



GAISCE
THE PRESIDENT'S
AWARD

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Updated August 2024

PAL GUIDE

A President's Award Leader Guide to
the Gaisce programme





GAISCE
THE PRESIDENT'S
AWARD

YOUR
WAY:
YOUR
AWARD



Message from the Chief Executive of Gaisce

A Chairde,

This guide has been created to provide Gaisce President's Award Leaders (PALs) with an essential and practical roadmap providing information and tools on how to best inspire, motivate, and support young people on their Gaisce Award journey.

Gaisce is a direct challenge by the President of Ireland encouraging young people to dream big. As the national non formal education youth award, it is Ireland's highest recognition of a young person's achievement. The Gaisce framework has remained largely unchanged over the years, yet it feels more relevant today than ever. It has been proven to enhance the social and emotional skills central to young people making positive life choices and developing the protective factors vital for their transition from childhood to adulthood.

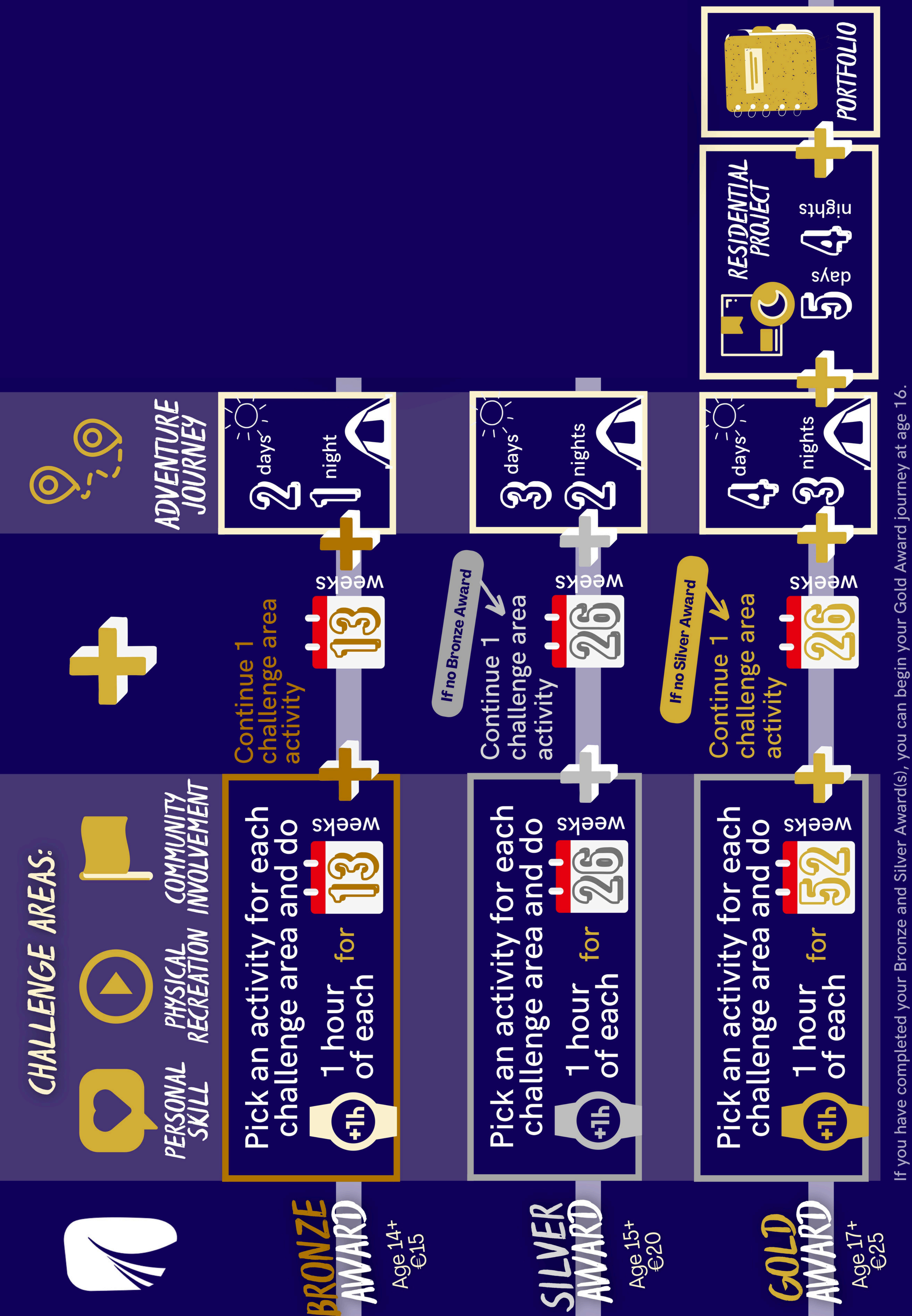
One of Gaisce's core elements, unchanged since its inception, is the importance of an unrelated adult guiding a young person through their journey: their PAL. The concept of the 'one good adult' has been at the heart of Gaisce from the start, and today, more than 1,300 PALs support young people through their Award experience. We understand the significant commitment required to become a PAL and to support a young person through this journey, so too do we all know that without that commitment and sacrifice of time and energy of PALs many more young people would lose the opportunity to reap the benefits of Gaisce participation.

We deeply appreciate the passion and ambition PALs have for young people and their belief in every young person's future. We frequently hear transformative stories from participants and Awardees about their PALs and the lasting impact they've had—often remembered many years after their Gaisce experience. We are acutely aware that without PALs, there would be no Gaisce participants, no Gaisce Awardees—no Gaisce. PALs truly amplify our philosophy that there is more in you than you think, and that ethos has positively changed and opened the pathways, possibilities, and aspirations for more than 480,000 young people since 1985.

Whether you're new to the role or have been a PAL for some time, we want this guide to always be close to hand as a valuable resource. The PAL guide is your playbook to make sure that young people get a quality Gaisce experience delivering upon the positive outcomes we all want for them through their Award achievements. The progressive value of the Award from Bronze, to Silver to Gold is the ultimate challenge and I ask you as a PAL to support young people to gain all three awards to give them every opportunity to flourish and celebrate their talents, qualities, contributions to society and the learnings gained.

Together, we can make Ireland the best place to be a young person equipping them with the non-formal education skills, knowledge and mindset to help navigate challenges, prioritise self-care, embrace differences and engage in society as active change makers. Gaisce Awards are all about setting young people up for success by building their resilience, empathy, leadership, and confidence for a future that provides them with every opportunity to reach their full potential guided by all of you, our wonderful President's Award Leaders.

Is mise, le meas,
Avril Ryan



About Gaisce - The President's Award

Gaisce - The President's Award is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 14-25, which is proven to enhance confidence and wellbeing through participation in personal, physical, community and team challenges. It is a direct challenge from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, to all young people to dream big and realise their potential.

Gaisce is non-competitive and self-directed: participants progress along each award level (Bronze, Silver or Gold) choosing personal skill, physical recreation and community involvement activities as well as undertaking an Adventure Journey. The President's Award Leader (PAL), vitally supports them throughout the process.

Young people who complete the Gaisce programme at any level receive a medal, a pin and a certificate signed by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. Should they progress to achieve a Gold award, President Michael D. Higgins presents them with their Gold Gaisce Award a special ceremony in Dublin Castle.

Gaisce is active across all 26 counties and, through the Joint Award Initiative, an innovating partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, young people living in Northern Ireland are able to achieve a Gaisce Award at any level also. Gaisce Awards are recognised internationally.

Gaisce celebrates the individuality of each participant and ensures while there are many pathways to achieving a Gaisce Award, each Gaisce journey is as unique and expansive as our participants determine and equally recognised.

Central to the success and design of the Gaisce programme are the PALs who deliver, guide and support thousands of young people undertaking their Gaisce journey annually.

Contents

This PAL Guide provides President Award Leaders (PALs) and their organisation, the Gaisce Award Partner (GAP), with information to support and guide young people on their Gaisce journey at all award levels - Bronze, Silver and Gold.

This Guide details the essential responsibilities and programme delivery requirements for PALs and GAPs to ensure that young people undertaking an award have a safe, high quality and truly brilliant Gaisce experience.

