

The **Wilderness Education Association** is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to educate the general public and outdoor leaders in the appropriate use of wildlands and protected areas by developing and implementing educational curricula, programs and by forming strategic alliances with federal land management agencies, conservation groups and all organizations that benefit from wildlands and feel that the existence of wildlands is important to the quality of life.

WEA at a glance:

Membership: The WEA is a member based organization that relies on the continued support of our members to carry out our important work.

Affiliate Network: The WEA has an Affiliate Network of over 40 colleges, universities, private and non-profit groups that offer our courses. While our Affiliates are concentrated in the United States, we have Affiliates in Canada, Mexico and Hong Kong. WEA has recently converted to an accreditation system. Affiliates are currently undergoing the accreditation process to accredit curriculum based on the WEA six core competencies.

Courses: The WEA's courses types and formats offer a wide range of opportunities for students to learn Outdoor Leadership skills. Our course formats also offer flexibility for Affiliates to incorporate them into their current programs, whether they are focused on academics, staff training, programming, etc.

National Conference on Outdoor Leadership: Each year the WEA hosts its annual conference where people from all areas of outdoor education and leadership gather to learn, share, meet old friends, and grow the field by networking and meeting new ones. The conference travels to a different location each year and continues to be a source of collaboration and growth for the WEA and the field of Outdoor Leadership.

THE BACKCOUNTRY CLASSROOM

Publications and Research: The WEA has a contingency of professionals, professors and students across the country that have produced publications and research over the years. These publications have changed and continue to change the way we think about outdoor leadership and how we approach it in the field and in the classroom.

Committees: WEA committees consist of members who volunteer their time, knowledge and skills to ensure that the mission of the WEA is carried out and align our actions with the vision of the organization.

International Outdoor Leadership Registry:

Students that complete an RCPT degree and concentrate in outdoor recreation are able to submit their outdoor leadership portfolio to be included in the International Outdoor Leadership Registry (IOLR). Successfully completing the RU program will grant students their WEA Outdoor Leadership Certification.

Students that are enrolled in programs through an accredited institution such as Radford University and Hollins University will be granted a portfolio within the IROL. There is an initial \$100 fee to join WEA and access your personal IROL portfolio. Upon completion of Outdoor Leadership Certification students should have a completed portfolio documenting their successful completion of each of the 6 core competencies. Outdoor Leadership Certification maintenance will be tracked through continuing education added to the portfolio as well as track field time for their advancement to Apprentice and Instructor Levels as well as to share access to their portfolio with current and potential employers.

Minimum Content Requirements

Portfolios must contain the following minimum requirements when submitted to the IROL:

- Introductory Cover letter including a personal background, professional and personal highlights and personal outdoor education philosophy
- Table of contents
- Basic Resume
- Wilderness Experience Inventory
- Copy of WFR and CPR certifications
- A One-page justification for each of the completed competencies as approved by the accredited institution.

Purpose of the Requirement

In an effort to increase the level of competence, training, application, professional development and experience of outdoor leaders, IROL registrants are required to complete a minimum number of field days prior advancing within the IROL. The following is meant to serve as a guide for the particular features of this requirement.

Completing the Necessary Requirements

In order to advance through the IROL professionals must log their professional field time using the Wilderness Experience Inventory that chronicles their leadership experience.

Type of Leadership Experiences That Apply

This requirement consists of IROL registrants leading “face-to-face” adventure experiences with a client group. For a field experience to count in the advancement from one IROL level to the next, the field experiences must be in the assistant or lead instructor/guide role. Experiences “shadowing,” observing, serving in a logistics role, etc. are valuable experiences in their own right and may serve as precursors to leadership positions, but these are not seen as providing field leadership and will not count towards the field day requirements for the IROL.

Each level of the IROL has clearly defined requirements for the number of field days. Of the field days required for each level of the IROL, a minimum of half of the experiences must be seven field days in length or longer as an assistant or lead instructor/guide. A field day is defined as waking and bedding down while in a remote environment.

IROL Levels and Field Day Requirements

Student Experience Inventory: Student has completed one or more competency and is working towards Outdoor Leadership Certification.

