THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD
MALTA

Growing as a Whole Person with the Award

Balanced Development

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#WORLD READY

Growing as a Whole

In a world where achievements are often measured in single dimensions—grades, athletic wins, or social media followers; it's easy to overlook the importance of growing as a **whole person**.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (the Award) champions a more holistic approach, promoting balanced development across physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. This guiding principle ensures that young people thrive not just in one area, but in life as a whole.

What Balanced Development means

Balanced development is about nurturing all aspects of a person's growth. The DofE framework encourages participants to step outside their comfort zones, try new experiences, and build well-rounded capabilities that prepare them for adulthood. The programme's four sections—Skills, Voluntary Service, Physical Recreation, and the Adventurous Journey—each contribute to a different area of personal growth:

SKILLS Sharpen creativity, discipline, and perseverance through learning something new or improving a current talent.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE Cultivate empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility by giving back to the community.

PHYSICAL RECREATION Strengthen health, stamina, and teamwork through regular physical activity.

ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY Boost resilience, leadership, and problem-solving by exploring the outdoors with a team.

Why it Matters

The world doesn't need young people who are just academically brilliant or athletically gifted. It needs adaptable, emotionally intelligent, and socially conscious individuals who can navigate an ever-changing landscape. Balanced development nurtures the kind of well-rounded character that helps young people succeed not just in school or sport, but in life as a whole.

By engaging in a variety of activities, participants build:

Confidence in Diverse Situations

The variety of experiences—public speaking through volunteering, leading a hiking team, or learning a new skill—helps build comfort in unfamiliar environments and fosters a sense of self-assurance.

Stronger Mental Health

Regular physical activity promotes endorphin release, volunteering creates meaningful connections, and team-based tasks reduce isolation—each supporting emotional and psychological well-being.

Better Life Skills

Planning an expedition, collaborating with peers, staying committed to a skill, and serving others instil crucial life competencies like time management, leadership, empathy, and perseverance.

The DofE doesn't just prepare participants to achieve their goals—it prepares them to thrive, contribute meaningfully to society, and adapt with confidence to whatever comes next.

Real Stories, Real Growth: Emma's Journey

Emma, a 16-year-old participant from Gozo, joined the Award initially as a way to build her CV for university applications. Coming from a small community, she felt her opportunities for growth were limited and was eager to explore something more diverse. But what she discovered was far more valuable than just credentials.

She chose baking as part of the Skills section, something she had dabbled in at home. Over time, her hobby turned into a disciplined routine. *"I learned to manage my time better, follow complex instructions, and see improvement week by week,"* Emma shared. *"I even started taking small orders from neighbours and friends."*

Volunteering weekly at a local animal shelter gave Emma a sense of purpose beyond herself. She built meaningful connections with the staff and developed empathy through caring for vulnerable animals. *"It wasn't always easy, but knowing I made a small difference kept me going"* she said.

To improve her physical health, Emma took up swimming; a big challenge as she had always been self-conscious. With weekly sessions, she noticed improvements in her stamina and mood, finding swimming to be both empowering and meditative.

But it was the Adventurous Journey that tied it all together. Hiking through the rugged countryside with her team, learning to navigate, cook, and sleep outdoors, Emma stepped into unfamiliar territory, both literally and figuratively. The experience demanded leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability. *"I never thought I could do half the things I've done through the Award,"* Emma says. *"It's not just one thing that changed me, it was the mix of everything. It helped me become more balanced, more confident, and more aware of who I want to be."*

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How the Award Support Whole-Person Growth

The structure of the Award creates a rhythm of diverse activity that ensures participants don't just excel in one area. Instead, they develop:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE by engaging with others from different backgrounds, navigating group dynamics, and reflecting on their experiences. Whether supporting a teammate on a hike or volunteering in a community setting, participants learn to understand and manage their own emotions while empathising with others.

PHYSICAL RESILIENCE through consistent physical activity and outdoor challenges that push limits and build stamina. Facing adverse weather, managing fatigue, or completing a difficult trek fosters endurance and grit.

MENTAL AGILITY by tackling real-world challenges that require quick thinking and adaptability. Planning an expedition route, improvising a meal with limited resources, or overcoming unexpected setbacks during an activity sharpens critical thinking and decision-making.

SOCIAL AWARENESS by working collaboratively in diverse teams and engaging in service to the community. Participants develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and cultural sensitivity while contributing to causes bigger than themselves.

Tips for Embracing Balanced Development

Mix it Up Choose different types of activities across the four sections to challenge multiple aspects of yourself.

Set Growth Goals Identify what you want to gain from each section—not just what you want to complete.

Reflect Often Take time to think about how each experience is helping you grow.

Support Your Peers Share experiences and celebrate each other's wins, big or small.

Share Your Journey

Balanced development looks different for everyone, and that's the beauty of the DofE. Share your story with us using the hashtag **#BalancedWithDofE** and inspire others to take a well-rounded path to personal growth.

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Next in the Series: Voluntary Service

In the next blog, we'll explore the power of giving back and how the DofE helps participants develop compassion and leadership through volunteering. Stay tuned!

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