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HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES



1.1 History

Gaisce - The President's Award was established in 1985 to mark UN International Year of Youth and was launched in Áras an Uachtaráin by President, Dr. Patrick J. Hillery, Gaisce's founding patron. Initially the programme was piloted in five areas: Monaghan, Galway, Kilkenny, Cork City and Dublin with a total of 300 participants. In 1988, Gaisce was extended to the 26 counties with almost 3,000 participants. Today, more than 25,000 participants register annually. In 2005, under an agreement initiated by the the commitments of the Good Friday Agreement, the choice to receive a Gaisce Award became available to young people in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Joint Award Initiative (JAI), a partnership between Gaisce, Duke of Edinburgh Award and Duke of Edinburgh International Award.

1.2 Vision

Ireland - where young people dream big and fulfil their potential.

1.3 Mission

To provide a positive youth development programme that encourages and rewards young people to discover their passions and challenge themselves, positively impacting themselves and the world around them.

1.4 Values

GAISCE IS GUIDED BY FOUR CORE VALUES:

EMPOWERMENT: Making a difference, effecting change and enabling young people to shape their path to self-discovery.

INCLUSION AND EQUALITY: Every person has the opportunity to grow their potential through equality of access, participation and outcome.

RESPECT: Valuing people equally, recognising diversity, and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity.

EXCELLENCE: Making an impact through pursuing the highest standards, operating with integrity and in a transparent manner.

1.5 Guiding Principles

The Gaisce Award is built upon several principles, which are an intrinsic part of its success and important for PALs to steward:

INDIVIDUAL

Young people are encouraged to design their own Gaisce journey, which can be tailored to suit their personal circumstances and choices. Whilst there is a minimum time commitment, they can take as long as they need to achieve their chosen award level.

NON-COMPETITIVE

Pursuing the Gaisce Award is a personal challenge for each participant and not a competition against others. Every participant's Gaisce experience is tailor-made to reflect their individual starting point, abilities, and interests.

ACHIEVABLE

The Gaisce Award is achievable by any individual who chooses to take up the challenge regardless of their ability, gender, background or location.

VOLUNTARY

Individuals are encouraged to choose their own challenges and commit their free time to undertake Award activities.

DEVELOPMENT

Participating in the Gaisce Award fosters personal and social development. Individuals gain valuable experiences and life skills, grow in confidence, and become more aware of their environment and community.

BALANCED

The Gaisce Award provides a balanced framework to develop the individual's mind, body, and community spirit by engaging them in a range of activities across the Gaisce Award Challenge Areas.

PROGRESSIVE

At each level of engagement, the Gaisce Award demands progressively more time, commitment, and responsibility from the participant.

INSPIRATION

The Gaisce Award inspires young people to extend their expectations of themselves. Individuals achieve an award by striving to achieve their goals and by showing that they have learned and developed in the process.

PERSISTENCE

The Gaisce Award requires persistence and cannot be completed with a short burst of enthusiasm. Participants are encouraged to continue with activities and to maintain their interest even after achieving a Gaisce Award so that they will continue to grow and develop.

FUN

Participants should find the Gaisce Award enjoyable, fulfilling, rewarding and unforgettable!

IMPACT AND BENEFITS



"Gaisce is one of the most challenging and rewarding things I have ever undertaken. You really get to know yourself and what you are capable of."

- Abbie Moloney
Gaisce Gold Awardee

Section 2 - Impact and Benefits

"More widespread participation in programmes such as Gaisce would have positive implications for the psychological health of young people in Ireland"

(*'Does Gaisce - The President's Award act as catalyst in the enhancement of the psychological attributes of: hope, self-efficacy, self-esteem, happiness, and psychological well-being in its participants?'* Dr. Niamh Clarke McMahon, 2015 research)

2.1 Benefits to young people

In 2015, Gaisce published independent research towards a doctoral thesis by Dr. Niamh Clarke McMahon on the impact of participation in Gaisce for young people. The research proved that the Gaisce programme, through its structure, operation and outcomes, successfully meets the inclusion criteria to be classified as a Positive Youth Development programme. The research highlights the very positive impact participation in Gaisce has on young people with respect to a variety of competencies and psychological attributes summarised as follows:

- **Enhanced positive relationships** - participation in the Gaisce Award offers the opportunity to grow both new and existing relationships, to develop new social networks, and to enhance communication and social skills through the programme's teamwork elements.
- **Increased empathy and altruism** - participants gain a better understanding of the positive impact that they can have on the lives of others through helping and volunteering, and gain greater levels of understanding and patience when working with others.
- **Greater mental fortitude** - taking part in the Gaisce Award enhances a young person's ability to motivate and push themselves, to have the confidence to set goals for themselves that lie outside their comfort zones, and to persevere to reach those goals.
- **Increased positive emotions** - the Gaisce Award gives young people the opportunity to discover new activities that they enjoy, and to have fun while also gaining the satisfaction of achieving their goals and fulfilling their potential.

- **Self-efficacy** - through setting their own goals and working towards achieving them, participants gain a sense of fulfilment and a belief that they can achieve tasks and replicate their success in the future.
- **Personal growth** - participation in the Gaisce Award gives young people the opportunity to learn and experience new things, and to enhance positive thinking in young people by giving them greater confidence and self-esteem through fulfilment of the challenge.

The Gaisce Award framework promotes the ethos that chosen activities are balanced in such a way as to encourage the complete development of the young person. Young people often say that they would never have considered certain activities if it had not been for undertaking their Gaisce Award and continue to engage with activities they initially discovered whilst they were participating in the Gaisce Award.

2.2 Benefits to PALs

Choosing to become a President's Award Leader (PAL) can be hugely beneficial and rewarding for individuals across a wide range of professions, as it can provide an opportunity to:

- **Inspire young people** to begin and to complete their Gaisce Award and be a key part of that journey of achievement for a young person
- **Make a difference in the lives of young people** supporting their self-directed learning and individual goals
- **Celebrate the achievements of young people** through a recognised and implementable non-formal learning framework
- **Develop mentoring and coaching skills**
- **Meet other PALs and gain new experiences** through interaction with participants on their Gaisce journey
- **Provide added value** to the activities or projects PALs already deliver

2.3 Benefits to Gaisce Award Partners

For the safety of young people, every PAL is required to either be an employee or approved volunteer with the organisation they plan to deliver Gaisce: the Gaisce Award Partner (GAP). This ensures that the PAL is protected by proper policies and procedures in place in accordance with best practice and good governance. Supporting PALs to deliver the Gaisce Award benefits organisations in a number of ways including:

- Provides a structured framework to support and recognise young people's personal development
- Professional development for staff/volunteers who are trained to deliver the Gaisce Award programme
- Boosts young people's confidence, communication and leadership skills through a programme that is achievable, non-competitive and encourages each individual's ability and personal goals
- Is easily implementable as young people are often already undertaking activities that could count towards a Gaisce Award
- A Gaisce Award can add further value to young people's accomplishments within an organisation being a national non-formal learning award
- Gaisce has been proven to significantly enhance mental health and well-being in young people
- Provides an award that helps young people demonstrate their skills, competencies and achievements through a programme recognised and valued by many employers and educators

Section 3

2.4 Benefits to Parent & Guardians

Gaisce was specifically designed to help young people through the transition from child to adult, a time when (research shows) they can tend to disengage from positive activities such as sport. Encouraging young people to stick with activities that they may have started years previously can be a challenge for many parents and guardians as interests wane and other distractions arise during teenage years. The Gaisce Award provides a structure for working towards and achieving a distinctive award that is recognised around the world and which can be a positive indicator for future employability. To many, it is a huge honour and an immense source of pride to witness their child receiving a Gaisce Award.

2.5 Benefits to the Community

The Gaisce Award provides a practical way for young people to connect with their community and begin a habit of positive contribution to society. This is achieved by using the Community Involvement Challenge Area to encourage volunteering in ways that might not have been considered previously. This Challenge Area is based on the understanding that, in order for young people to be active citizens and play a positive role in the community, they need to be given the opportunity to take on responsibility, to contribute to society, to be respected and show respect for others.

STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY



"I've been involved in Gaisce for over 10 years. Gaisce is more a part of my life than when I first started, so I think it's definitely changed things for the good".