Outdoor Leader: Student has completed all competencies and has been granted Outdoor Leader Certification through an Accredited Institution. This person begins acquiring field leadership experience (98 days) required to be listed at the Apprentice Level.

Apprentice Level: Student has achieved Outdoor Leadership Certification through an accredited organization. Apprentice must document a minimum of 98 field days. Please note that the field experiences completed as a participant during your outdoor leader certification acquisition cannot be counted.

Instructor Level-1: Individual has achieved Outdoor Leadership Certification through an accredited organization and can document 196 field days. Individual can document assessment and evaluation student learning outcomes in two or more WEA core competencies. Please note that the 196 field days can be in combination with the apprentice requirements.

Instructor Level-2: Individual has achieved Outdoor Leadership Certification through an accredited organization and can document 196 field days. Individual can document assessment and evaluation student learning outcomes in all WEA core competencies. Please note that the 196 field days can be in combination with the apprentice requirements.

The table below describes the different field experience formats including minimum and maximum days that can be counted using that format and are applicable to all IROL levels.

Format	Description	Minimum Field Days Required	Maximum allowable use for the format?	Calculation Adjustments
Field Week	A field is week is seven consecutive field days or longer.	½ of total required field days	No maximum, can be used for all field days	N/A
Multi-Day	Multi day field experiences (2 or more consecutive field days)	Not required	Can count for up to ½ of required field days	N/A
Technical Skills Instruction	Leading or teaching a technical skill/activity (rock climbing, ski, snowboard, etc)	Not required	21 days total	14 hrs of instruction = 1 day. (294 hours = 21 days) *# of hours for each experience should be clearly noted in the experience inventory listing

Six Core Competencies of the WEA Curriculum

8.0 JUDGMENT

Judgment is the *act of integrating previously learned information with situational factors to arrive at a decision*. Outdoor leaders are often presented with decision making challenges in an uncertain environment with limited information. Outdoor leaders must demonstrate judgment by effectively integrating core competencies and situational variables to make and implement quality decisions. Accurate assessment and application of skills using judgment is the central quality of an effective outdoor leader.

8.1 Decision Making and Problem Solving

- 8.1.1 Demonstrates the ability to examine, evaluate, and adapt decisions to maintain the overall objectives required of each of the core competency areas.
- 8.1.2 Understands the importance of consistent personal decision-making.
- 8.1.3 Demonstrates consistent judgment development by conceptualizing and ritualizing decision-making processes in each of the competency areas.

9.0 PROFESSIONAL CORE COMPETENCIES

The following standards delineate the professional competencies for the Wilderness Education Association's accredited programs offering Outdoor Leadership Certification. For ease of identifying areas of competence, the standards are clustered into six core competency areas driven by the overarching concept of judgment, shown as headings, below.

Please note: The Curriculum Committee has included "Content to consider" after some general outcomes. This is provided to aid understanding of the outcome, but does not constitute a list of content that a program must include to address the outcome.

9.1 Outdoor Living.

The specific outdoor skills that is essential to individual / group sustainability in the backcountry.

- 9.1.1 Understanding and demonstration of proper campfire use, camp establishment, and basic kitchen management.

Content to Consider: Safety and environmental considerations, components, materials, and structure of fire. Safety, environmental, and regulatory considerations of camp establishment. Safety and environmental considerations, tools and utensils, organization and sanitation, identification, preparation and storage.

- 9.1.2 Understanding and demonstration of proper selection, repair, and storage of equipment and clothing for self and others.

Content to Consider: Physiological, thermoregulation, and psychological considerations. Materials, construction and fit. Care and use, sewing and improvisation.

- 9.1.3 Understanding and demonstration of proper health and sanitation techniques.

Content to Consider: Personal and group health & hygiene consideration. Impact on group dynamics. Sanitation and waste disposal techniques and preventative self care.

- 9.1.4 Understanding and demonstration of planning for the safety, comfort, and organization of a group in a backcountry environment.

Content to Consider: Safety and Environmental considerations. Time, energy, and personal climate control. Rhythmic breathing, walking techniques, group size, trail courtesy and group roles.

