Sections are intended to complement each other and provide a balanced programme.

There are three levels of Award - Bronze, Silver and Gold - each demanding a different level of commitment and effort. To achieve an Award, a participant must fulfill the basic requirements for each of the four Sections. On fulfilling these requirements the young person receives a badge and a certificate as recognition of his and her achievements. There is no other award. The participant's Award is the feeling of personal achievement and satisfaction.

Participation in the Award starts when the young person obtains a Record Book. The Record Book acts as a record of the participant's progress through the Programme his/her achievements and successes.

A young person may start at any level of the Award, as long as he or she is within the correct age range. As the programme is intended to be used for the development of young people, an upper age limit of 25 years has been set. There is no maximum time limit for each Award, other than the 25th birthday. Participants are encouraged to work at their own pace.

It is important to recognise that the Award is a programme of activities, not an organisation. Young people can take part in the Programme through schools or colleges, voluntary youth organisations, their local Government Youth Service, religious centres or as individual. They do not need to join a special group to participate.

Further advice of many of the aspects of the Award mentioned above is given in the following chapters.

The Sections

At each level the mandatory sections are skills, physical recreation, service and adventurous project. Additional, at Gold level, there is the requirement of a residential project.

All sections and the residential project share common elements. All of the sections should be enjoyable, satisfying and enhance the self-esteem of the participation. The activities should encourage progression, with the participant improving his or her capabilities, If a participant continues an activity at another level of Award, the challenge at the new Award level should increase accordingly. The activities undertaken should not be for personal financial gain.

Service

Aim: To learn how to give useful service to others

Ethos: This section seeks to give participants a sense of responsibility to the community and to help them become better citizens. The participant should undertake an activity in which they give service to others, and should learn and benefit from undertaking their service.

Action: To undertake practical service with appropriate knowledge and understanding.

Physical Recreation

Aim: To encourage participation in physical recreation and improvement of performance

Ethos: This section seeks to encourage improvement in personal physical performance through training and perseverance in the chosen activity. Involvement in physical recreation should be an enjoyable experience, regardless of physical ability. Participants should lead to a sense of satisfaction and the adoption of healthy lifelong habits.

Action: To undertake active pursuit with a degree of physical exertion.

Skills

Aim: To encourage the development of personal interests, creativity or practical skills.

Ethos: This section should stimulate new interests or develop and improve existing ones. The participant should be encouraged to interact with people who are knowledgeable in the activity, sharing enjoyment and developing social and life skills.

Action: To undertake pursuits reflecting elements of creativity and/or practical skills.

Adventurous Project or Exploration

Aim: To encourage a spirit of adventure and discovery while working in a group.

Ethos: This section seeks to provide participants with a unique challenging and memorable experience. The venture should be undertaken in a small group in an unfamiliar environment, requiring determination and perseverance, thus providing a sense of independence, self-sufficiency and discovery.

Action: To plan, prepare, undertake and complete the final venture using cooperation skills and leadership as a part of a team.

Adventure, which have journeying as their principal component, and Exploration, which involves less journeying and a greater proportion of the time being spent on approved investigations or other specified activities, but which are to be undertaken in the context of an expedition.

Requirement: the effort required should be roughly equivalent to the following:

Bronze

one night out in a shelter or in a tent and about 15 miles (24 km) on foot, depending upon terrain, representing at least 12 hours of effort averaging 6 hours per day.

Silver

two nights out in a shelter or in a tent and about 30 miles (48 km) on foot, depending upon terrain, representing at least 21 hours of effort averaging 7 hours per day.

Gold

three nights out in a shelter or in a tent and about 50 miles (80 km) on foot, depending upon terrain, representing at least 32 hours of effort averaging 8 hours per day.

Gold expeditions should take place through wild or open country.

Participants are required to complete appropriate preparation and training, including practice journey(s) before undertaking their ventures.

Residential Project

Aim: To broaden experience through involvement with others in a residential setting

Ethos: this gives participants a shared purposeful experience, working with others towards a common goal. It should be an experience that broadens the participant's outlook and horizons.

Action: to live away from home with people who are not the usual companions of the participants, working together in a worthwhile activity that brings benefits to others and/or to the participants.

HOW TO START?

IF THERE ARE ALREADY GROUPS IN YOUR AREA, ask them, listen to them, visit them and try to get all groups to cooperate whenever possible. Could Service or Expedition Training be a joint course? Is there already a local Award Committee which represents operating units and groups like Red Cross and the Fire Service, and which can coordinate Award activities, help with liaison, act as an information source and even raise funds for things like camping equipment? Your National Authority can tell you and in many other ways.

IF YOU ARE THE ONLY GROUP IN THE AREA, never mind. Other Organisations (Youth Clubs, Schools, Voluntary Associations, etc) may be helpful, informative and a source of instructors.