- Nathan Cafolla - President's Award Leader
and Gaisce Gold Awardee

Section 3 - Structure and Delivery

Fundamental to the Gaisce model is the principle that one good adult in a young person's life can have a positive influence on their mental health and wellbeing. The Gaisce PAL fulfils this principle. PALs guide young people towards achieving Gaisce Awards by encouraging them to discover their passions, develop new skills, make a difference in their communities, and create memories with their peers that resonate long after they complete an award.

3.1 The Gaisce Award Structure

The Structure of the Gaisce Award is designed with young people at its heart, supported by dedicated PALs.

STRUCTURE OF THE GAISCE AWARD



3.2 Delivery of Gaisce

The Gaisce Award is delivered by PALs that work or volunteer in a variety of Gaisce Award Partners (GAPs) all over Ireland which include: schools; special schools; further education and third level institutions; youth organisations; Youthreach & Community Training Centres; youth services; disability organisations; prisons; probation projects; Garda Youth Diversion Projects; uniformed organisations; special care organisations; detention centres; sports organisations; religious organisations; organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers; Traveller organisations; volunteer centres and many more diverse organisations engaging with young people.

3.3 Gaisce Award Partners

Every PAL must be an employee or an approved volunteer of a Gaisce Award Partner to For the safety of young people, every PAL must be an employee or an approved volunteer of a Gaisce Award Partner to ensure they have the correct organisational supports to deliver the Gaisce Award and to ensure continuity. Gaisce Award Partners must have relevant policies and procedures, best practice and governance measures in place.

3.4 The Role of the PAL

PALs take on the responsibility of delivering the Gaisce programme, supporting the personal development of young people all over Ireland. Being a PAL can be hugely beneficial and rewarding, both personally and professionally.

PALs also have the responsibility to ensure young people have a high quality and enjoyable Gaisce experience that meets the Gaisce Award standards. PALs uphold the values and integrity of the Gaisce programme. The support and encouragement of each dedicated PAL is vital to ensuring young people have the opportunity to achieve a Gaisce Award. Without PALs' commitment and motivation of young people to begin, and more importantly complete, their Gaisce Award, there would be no awardees - and no Gaisce!

It is also wonderful when PALs encourage and inspire young people to continue their Gaisce journey from Bronze, to Silver and all the way to Gold.

3.5 Award Levels and Challenge Areas

There are three levels of the Gaisce Award: Bronze, Silver and Gold. At each award level, participants must set themselves personal goals in each of the four Challenge Areas: Community Involvement, Personal Skill, Physical Recreation and the Adventure Journey. At Gold level, there is an additional Challenge Area, the Residential Project, and participants are also required to prepare a Portfolio (see Sections 5-9 for full details on the Challenge Areas). Goals participants set for themselves should be achievable and progressive, and ultimately allow the young person to feel a sense of achievement when they complete each Challenge Area. It is important that the PAL helps the participant to identify and achieve these goals.

3.6 Participant Age Requirements and Registration

The Gaisce Award is available to young people aged 14-25. Participants are required to register (see Section 4.7 for full details) with Gaisce before they reach their 26th birthday.

THE MINIMUM STARTING AGES FOR EACH LEVEL ARE:

Bronze level: 14 years (participants aged 13 undertaking a Gaisce Award with their peers can register)

Silver level: 15 years (participant aged 14 undertaking a Gaisce Award with their peers can register)

Gold level: 17 years (participants aged 16 who have completed both a Bronze and Silver Award can register for Gold)

Once participants have reached the minimum award level age, they may choose to begin the Gaisce Award at any level.

3.7 Participant Time Requirements

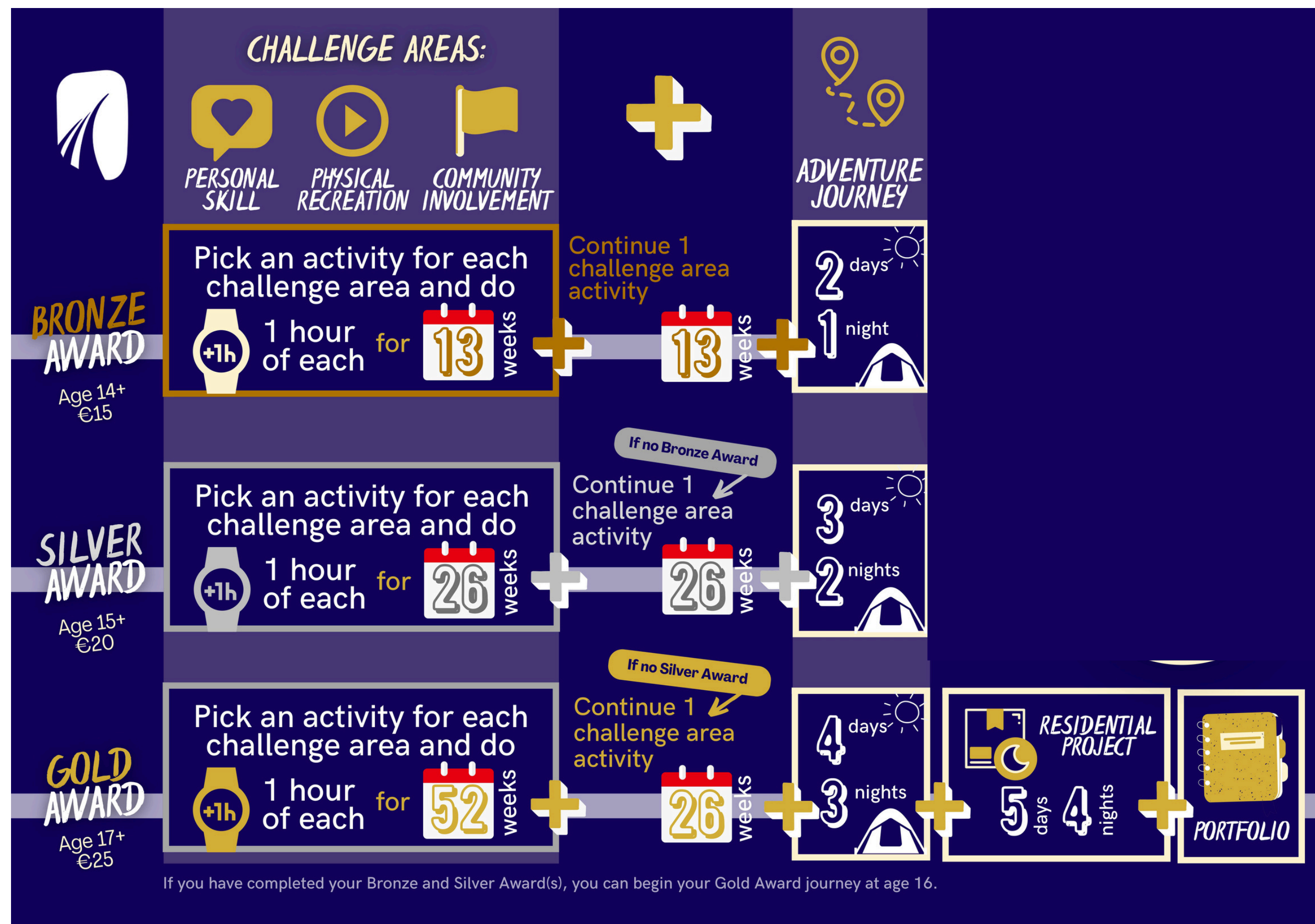
As the Gaisce Award is formulated around self-directed personal development, participants are encouraged to work at their own pace. The perseverance required to fulfil all aspects of a Gaisce Award can at times be challenging (holidays, illness, exams & other life circumstances), and so participants may need to take more than the minimum time to complete their Gaisce Award Challenge Areas.

In the Community Involvement, Personal Skill, and Physical Recreation Challenge Areas, participants are required to show regular commitment to their chosen activities. The Gaisce Award requires that participants spend at least one hour per week on each of their activities for a specified number of weeks at each of the award levels.

There is no rule as to how frequently participants should be engaging in their activities, and participation does not need to occur in consecutive weeks. The Gaisce Award cannot be achieved in a shorter time-frame by working more intensely:

MINIMUM PERIOD OF PARTICIPATION AT EACH GAISCE AWARD LEVEL

Award Level	Direct Entrants	Awardees
Bronze	26 weeks	n/a
Silver	52 weeks	26 weeks if Bronze Awardee
Gold	78 weeks	52 weeks if Silver Awardee



Note: • If you already have a Bronze Award, there is no need to do an additional 26 weeks at Silver. • If you already have a Silver Award, there is no need to do an additional 26 weeks at Gold.