Understanding and demonstration of getting from one place to another and how it is done efficiently and safely in a backcountry environment.

Content to Consider: Use of map, compass, GPS, Limitations of technology, primitive navigation.

- 9.1.5 Understanding and demonstration of basic weather forecasting and the implications of the effects of weather on the comfort and safety of the group.

Content to Consider: Characteristics of weather patterns, reading signs of changing weather patterns, different options for technological assistance, weather hazards, & weather lore.

9.2 Planning & Logistics.

The knowledge, skills and abilities to design, implement, and prepare outdoor expedition trips a minimum of 7 days long.

- 9.2.1 Understanding of and ability to prepare an effective plan for group outings of seven or more days in a backcountry environment.

Content to Consider: Defining and framing of trip outcomes, itinerary development, gathering of risk management resources, liability and permitting paperwork, finances, transportation, post trip preparation.

- 9.2.3 Demonstration of ability to design and manage proper travel progressions.

Content to Consider: Utilizing trip outcomes to develop appropriate skill and knowledge progression. Assessment of appropriate skill and knowledge of leadership team.

- 9.2.3 Understanding of and ability to adequately plan and package rations for a group of 5 or more for an outing of seven or more days in a backcountry environment.

Content to Consider: Food costs, nutritional value and weight. Food purchasing, repackaging and preparing for resupply. Value of ration planning vs menu planning on extended trips.

9.3 Risk Management.

A structured approach to manage actual risk, emotional risk and perceived risk through: risk assessment, utilization of management and instructional resources, and development and execution of emergency protocols.

- 9.3.1 Understanding and demonstration of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to engage the process of identifying and implementing plans that control risk in outdoor activities.

Content to Consider: Hazard awareness, evaluation and management of physical, emotional and perceived risk.

- 9.3.2 Demonstrate ability to design, implement and evaluate an effective risk management plan.

Content to Consider: Crisis response plan – student, instructor, administrative and external. Protocols vs. guidelines, evacuation considerations, Standard Operating Procedures, Local Operating Procedures, risk management consulting, incident levels and reporting.

- 9.3.3 Demonstrate proper balance between the potential of risk with the educational benefits of adventure.

Content to Consider: Outcome based risk-benefit analysis, participant screening, adventure theory and concepts, actual vs. perceived risk.

- 9.3.4 Demonstrate ability to manage group travel by moving a group in a safe manner.

Content to Consider: Instructor positioning, group movement, site evaluation, role delineation and delegation.

- 9.3.5 Demonstrate the ability to organize and implement search/evacuation procedures to locate group members in need of assistance.

Content to Consider: fundamentals of search and rescue, Incident Command System components and functions, search tactics, formations and crew management.

9.4 Leadership.

The ability to accurately self-assess as well as those essential skills concerning or involving relationships between people; the ability to effectively implement a decision.

- 9.4.1 Understanding and demonstration of ability to control ones own emotions and behaviors and adapt to stressful or dynamic situations.

Content to Consider: Time management, goal orientation, organizational skills, work ethic, follow through, self awareness, self confidence, self control, stress tolerance, personal resiliency, adaptability.

- 9.4.2 Understanding and demonstration of ability to maximize the potential of others and motivate them to attain shared goals to improve expedition behavior.

Content to Consider: Active listening, discussion facilitation, psychological knowledge, group orientation, social perceptiveness, power and influence, developmental and motivational strategies, feedback strategies, group relationships, and conflict resolution.

- 9.4.3 Understanding and demonstration of task-specific knowledge to guide a group to attaining its goals.

Content to Consider: Task execution, managing information, material and human resources. Performance enhancement strategies.

- 9.4.4 Understanding and demonstration of creativity while taking initiative and calculated risks.

Content to Consider: Generating ideas, critical thinking, problem identification, independent thinking, openness to ideas, collaboration, group development forecasting, and managing change.

- 9.4.5 Understanding and demonstration of integrity and honesty putting the best interest of a group before individual desires.