1. Gather together a team of adults willing to help you start an Award Group and able to instruct young people in a variety of activities. Gain official support from your supervisors, headteacher, senior club official, etc.
2. Investigate the opportunities offered by local facilities. Identify potential sources of help-instructors, assessors, funding, etc.
3. Decide who does what? Each adult should take on their own specialist responsibility to help in running the Scheme.
4. Obtain the necessary literature and tell young people about the Programme.
5. Have a number of activities available for an early start - but remember that it is important to give the young people free choice. A "Tasting Period" can be allowed before the issue of a Record Book to give them a taste of the Programme.
6. Involve parents so that they know what their children are doing. They are also a further source of help and support.
7. Start a pilot group with a small number of people say 10 to 12. It will help you if you keep a record of participants and their progress through the Award.
8. Prepare for an Award Presentation in anticipation of the participants concluding the Programme. This will bring the Programme publicity and encourage those already involved and also attract new people.

THE TEN KEY POINTS

Non-competitive

The Award Programme is a personal challenge and not a competition against other individuals. The only set standards are those necessary to ensure the safety of participants. The Award programme is based on personal choice and should reflect the abilities and interests of individual participants. No two programmes should be identical.

Available to All

There is one Award which is available to young people who wish to take up its challenge, with no discrimination on grounds of gender, cultural background, religion or political affiliation. An Award is gained through individual improvement and achievement, which means that disadvantaged young people and those with special needs are able to benefit from involvement in its programme.

Voluntary

The Programme is run by volunteers for volunteers. Every young person makes a free choice to enter the Programme and must commit leisure time to complete the activities, with the support of a huge network of adult volunteers.

Flexible

The Award Programmes can be geared to local facilities and should be designed for individuals taking part. Providing the basic age requirements are met, young people may take as long as they wish to complete an Award and may enter for whichever level of Award best suits them.

Balanced

Whatever the level, there are four Sections which must be completed: Service, Adventure, Skills and Physical Recreation. There is the additional requirement of the Residential Project at Gold. The Challenge is to extend and develop existing facilities and to try something new. Each Section will make greater or lesser demands on participants according to their experience, interests and abilities.

Progressive

Through its three levels, the Award Programme demands more time and an increased degree of commitments and improvement. Young people should also take an increasing role in organising their Award. At Bronze, participants will need strong support from Adult Helpers. At Silver they should be given more independence and at Gold they should be largely responsible for organising their own Award programme with the guidance of adults.

Achievement-Focused

The Record Book notes positive achievement and improvement only and it profiles achievement across a broad range of activities. If a participant does not complete the conditions at one time, the opportunity exist to try again.

Marathon not a Sprint

The Scheme demands persistence and commitment and cannot be completed in a short burst of enthusiasm. The time limits for each level of Award are minimum rather than maximum requirements and therefore individuals can work at their own pace, according to the time available, until their 25th birthday.

Process not a prize

The Scheme is process of personal and social development and the programme and activities are a means to this end. It should introduce participants to a range of new opportunities, allow them to learn from their experiences and enable them to discover hidden capabilities and talents. The value and significance of the Award to participants is directly proportional to the quality of experience and degree of personal commitment.

Enjoyable

Above all, it is important that both young people and their Adult Helpers find participation in the Scheme enjoyable, exciting and satisfying. The intention is that participants should pursue Award activities in their future lives and not be discouraged from ever trying them again.

WHO CAN HELP?

To run the Programme successfully you will need help from a reasonable number of organisations and people. The following is a list of those who may be able to help. The list is by no means exhaustive and many new contacts can be made.

- Instructors and Assessors
- Parents
- Colleagues and Friends
- Gold Award Holders
- Voluntary Youth Organisations - Guides, Scouts
- Service Organisations - Red Cross, St John Ambulance Brigade, Rotary, Lions.
- Service Professions - Police, Fire Service, Hospitals and Nursing Homes, Special Schools, Coastguards, etc.
- Schools
- Government Youth Service
- Other Government Departments
- Youth Centres

ROLE OF THE AWARD LEADER

- To advise, guide and assist young people to participate in the Award
- To provide young people with Record books and other materials
- To maintain the operation of the Award within the unit
- To keep records
- To liaise and co-ordinate activities with other units in their area
- To ensure the Awards gained are authorised and presented
- To publicise the Award
- To ensure the safety and well-being of the participants
- To ensure the operation of the Award meets the international guidelines and that the standards of the Award are upheld.

REGIONAL AWARD COMMITTEES

In any area, there may be many different groups operating the Programme - schools, youth clubs, uniformed groups, even businesses. Many would benefit from making contact with others in their locality to pool resources and share experiences. In some areas, this network of local operators is organised into a Regional Award Committee.

Each operating unit is represented on the Committee, which meets regularly every two or three months. Local sources of help like First Aid organisations or service clubs can also be represented on the Committee.