Minimum Timescales for each Gaisce Award Level by Challenge Area

3.8 Merit System

To encourage Gaisce Awardees to progress to the next level of a Gaisce Award, there is a merit system that offers reduced time requirements at Silver and Gold level for existing Gaisce Awardees. Where a participant holds a Gaisce Bronze Award, the additional activity for the Silver Award level is not required. Where a participant holds a Gaisce Silver Award, the additional activity for the Gold Award level is not required (see the information above on 'Minimum Period of Participation at each Gaisce Award Level').

3.9 Progressing to the next Gaisce Award Level

Participants can continue with the same activities throughout their progression from Bronze to Silver to Gold Gaisce Award levels. However, they can also select their favourite activities to continue to progress and add new activities or choose entirely new activities for all the Challenge Areas at each award level.

Participants should be encouraged to complete their entire award programme (i.e.

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find PAL Resources on learngaisce.ie.

all required Challenge Areas) before continuing onto the next award level. However, participants can start on a Challenge Area of the next level prior to completing their award provided: they have reached the age of entry for the next award level and have completed the Challenge Area of the previous award level. Registration requirements in such cases remain the same, and confirmation to proceed must be sought from Gaisce - The President's Award. It is not possible to work towards all three levels of the award at the same time.

3.10 Parental Consent

Written parental consent is required for participants undertaking the Gaisce Award if they are under the age of 18. Template consent forms are available on the 'PAL Resources' page of gaisce.ie/pals-toolkit and should be completed by the participant's parent or guardian and returned to the PAL/Gaisce Award Partner for safekeeping. The consent form should be kept for as long as the participant is actively pursuing the Award.

3.11 Insurance

The principle responsibility for delivering Gaisce resides with the Gaisce Award Partner and the President's Award Leader. Gaisce Award Partners should have employer's liability insurance and public liability insurance with limits of indemnity of no less than €13m and €6.5m respectively. Gaisce PALs and participants should have an appropriate personal accident policy in place.

Travel Insurance for trips outside of Ireland (including NI) is the responsibility of the Gaisce Award Partner and/or participant/parent/guardian, as appropriate. The PAL should ensure participants are aware of this for all award levels.

Gaisce has a public liability policy in place, as a contingency measure, for all PALs and Gaisce Award participants who are registered and whose registration fees have been paid at the time of carrying out activities.

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find PAL Resources on [learnaisce.ie](https://www.learnaisce.ie).
- We have a safeguarding page on [gaisce.ie](https://www.gaisce.ie) but there is also a file on [learnaisce.ie](https://www.learnaisce.ie).
- Visit our Challenge Partner page at [gaisce.ie/challenge-partner](https://www.gaisce.ie/challenge-partner).

3.12 Safeguarding and Welfare

The safety and welfare of participants is the primary responsibility of PALs and their organisation, the Gaisce Award Partner. If PALs have participants under the age of 18, they must ensure they are familiar with their own organisation's Safeguarding policies and procedures, which should be followed in the event of an incident or disclosure. As an additional support, Gaisce has developed a Safeguarding Guidance document for PALs which is available on [gaisce.ie/pals-toolkit](https://www.gaisce.ie/pals-toolkit). All PALs must complete the Children First E-Learning programme before they can deliver the Gaisce programme.

3.13 Community Connections

In advance of delivering Gaisce, it is a good idea for PALs to find out what activities young people can get involved with in their community. It is also useful to find other PALs in the area to increase or open up opportunities to collaborate or support each other. PALs can create a Gaisce page on their organisation's website, highlighting activities being undertaken by young people on their Gaisce journey. It's a good idea to send Gaisce stories to local newspapers to further highlight young people's achievements to the whole community.

3.14 Gaisce Challenge Partners

Gaisce Challenge Partners support young people to participate in one or more Gaisce Challenge Areas, allowing Gaisce participants to use relevant activities to count towards achieving a Gaisce Award. Challenge Partners frequently act as activity supervisors, signing off on weekly activities for Gaisce participants. For further information on Gaisce Challenge Partners visit [gaisce.ie/challengepartners](https://www.gaisce.ie/challengepartners)

3.15 Keep in Touch with Gaisce Development Officers

It is vital that PALs keep in touch with their dedicated Gaisce Development Officer for both advice and support. Gaisce Development Officers also love to hear and collect stories about PALs, participants and awardee experiences so please remember to

GETTING PARTICIPANTS STARTED



"Through the experience of completing the Gold Award I was given the opportunity to step outside my comfort zone and to partake in experiences and challenges that have had a huge impact on my life and the way I now view the world."

- Lucy McGill
Gaisce Gold Awardee

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find PAL Resources on learngaisce.ie.

keep in touch! To find the Gaisce Development Officer for a region check gaisce.ie/meet-the-team/ or call Gaisce on 01 617 1999.

Section 4 - Getting Participants Started

Once a PAL has been trained and fully approved on the Gaisce on-line system, they can begin to invite their participants to register and start their Gaisce Award. Registration can be at any time of the year!

4.1 Presentation

Presentations are a great way to show all that Gaisce has to offer, inform young people on the programme structure and inspire them to rise to the challenge of achieving a Gaisce Award!

Participation in Gaisce should be voluntary, so the presentation is an opportunity as a PAL to encourage all young people to take part.

If there are also Silver and Gold participants or awardees in an organisation, it is a great opportunity to invite them to tell their story and to inspire potential participants.

4.2 Resources Available

As a starting point, visit the 'PAL Resources' section (gaisce.ie/pal-toolkit) of the Gaisce website and download the presentation. This is an editable template, so if your organisation has delivered Gaisce before, use photos from past projects and Adventure Journeys to bring the programme to life and engage participants.

Young people will be more likely to take part in Gaisce if it is a tailored presentation. It could also be an ideal opportunity to invite a Gaisce Awardee to speak about their experience.

There are many easy ways to make the presentation engaging and inspiring, here are some presentation suggestions:

- Find sample videos available on Gaisce's YouTube Channel
- Invite a Gaisce Awardee to share their experience and inspire young people to take part
- Remember your audience: make sure the presentation speaks to the young people and examples are relatable and achievable

4.3 Key Questions

Encourage young people to brainstorm ideas together and be involved in how they plan and shape their Gaisce experience. As participants prepare to take the first steps on their Gaisce journey, here are some useful questions to get them thinking and to help ensure they start off on the right track:

- What activities are they passionate about?
- Is there an activity they have always wanted to try or learn?
- Are they already doing an activity they could potentially improve or develop?
- What activities would they like to do in each Challenge Area?
- Will the activities last the required number of weeks?
- Who will sign the record sheets for the completed activities for each Challenge Area?

4.4 Choosing Activities

The choice to take part in the Gaisce Award is voluntary, and as such, participants choose their activities for each section. Before young people register for the Award, they should choose their activities for each Gaisce Challenge Area. Each participant has the freedom to tailor their Gaisce journey to their personal interests, needs and abilities, with the support of their PAL.

When agreeing activities with a participant, there is no common standard to achieve, rather a personal goal for each participant to set and work towards. The PAL's role is to guide and help participants to find suitable activities.

If a PAL is unsure of whether an activity is eligible for Gaisce, here are some key questions to consider:

- Is the activity safe and legal?
- Will the activity contribute to the participant's personal development?
- Where is the participant undertaking the activity? Is there appropriate support or supervision and an adult/PAL to sign the record sheet?
Note: parents or relatives cannot sign record sheets
- Where activity supervisors are not present to sign off on weekly progress, as a PAL, can you be satisfied that participants have presented evidence of weekly activities and progress?
- Are the activities chosen for each Challenge Area balanced, allowing the

4.5 Ensure Gaisce is Achievable

When agreeing activities with a participant, ensure that all challenges are achievable for the young person. Gaisce is an opportunity for every young person to push themselves to achieve their goals, but a PAL must ensure that the challenge is reasonable, safe, the activity can be recorded and the goal can be achieved. Remember that participants do not need to undertake new activities in all Challenge Areas: they could use existing interests or hobbies as part of their Gaisce challenge. Keep in mind that an activity that works for one participant may not be suitable for another.