Content to Consider: Civic responsibility, social knowledge, ethical processes, leadership theory, valuing diversity, responsibility for others and accountability.

9.5 Environmental Integration.

The concepts that embody ecological and cultural literacy along with the cooperative planning and management skills needed to ensure preservation of resources, through personal connections, for past, present and future generations.

- 9.5.1 Understanding and demonstration of concepts that embody ecological and cultural literacy along with the cooperative planning and management skills needed to ensure preservation of resources.

Content to Consider: Sustainability, natural systems, resource management, culture awareness, attitude towards cultural differences, knowledge of cultural practices, and cross-cultural skills.

- 9.5.2 Demonstrates the capacity to perceive and interpret the basic health of environmental systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.
Content to Consider: Service learning, geology, ecosystems. Flora and fauna identification, interrelation, and person based resource management.
- 9.5.3 Demonstrates the understanding of the theoretical foundations of environmental education.
Content to Consider: Goals, theory, and practice of environmental education. History of environmental education efforts in the public sector at the local, regional and national levels.
- 9.5.4 Understanding and demonstration of the civic responsibly to educate land users to reduce their impact in backcountry as well as in their day to day lives.
Content to Consider: Authority of the resource, affect of local flora and fauna on human development and society – past, present and future. Environmental advocacy for both backcountry and front country environments.

9.6 Education:

The ability to know and implement theories and practices of teaching, processing and transference.

- 9.6.1 Demonstrates understanding of education theory and foundations.
Content to Consider: Past and present contemporary educational theories such as constructivism, behaviorism, developmental theory, learning styles, multiple intelligences, experiential education, etc.
- 9.6.2 Demonstrates a variety of effective teaching and learning strategies in both traditional and outdoor environments.
Content to Consider: Teachable moments, grasshopper, jigsaw, formal presentations, SPEC, etc.
- 9.6.3 Demonstrates knowledge of teaching and learning skills to plan educational strategies and progressions.
Content to Consider: Outcome based lesson plan development, Bloom's taxonomy, Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction, teacher centered vs. student centered learning, etc.
- 9.6.4 Demonstrates problem solving and critical thinking skills to understand instruction and learner achievement.
Content to Consider: Timing and placement of learning modules, transition management, progression development, student readiness, etc.
- 9.6.5 Demonstrates understanding of appropriate educational assessment practices and procedures.
Content to Consider: Use of formative, summative, objective, subjective, informal, formal, internal, and external assessment. Basis of comparison and development of field tools for assessment.

10.0 Assessment and Evaluation

Outdoor leadership is a complex grouping of activities and skills that are best assessed and evaluated using multiple techniques and broadly based criteria. Assessment for formative purposes is designed to stimulate growth, change and improvement in outdoor leadership through reflective practice. Evaluation, in contrast, is used for summative purposes to give an overview of a particular students outdoor leadership in a particular course and setting. Informed judgments on effectiveness can best be made when both assessment *and* evaluation are conducted, using several techniques to elicit information from various perspectives on different

characteristics of outdoor leadership. In order for any one to teach using any of the WEA professional core competencies they must be well versed in assessment and evaluation techniques.

- 10.1 Understand, apply, and evaluate assessment methods using both formal and informal variations.
Content to Consider: Summative vs Formative, Subjective vs Objective, Validity and Reliability.
- 10.2 Understand, apply, and evaluate evaluation methods using both formal and informal variations.
Content to Consider: Classifications of Approaches, Methods and Techniques, Competency Evaluation, quantitative vs qualitative.
- 10.3 Identify and understand the purposes and functions of evaluation and assessment techniques used in outdoor leadership analysis.
Content to Consider: Informal Techniques and Formal Techniques.
- 10.4 Describe, understand, and evaluate the relationship between assessment of student learning with the educational values and the goals of outdoor leadership certification.
Content to Consider: WEA Core Competency Model, Student Learning Outcome Interpretation and Program Development.
- 10.5 Identify, understand, and evaluate the principles of learning upon which assessment is based and how to apply these principles to the development and implementation of assessment tools.
Content to Consider: Types of Assessment Tools, Documenting Evidence, and Determining Compliance.