The purpose of the Committee is to co-ordinate Award activities in the area and save any duplication of effort. For example, an expedition training course could be organised centrally for all the young people to attend, instead of each unit organising its own.

The Regional Committee can play a major role in publicising the Programme, e.g by organising joint Award presentations or by getting a major story into a local newspaper.

Regional Award Committee serves as a contact point between Award Units and the National Office, providing literature, channelling information and even organising training and information sessions for leaders.

The functions of the Regional Award Committee can include:

- promoting the Programme in the locality
- helping to recruit adult support
- coordinating resources, manpower, equipment and facilities
- helping participants to continue the programme when they leave school or move to another area or unit.
- arranging presentation ceremonies
- maintaining contact with Gold Award holders
- ensuring acceptable standards among all Award units in the area.

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

The presentation of the Awards to young people is very important.

It is:

- the public recognition of their achievements
- an opportunity to thank all the adults involved in some way
- an opportunity to promote the Programme to other young people and adults.

Usually Bronze Awards are presented locally, Silver Awards regionally and Gold Award nationally.

Annual presentations of Award are often organised by the NYAA Office and include all those in the area who have achieved an Award. Previous Award Holders can be asked to help organise presentations. This provides an ideal opportunity for them to continue their involvement with the programme.

Instructors, supervisors and assessors

Any adult who is interested in the well-being of young people and who is qualified or experienced in the activity may act as an instructor, supervisor or assessor. In most cases, no special qualifications are required.

In some cases, particularly for activities which involve specialist safety precautions, instructors and assessors have to be approved by the Award Authority. It is also necessary to note that in some countries the statutory youth service requires official screening of adult volunteers directly involved with young people. Check both these points with your Award Authority.

The more adults prepared to help, the wider the choice of activities can be. The aim should be to seek a little help from many, rather than a lot of help from a few.

The Programme can be of benefit to adults as well as to young people: the importance of bridging the generation gap and involving adults in the development of younger citizens should not be overlooked.

The role of the instructor is to guide young people through their chosen activity while the assessor gauges and certifies the young person's progress and achievements in accordance with the conditions laid down in this Handbook. In some cases, notably the Skills Section, the instructor can act as the assessor. In other cases, it is advisable to have an independent assessor, as explained in the Award Handbook.

Any responsible adult can act as the supervisor for an expedition or a Service project: it is often the instructor. In the Adventure Section, the supervisor is responsible for the safety of the group whilst on its venture. For a service project, the supervisor should be able to assist the participants with any difficulties they encounter and to help them to give their best.

The National Award Office is the body responsible for operating and administering the Award Programme.

The main functions of the Award Office are to:

- maintain Award standards throughout the extent of its operation, To conform to the International Declaration and Principles, and to the Code of Practice and Reciprocal Participation clauses given in the International Constitution.
- publicise the programme to young people and throughout the community.
- establish an administrative framework to enable the Programme to function.
- authorise individual schools, youth organisations, clubs, industrial and commercial firms, and other groups to operate the Programme for their respective members.
- arrange leaders' training courses for those who are to be responsible for the conduct of the Programme within each such Operating Authority.
- secure sufficient funds to meet the cost of administration, including the provision of literature and other supplies, and maintain appropriate accounts.
- provide Operating Authorities and other interested parties with all relevant items of Award materials; provision of literature and other supplies
- co-ordinate the general pattern of Award activities to ensure the best use of available resources and general uniformity of standards.

- encourage the promotion of activities which are appropriate to the local environment and relevant to the needs of participants.
- sponsor participation in the Programme by young people not belonging to any particular group or organisation.
- issue Record Books and authorise Awards, maintaining appropriate records.
- ensure continuity of participation by young people leaving school or moving to a new area.
- make appropriate arrangements for the presentation of badges and certificates.

Some of these responsibilities may be delegated to Operating Authorities in whole or in part. In addition. Operating Authorities should be responsible for:

- general conduct of the Programme by their User Units and the provision of leader training
- approval of instructors and assessors as required
- supply of Record Books and other materials to User Units
- checking Records Books and authorising Awards
- supply of badges and certificates

Record Books

Record Books are issued on entry into the Scheme and become the personal property of the participant. The same Record Book issued for all three Awards, by both progressive and direct entrants. It should be remembered that only success should be recorded. If an assessor feels that the requirement has not been met, the participant should be encouraged to make further effort, and no entry made in the Record Book.

When making entries, assessors should be asked to make appropriate comments and should be instructed fully on how to complete the correct page. Leaders must ensure that the following participants are absolutely correct:

Name of participant, in block letters
 Date of Birth
 Date of Issue (which is also date of entry)
 Name of Operating Authority

On completion of an Award, the Record Book should be sent to the appropriate official in the Operating Authority so that the pages headed "Certificates and Awards" may be signed and the appropriate certificate and badges awarded