Activity supervisors should also be aware of the goals being set so that they can best help the participant to reach them within the specified period.

4.6 Safety

When the participant has identified their goals and activities, each section of the Gaisce Award should be assessed for any safety risks. Ensure the organisation (Gaisce Award Partner) is aware of activities being undertaken.

4.7 Registering Participants

Registration for a Gaisce Award can begin once a participant has an approved PAL who Registration for a Gaisce Award can begin once a participant has an approved PAL who is willing to take on responsibility for seeing them through the challenge. The PAL and participant will then determine what activities the participant will pursue in each of the Challenge Areas of the Gaisce programme. Participants can then register on Gaisce's on-line system (gaisce.ie), which will require payment of the registration fee by either the participant or PAL (on the participant's behalf).

The current registration fees for Gaisce participants are as follows:

Bronze: €15

Silver: €20

Gold: €25

There are two approaches to managing payment for your participants:

1. Participants can pay individually with a credit/debit card when registering on Gaisce's on-line system at gaisce.ie
2. PALs can collect payment from participants, create an invoice on Gaisce's on-line system and pay Gaisce by bank transfer, cheque or credit card.

Eligible activities for a participant's Gaisce Award commence once the participant has registered on Gaisce's on-line system. PALs should contact their Gaisce Development Officer if they have any queries or concerns relating to registration or commencement of awards. The participant will keep a record of participation in their activities on record sheets, which should be signed off by the activity supervisor for each session, and then approved by the PAL for each section when the minimum time requirements have been fulfilled.

4.8 Activating Participants

When a participant has registered for their Gaisce Award, their PAL will need to 'activate' them on Gaisce's on-line system. This can be done as each participant registers, or done 'in bulk'. To access Gaisce's on-line system, visit gaisce.ie and click the 'log in' option from the main menu. When PALs log in, any new applications awaiting activation will be highlighted on their PAL dashboard. For further information on the process and Gaisce's on-line system, see the PAL Toolkit section on gaisce.ie or contact a Gaisce Development Officer for support.

Hints & Tips

Remember there are many affordable ways to complete a Gaisce Award. PALs can always talk to their Gaisce Development Officer to discuss ideas or queries on the suitability of an activity.

Some PALs opt to register all of their participants together by scheduling a registration class/group for all participants interested in taking part in Gaisce. This can help to ensure timely registration of all participants and can be a good approach for PALs that collect payments from participants. Remember participants must be registered before they begin their Gaisce award activities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



“My favourite thing about doing Gaisce is the wide range of things you get to do, and trying new things you never would have thought of.”

- Cian Brennan
Gaisce Silver Awardee

Section 5 - Community Involvement

The Community Involvement Challenge Area is an opportunity for Gaisce participants to volunteer with a wide variety of community groups and charities helping people, animals or communal activities, without getting paid. Gaisce is often a young person's first experience of volunteering and active citizenship. Volunteering is a great way for young people to connect with their community, gain confidence, make new friends/network and develop new skills. Community involvement empowers young people to have a voice and make a difference in their communities.

5.1 What do participants gain?

- Experience a greater sense of belonging and value by supporting others or being a part of making community goals happen
- Make a real difference to the lives of others
- Increased awareness of the needs and problems of others
- Gain responsibility and leadership experience
- Meet new people and expand their personal network
- Discover their own passions, confidence and ideas
- Develop empathy for others

5.2 What can participants do?

There are countless ways to volunteer and get involved in the community, and there are thousands of organisations and groups across Ireland, which actively engage volunteers. Encourage participants to identify a local need they might be interested in supporting, either individually or as a group. To kick start ideas for participants, PALs can also find out if there are opportunities in the local community.

It is important to remind participants that their Community Involvement activity cannot be completed for a business need or payment. For example, helping out in the local café would not count, whereas helping organise community events in the café would.

5.3 Preparation

Encourage participants to plan their Community Involvement activity and check if any advance training is required. This time can count towards their award, although the majority of the time on this award challenge should be hands-on volunteering. Make sure the activity differs from the other Challenge Areas to ensure a balanced programme.

5.4 Community Involvement Ideas

There are many choices for a young person when they are considering what they would like to achieve for their Community Involvement, here are a few ideas:

- Helping children in a school or club e.g. afterschool activities or reading
- Visiting older people
- Community mural
- Support people with special needs
- Community campaigns e.g. litter picking, cyber safety, recycling
- Helping out in the local charity shop
- Charity volunteer e.g. event support and fundraising
- Animal welfare volunteer e.g. helping out in a rescue centre
- Conservation and environmental awareness activities in the community
- Lifeguarding
- Sports coach or referee
- Community committee member
- Drama or musical society activities
- Youth club or group leader
- Volunteering in athletic or sports club activities
- Member of arts group
- Book clubs
- College or school society
- Intergenerational and Intercultural projects
- Community Garden

Hints & Tips

It is a great idea to connect with other PALs for more ideas on organisations and charities where young people are undertaking their community involvement. Check with a Gaisce Development Officer for assistance.

There are thousands of charities across Ireland that engage volunteers - if a PAL is unsure what opportunities may be available nearby, also visit volunteer.ie to find local volunteering opportunities.

Do not forget participants' own Gaisce Award Partner might also be the perfect place for the Community Involvement challenge, for example, coaching or after school support of younger children.

PERSONAL SKILL



“Doing Gaisce has taught me patience and that if you persevere and put enough time and effort into something you will get there in the end.”

- Olivia Porter
Gaisce Gold Awardee

Section 6 - Personal Skill

The Personal Skill Challenge Area is a chance for Gaisce participants to develop an existing skill or try something brand new. This is an opportunity for participants to explore an activity that interests them and to develop skills that they may have previously thought beyond their reach.

6.1 What do participants gain?

- Develop personal interests, creativity and practical skills
- Reach their full potential
- Experience a sense of achievement and accomplishment
- Develop skills that enhance CVs and demonstrate employability and leadership
- Increased confidence and resilience
- Develop a lifelong interest or discover a career path
- Discover hidden talents or abilities

6.2 What can participants do?

Participants should choose to develop or find a skill that is appropriately challenging. Encourage participants to follow their passion or interests. Activities can be undertaken on either an individual or a group basis.

6.3 Preparation

Encourage participants to plan and set personal goals on either improving an existing skill or developing a new skill. Make sure the activity differs from the other Challenge Areas to ensure a balanced programme.

6.4 Personal Skill Ideas

There are endless possibilities for a young person to consider for the Personal Skill challenge, here are some ideas:

- First Aid
- Web Design
- Baking or Cooking
- Film making
- Counselling
- Photography
- Learning a Language (extra-curricular)
- CV writing and employability skills
- Musical Instrument
- Painting
- Jewellery-Making
- Sign Language
- Fashion Design
- Drama
- Public Speaking
- Chess
- Knitting
- Singing
- Youthreach or CTC courses
- Woodwork
- Driving Lessons (only applicable for Bronze)
- Literacy/reading
- ECDL
- DJing
- Art, music or dance appreciation
- Circus skills
- Science clubs
- Dog training
- Journalism/vlogging/blogging
- DIY
- Coding
- Equine, canine or alpaca therapy

Hints & Tips

There are many low cost or free activities that can be used for the Personal Skill Challenge Area, for example, using a free app to learn a language or becoming a vlogger. If an activity does not have or require a supervising adult to be present (such as in some of the above examples), please ensure the participant can provide some evidence of completing the activity. If a PAL is unsure and thinks that an activity may not fulfil the Personal Skill requirements, check first with a Gaisce Development Officer.



PHYSICAL RECREATION



"The Physical Recreation Challenge was the most fun part of my experience as I had been doing Tae Kwon-Do for 5 years... Getting my black belt was definitely the highlight of my physical recreation."

- Cathal Seabrook
Gaisce Gold Awardee

Section 7 - Physical Recreation

Physical activity is great for both body and mind and is essential for a person's well-being. In this Challenge Area, participants can either seek to improve their ability in a physical activity they already do or can try out a new sport or exercise. The physical activity should be set at an appropriate level for each individual's capability. Activities can be undertaken on an individual basis, or as part of a team. In the case of a team sport, it is the individual effort and commitment that counts.

