

## **Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC)**

### **Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures**

#### **Introduction**

The Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures (RCOA) program offers day and multi-day 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 RCOA trips live in and travel through are remote, dynamic, and physically and emotionally challenging. Our program also requires 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 RCOA 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 RCOA program. The RCOA 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 RCOA 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.
- Review and understand gear required to appropriately fit a person to take part in each type of trip or activity.
- 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 RCOA 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 program participants, 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 RCOA staff or other program participants of personal distress, injury, or need for assistance.
- Be able to do the preceding warnings and notifications up to a distance of 50 meters 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 RCOA staff.
- 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—no verbal or physical inappropriate behavior of others is tolerated for any reason.
- Be able to willingly and equitably 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 participant.
- 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 RCOA program course.

## **Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures (RCOA) EEC:**

**(Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures EEC is relevant to all off-site RCOA 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 RCOA program will permit the attendance of a companion at no additional cost to the participant. However, the companion caregiver will be responsible for purchasing their own consumable resources (i.e. food) and individual access fees (i.e. lift tickets) required during the trip. For convenience, the RCOA program will provide these resources at cost, if requested. In the event that a participant requests the attendance of a companion caregiver during a trip experience.

If you are attending as a companion caregiver, you must have the ability to complete the following requirements:

- Meet all of the Universal and Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures EEC, and any activity-specific EEC.
- Be willing and able to assist in the physical and cognitive needs of your client. This includes, but is not limited to, lifting, pushing, and pulling the weight of your client for the distance and terrain involved in the specifics of each particular program; and,
- Offer one-on-one support for your client as needed.

**Activity Specific EECs (Activity Specific EECs are relevant to each activity. Read the relevant sections in addition to the Universal EEC and Roanoke College Outdoor Adventures EEC.)**

### **Backpacking 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 40 pounds, 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 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 RCOA 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 nights. The remoteness is such that it may require a minimum 1-day travel, but perhaps 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 RCOA EEC requirements.

### **Caving (Horizontal) 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) 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.

## **Flatwater Paddling (Kayak and Canoe) 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 (Kayak and Canoe) 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 pounds) 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 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 10-25 pounds, 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-plus hours per day, either independently or with the assistance of a companion or an approved assistive device.

### **Mountain Biking/Road Biking 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 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 (Kayak and Raft) 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 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.

### **Snow Sports (Skiing and Snowboarding) 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 or snowboard) over a variety of terrain conditions, including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- 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 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 equitably the responsibilities and tasks required of the group.