7.1 What do participants gain?

- Improved fitness and physical health
- Enhanced self-discipline, perseverance and self-motivation
- Experience a sense of achievement
- Develop a lifelong commitment to physical wellbeing
- Enjoyment of the physical activity they choose
- Discover new abilities

7.2 What can participants do?

From team sports to individual fitness challenges, there are countless potential activities for this Challenge Area. Many participants may already be engaged in a sport or exercise they wish to use for this Challenge Area, but it is good to remind participants that Gaisce can be a great opportunity to try new things. The Physical Recreation Challenge isn't about being a pro-athlete or pro-footballer, the key is to have fun through a physical activity - be that achieving a couch to 5k running programme, walking a set amount of steps or kilometres per week, using the gym, joining a dance class, or setting up a wheelchair basketball group - the idea is that everyone can participate regardless of ability.

7.3 Preparation

Encourage participants to plan their Physical Recreation activity and to check if they require support or training related to health and safety and skills development. Activities should be tailored to the participant's level of experience and ability. Make sure the activity differs from the other Challenge Areas to ensure a balanced programme.

7.4 Physical Recreation Ideas

There are variety of choices for a young person to consider for the Physical Recreation challenge depending on their abilities and interests, here are some ideas:

- Walking or Hiking
- All types of dancing e.g. tap, Irish, jazz
- Bowling
- Wheelchair basketball
- Athletics
- Soccer
- Boxing
- Gaelic Football
- Running
- Kayaking
- Cycling
- Physiotherapy
- Tennis
- Street sports
- Gym activities
- Badminton
- Sailing
- BMX
- Skateboarding
- Rock Climbing
- Camogie
- Hurling
- Tai Chi
- Aerobics
- Karate
- Yoga
- Cheerleading
- Zumba
- Rugby
- Hockey

Hints & Tips

If a participant is using a physical recreation they are already doing, it is a good idea to agree additional goals (personal bests /new training).

Remember challenges are non-competitive. The Physical Recreation Challenge Area focuses on each young person's ability and personal journey i.e. walking 5k might be a huge achievement for one individual, whereas another might be pushing themselves to run 5k for the first time. Preparation and training plans are a great way to motivate a young person to progress and achieve their physical activity goals.



**ADVENTURE
JOURNEY**



“From a young age I can remember climbing trees and running around outside and as I’ve grown, so has my love for being active.”

- Iona Lee Parnell
Gaisce Bronze Awardee
and Defence Forces Challenge Participant

Section 8 - Adventure Journey

The Adventure Journey often proves to be the most memorable aspect of Gaisce for participants. It is an opportunity to plan, train for and complete an outdoor activity over a number of days/nights as part of a team. It is a unique, challenging and memorable experience. It creates strong bonds between participants as well as the opportunity to develop self-sufficiency and leadership skills. Adventure Journeys can take place on land (hiking, cycling) or water (canoeing, sailing). The Adventure Journey can be undertaken as an expedition or an exploration.

8.1 Adventure Journey Key Steps

- Plan and agree Adventure Journey route
- Preparation (e.g. improving fitness, gear/equipment needs, accommodation etc.)
- Undertake the Adventure Journey
- Post journey reflection

8.2 Adventure Journey Requirements

1. The Adventure Journey must be planned as either an expedition or an exploration, both require **journeying**.
2. All Adventure Journeys should be undertaken in **small teams of peers** between 4-10 people at Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award level. For larger groups break up into smaller teams and start the journey at intervals.
3. All journeys must be by the participants **own physical effort** - foot cycle, wheelchair, sail, kayak etc., without motorised, or outside assistance. The Adventure Journey can take place on land or water.
4. All Adventure Journeys should be **supervised by the PAL** (and appropriate supervision ratios), particularly where the participants are under the age of 18 or are vulnerable adults. Where a PAL is not in a position to supervise the Adventure Journey another adult from the Gaisce Award Partner who has been vetted/screened and is familiar with the Adventure Journey planning and requirements can cover.
5. All **participants must be involved in the planning and preparation** of their Adventure Journey.

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find PAL Resources on learngaisce.ie.

6. All participants must be **properly equipped and prepared** for their Adventure Journey.
7. The participants must stay in a self-catering hostel, camping or in another suitable form of similar accommodation.
8. **Participants must be encouraged to understand suitable meal preparation and nutritional requirements when undertaking an adventure journey and where possible help to plan, make and/or organise shared meals. PALs and participants should plan meal options appropriate to the adventure journey setting and where possible self-cater.**
9. **The Adventure Journey should be undertaken with a suitably trained or qualified person with experience appropriate to the adventure journey activity.**
10. Participants must **source and transport all gear and equipment** that they will require with them on the Adventure Journey.
11. **The Adventure Journey should be challenging but within the capabilities and fitness level of the participants.**
12. The travel days of the Adventure Journey must be **consecutive**.
13. **The route of the journey should go from point A to point B to point C etc.** (with the exception of the Bronze Award where looped walks are accepted)
14. On Completion of the Adventure Journey **PALs should review and evaluate** the experience with participants.

The 14 Adventure Journey requirements above are the minimum standards for the Adventure Journey. In addition, Gaisce has created a dedicated resource, the 'Adventure Journey Policy', that includes best practice and approaches to planning and managing a safe and successful Adventure Journey. The Policy can be downloaded at gaisce.ie/pals-toolkit/

8.3 When to undertake the Adventure Journey?

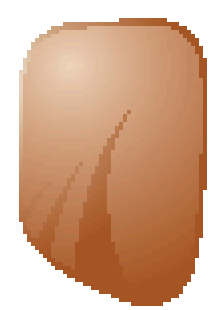
The Adventure Journey can be undertaken at any time, although most groups tend to plan it between March and October. PALs must ensure that participants are properly prepared and equipped for their Adventure Journey.

8.4 What do participants gain?

- Develop and enhance leadership skills
- Improve planning and organisational skills
- Develop responsibility, trust, team work and decision making skills
- Obtain a sense of achievement and satisfaction by overcoming challenges and obstacles
- Develop outdoor self-sufficiency and preparation skills
- Create Life-long team bonds and memories

8.5 Adventure Journey Distance/Time

The distance covered will depend on the speed and capabilities of the group, which should be established during practice and should then inform the planning of the Journey. The Adventure Journey can take place on land or water. The minimum requirements are set out below:



Bronze: 2 days, 1 night

Distance - 25km walking or 100km cycling or 6 hours journeying on water/horseback

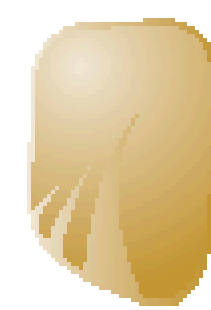
Must be completed over two consecutive days and involve a minimum of 6 hours of purposeful effort per day



Silver: 3 days, 2 nights

Distance - 50 km walking or 190km cycling or 7 hours journeying on water/horseback

Must be completed over 3 consecutive days and involve a minimum of 7 hours of purposeful effort per day



Gold: 4 days, 3 nights

Distance - 80km walking or 300km cycling or 8 hours journeying on water/horseback

Must be completed over 4 consecutive days and involve a minimum of 8 hours of purposeful effort per day)

Check the level that works for your participant's preparation e.g. easy, moderate or difficult.

Purposeful effort refers to time spent towards accomplishing the specific purpose of the Expedition or Exploration. Time associated with sleeping, cooking and eating is in addition to this time. For an Expedition, the purpose will be mainly associated with the journey so most or all of the hours of purposeful effort will be spent journeying. For an Exploration, a minimum of one third of the hours of purposeful effort must be spent journeying.

8.6 Adventure Journey Preparation, Supervision and Expertise

PALs with participants who are under 18 are required to attend and supervise the Adventure Journey, including the overnight stay. Where a PAL is not in a position to supervise the Adventure Journey another adult from the Gaisce Award Partner who has been vetted/screened and is familiar with the Adventure Journey planning and requirements can cover. Supervision ratios (1:8 with a minimum of 2 adults) should be in accordance with best practice and safeguarding policies and procedures. Appropriate gender supervision ratios should also be a key consideration. Where participants are over the age of 18, the PAL must agree the Adventure Journey with the participant beforehand and be fully informed of the Adventure Journey itinerary and emergency plans.

Proper planning, preparation, and training are vital so that participants are well prepared to enjoy and complete their Adventure Journey safely. Participants should be involved in all aspects of planning for the Adventure Journey e.g. training, gear selection, food selection, route selection etc. It is particularly important that participants are physically prepared for the Adventure Journey activity being planned. This should be appropriate to the fitness level required for the planned activity e.g. if participants are planning to hike 25km over 2 days, practice hikes and walks are important.

Where the chosen mode of travel would normally require a suitably trained or qualified person, the PAL must ensure that this person is involved in the Adventure Journey and any practice journeys e.g. kayaking. Check with governing bodies of relevant activities to ascertain the required level of proficiency to undertake the proposed Adventure Journey.

The PAL and participant should complete a risk assessment of the journey beforehand, plan the route, obtain parental consent (if under 18) and medical information, ensure

the PAL or another supervising/appropriate adult is trained in first aid and ensure there is an ICE (in case of emergency) contact aware of the journey who has the group route plan. The PAL or another supervising/appropriate adult should always have a fully charged mobile phone ready for emergency use. The same principles of planning and risk assessment apply for groups with awardees who are over 18 and may be travelling without their PAL.

8.7 Peer Experience

The purpose of the Adventure Journey is to foster and encourage a progressive level of independence and self-sufficiency for participants as they complete each award level. Therefore, participants undertake the Adventure Journey with their peers (minimum of 4), and where appropriate (as stated above) they are supervised by their PAL or adults approved (vetted and screened in accordance with legislation) by their Gaisce Award Partner organisation. Family holidays, in any form, do not meet the Adventure Journey requirements. Siblings within a participants peer group can be part of an Adventure Journey team. Non-Gaisce participants within a participants peer group can also form part of an Adventure Journey team, particularly if there are insufficient numbers to meet the Adventure Journey requirements.

8.8 Explorations

If participants wish to undertake an Adventure Journey with a focus on an exploration, PALs must check with their Gaisce Development Officer before embarking on the Adventure Journey to ensure it meets the programme requirements. An Exploration is a purpose with a journey. In an Exploration, the primary focus is to observe and collect information relevant to the purpose. More time and effort is spent on this purpose, and consequently less time is devoted to getting from one place to another. The journeying aspect remains significant, however, with a minimum of one third of the activity hours being spent on journeying. Participants must put together a short report on the findings of their exploration. Gaisce may request a copy.

8.9 Flexibility

Where participants have individual or additional needs that mean the one or more of the Adventure Journey requirements cannot be met, the PAL should contact their Gaisce Development Officer to discuss and agree alternatives in advance, which can be tailored to the needs of participants. Gaisce's priority is to ensure every young person has a quality Adventure Journey experience that reflects each individual's ability and personal circumstances.

8.10 Adventure Journey Expedition Examples

The Adventure Journey can be a wonderful opportunity to explore some of Ireland's most beautiful tracks, trails and waterways. The PAL is responsible for which Adventure Journey route or approach is best for their participants.

Here are a few ideas:

Leinster

- The Wicklow Way
- Royal Canal Way
- Grand Canal Way
- South Leinster Way
- The Barrow Way
- Ormond Way
- Lough Boora
- Mullingar to Athlone Greenway

Munster

- Slieve Bloom Mountains
- The Ring of Kerry
- The Comeragh Mountains
- Waterford Greenway
- Ballyhoura Way
- Great Southern Way
- Beara Way
- Sheep's Head Way
- Dingle Way

Connacht

- The Burren, Achill Island
- Great Western Greenway, Mayo
- Hymany Way
- Sligo Way
- Miners Way
- Suck Valley Way

Ulster

- The Mourne Mountains
- Kingfisher Cycle Trail
- Bluestack Way
- Cavan Way
- Monaghan Way
- Sliabh Beagh Way

Other Adventure Journey options

- Kayaking or canoeing
- Combination of walking, cycling or kayaking
- Sailing
- Camino de Santiago
- Scouting Centres
- Adventure and Outdoor Centres

Exploration Examples

- Explore the natural world: glaciation, geology, river valleys, flora and fauna studies
- Explore the outdoors through creativity e.g. photography, writing or art
- Explore historic land use: ruins, historic periods
- Explore human impact on the environment (e.g. Leave No Trace, Sustainable Development Goals)
- Prepare a wheelchair user guide to Glendalough National Park
- Explore mindfulness or health benefits

Hints & Tips

Gold participants looking for Adventure Journey companions or options should join the dedicated Facebook group **Gaisce Gold Participants**.

If you have an idea for an Exploration or need help making the Adventure Journey work for participants, it is always best to check with a Gaisce Development Officer in advance of any journey.

Participants and PALs should adhere to the 7 principles of Leave No Trace and mindfully respect the great outdoors. Find the 7 principles on Leave No Trace Ireland - leavenotraceireland.org



RESIDENTIAL PROJECT



"I really enjoyed doing Gaisce! The best part for me are the fun memories I have. We had some good laughs away with the group on the Adventure Journey and the Residential Project. We still talk about those trips when we meet up."

- Dylan White
Gaisce Gold Awardee

Section 9 - Residential Project (Gold Award level only)

The Residential Project requires Gaisce Gold participants to embark on a 5 Days, 4 Night residential in an unfamiliar environment with people who are not their usual companions, working towards a common goal.

The Residential Project activity should take place over consecutive days and nights. In exceptional circumstances, the residential can be completed over two weekends, using the same activity, within the same calendar year. This must be approved in advance with Gaisce - The President's Award.

If a participant is aged under 18, the PAL must ensure that safeguarding principles are paramount.

9.1 What do participants gain?

- Broaden experience through cooperation with people they don't know
- Thrive in an unfamiliar environment by getting out of their comfort zone
- Collaborate as part of a team towards shared goals
- Experience a sense of shared purpose and build new relationships and networks

9.2 What can participants do?

Any 5 Days, 4 Nights residential, in Ireland or abroad, will qualify as a Residential Project so long as the participant is staying away from home or their usual place of residence, and is in the company of others who are not their usual companions. Please note: staying with friends or family is **not** acceptable. Participants must not gain materially from the experience (though assistance can be sought for out of pocket expenses).

9.3 Preparation

Encourage participants to research and plan for a Residential Project activity that is suitable for their interests so they fully understand the requirements of the residential. It is important for participants to set their own personal goal on what they would like to achieve from the experience.

9.4 Residential Project Examples

- Children's Camps
- Residential Youth Camp
- Environmental and Conservation Projects
- Language residential e.g. Irish or Spanish
- Residential Training Course
- Residential volunteering e.g. Care Home
- Community Trips e.g. Lourdes
- International volunteering
- Yoga retreat
- Peace and reconciliation projects

Hints & Tips

Remind participant to ask for a certificate of attendance or letter of attendance for their portfolio evidences.

Section 10

SUPPORTING PARTICIPANTS

Section 10 - Supporting Participants

One of the most important roles of a PAL is to provide support and guidance for participants throughout their Gaisce journey. Every Gaisce participant will require a different level of support and guidance from their PAL. Some participants may decide upon activities with minimal PAL guidance, whilst others may be unsure of where to start or what activities to try. PALs know their participants best, and will know how much support is required and appropriate for each participant.

It is recommended, where possible, to check in regularly with participants - if even for a minutes - to review and check progress, answer any queries that may arise, support participants who may be having difficulty or simply to motivate them to keep going. Many PALs find scheduling a group meet up works very well for this - on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

Ways to support participants can include:

- Regular support meetings
- Provide and brainstorm suggestions of potential activities
- Review record sheets
- Check to ensure participants are enjoying their experience and no issues have arisen
- Utilise the on-line system by encouraging participants to fill in the on-line diary

Section 11

MOTIVATING PARTICIPANTS



"I love being a President's Award Leader, as in my role as a teacher, I have seen my students develop their confidence, become young leaders of the future and carve out their future careers through their involvement in their Gaisce activities."

- Clare Molloy
President's Award Leader

Section 11 - Motivating Participants

When a young person starts out on their Gaisce award journey, having a PAL ensures they know they have someone to motivate them towards completing their award and help them believe they will finish. Whilst not every young person will finish an award journey, the goal of Gaisce is that as many young people as possible have the opportunity to complete their award and this is where PALs make a big difference.

There is a huge sense of achievement and confidence that comes from completing the Gaisce journey. Here are some ideas and approaches to motivating participants:

11.1 Recognise Achievements

Recognition is such an important element of Gaisce. Whilst the Gaisce medal and certificate recognises all those who complete the Gaisce programme, as a PAL you have the opportunity to recognise smaller achievements throughout the Gaisce journey and encourage participants to keep going. A simple 'well done' from a PAL can mean the world to a young person.

11.2 Reassure Participants

Remember that the young people you support may not always receive encouragement elsewhere in their life, so your reassurance that they can achieve Gaisce, dream big and realise their potential is vital.

11.3 Distinguish Gaisce from other activities

Gaisce is a programme that every participant can take part in and succeed. Gaisce should never be something a participant feels they 'have to' take part in. PALs should encourage participants to take ownership of their Gaisce experience and ensure that support meetings and trips are in a friendly, safe and supportive environment.

11.4 Show the Impact

Demonstrate how Gaisce can make a difference in the 'real world'. Gaisce is a chance for young people to take on more responsibility, develop new skills and follow their passion. Gaisce can have a big influence on young people's professional path and is highly regarded and recognised by employers across Ireland.

11.5 Employer and International Recognition

The Gaisce Award is also recognised by employers, not for profits and community organisations in Ireland and in more than 130 countries world-wide where similar awards exist.

11.6 Changing Activities

If a participant has chosen what proves to be an unsuitable activity or an activity they are unhappy proceeding with, however, they can revise the activity or change to another activity once at each award level, with the time counting towards the minimum time requirement. This change must be approved by, and in consultation with, their PAL. The ideal situation is that participants choose the most suitable activity at the beginning of their Gaisce journey and stick with it for the required amount of time. This shows progress towards a goal and participants end up with a great sense of achievement and a lifelong interest or skill.

11.7 Participant Moving On

If a participant is moving on from your organisation or out of the area and had not completed their award or wishes to progress to another award level, try and help them find a new PAL in another organisation or contact a Gaisce Development Officer and they will do their best to help. Remind participants that once registered they can complete their award at any time in the future.

11.8 Partnership with Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation promotes the 'DoE Award' internationally and acts as a coordinating body for award operators internationally. Although not a licensee or operator of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, Gaisce is recognised as a partner with the Award's worldwide Association. By agreement between Gaisce and The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, reciprocal recognition is given to the Awards at each level (Bronze, Silver and Gold) across Ireland, the UK and the international network of Award Operators licensed to deliver the Award.

11.9 Joint Award Initiative in Northern Ireland

Under the Joint Award Initiative, young people in Northern Ireland who fulfil the requirements of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award framework at any level can choose to receive an International Award, a Duke of Edinburgh's Award or a Gaisce - The President's Award.

11.10 Gaisce Award Ceremonies

Attending a Gaisce Award ceremony inspires participation and is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate participant achievements (See Section 13 for more information).

Hints & Tips

Why not encourage participants to record their progress as they participate in Gaisce? Gaisce has an optional diary function available on the on-line system for participants or they can create their own tangible journal or scrapbook.

Section 12

REVIEWING AND APPROVING AWARDS

Section 12 - Reviewing and Approving Awards

Once participants have completed all activities for all Challenge Areas in accordance with the challenge and time requirements, PALs must confirm that the participants have completed the award through the Gaisce on-line system. If PALs need any support to manage completions, they should contact their Gaisce Development Officer or the Administration team.

12.1 Authorisation of Gaisce Awards

Participants qualify for a Gaisce Award when they have completed the required activities for the four Challenge Areas: Personal Skill, Community Involvement, Physical Recreation and the Adventure Journey (plus the Residential Project and Portfolio at Gold Award level), and have been marked as approved by their PAL on Gaisce's on-line system.

Gold Award participant must also fill out an on-line Gold Completion form summarising their Gaisce Gold Award journey along with media consent and other relevant consent forms. This on-line form is emailed to Gold participants upon receipt of the portfolio and should be returned by the date specified.

Once Gaisce is satisfied that the requirements for the specified award level have been met, certificates and award are issued in accordance with Gaisce's dispatch policy.

12.2 Record Sheets

PALs must collect and review participant record sheets to confirm and approve fulfilment of the award requirements. PALs must keep all record sheets for a minimum of two years as Gaisce Development Officers carry out random quality checks on participant award activities from time to time.

12.3 Meeting Gaisce Award Standards

Gaisce Development Officers may undertake quality checks on completed awards by requesting to view participant record sheets. PALs may also be asked for details or evidence of activities undertaken by participants to ensure the requirements of the award are being delivered. Where the Gaisce Award standards are not being met, Gaisce Development Officers will engage and advise PALs on a course of action to support participants towards the completion of their Gaisce Award and/or improving delivery of Gaisce going forward.

Hints & Tips

Keep participant record sheets stored where they can be easily retrieved. Encourage participants to keep evidence of participation in their activities.



GAISCE AWARD CEREMONIES



“Through this award, I have overcome many challenges. Through my physical skill, as well as competing in many cycling sportives across the country, I finally learned how to swim, something which I had always been afraid of doing.”

- Emma McKinley
President's Award Leader
and Gaisce Gold Awardee

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find PAL Resources on learngaisce.ie.

Whilst Gaisce organises regional Silver Award ceremonies and a national Gold Award ceremony every year, Bronze Award ceremonies are organised on a local level by the PALs/Gaisce Award Partners that deliver the Gaisce programme.

Holding a special Bronze Award ceremony as a stand-alone or part of another celebratory event inspires other young people to undertake an award. Encourage awardees to tell their Gaisce story to their peers at these events and share their experience.

13.1 Bronze Award Ceremony

Bronze Award Ceremonies are a fantastic way to recognise participants' achievements and highlight all of their hard work and efforts to the wider community. They are also a great way of encouraging Awardees to progress to Silver and Gold Awards.

Gaisce have put together a toolkit to help PALs along each step of the way when planning and hosting an award ceremony. This includes tips, useful information and templates for speeches and press releases.

Visit the 'PAL Resources' section on gaisce.ie/pals-toolkit to download the 'A Guide to organising a Bronze Award Ceremony'. The Gaisce team love to hear about ceremonies so please share photos on social media and tag Gaisce with [@GaisceAward](https://twitter.com/GaisceAward).

13.2 Silver Award Ceremony

Gaisce host a number of Silver Ceremonies annually. Achieving a Silver Award is a huge achievement and celebrating with other peers at a regional level is a very special moment for awardees. PALs are informed of dates through regular e-zine, direct mail and through the Gaisce website and social media. PALs are also thanked and recognised for their important role at the Silver Award Ceremonies.

13.3 Gold Award Ceremony

The Gold Award Ceremony is an annual event held in Dublin Castle, usually at the start of December. Participants who complete their Gold Award and submit their portfolio by the communicated deadline (early Autumn) will be invited to the next ceremony, provided their award is completed by their PAL through the on-line system and is confirmed as having met the standards of the award by Gaisce. This confirmation will be communicated to the participant. If a participant cannot attend in the current year, they will have one further opportunity to attend the following year's ceremony. This is a very special event where awardees are presented their Gold Award by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

SAMPLE AWARD TIMELINES AND MILESTONES



“Being an immigrant did not affect my Gaisce goals. I was able to do what I wanted and felt like I was part of the community. I had the same experience as everyone else.”

- Tracey Sefu Zinyama
Gaisce Silver Awardee

Section 14 - Sample Award Timelines and Milestones

We have compiled some sample Award timelines on the delivery of the Gaisce programme. Remember, these are just suggested timelines. Choose a timeline and approach to delivering the Gaisce Award that works best for you, your organisation and participants.

14.1 Key Gaisce Award milestones at a glance

Starting a Gaisce Award:

- Present and introduce Gaisce to prospective participants
- Identify who wants to do the award and collect parental consent (under 18's)
- Agree activities with all Gaisce participants
- Ensure participants register on-line
- Activate participants on the on-line system and ensure payment within 30 days

Achieving a Gaisce Award

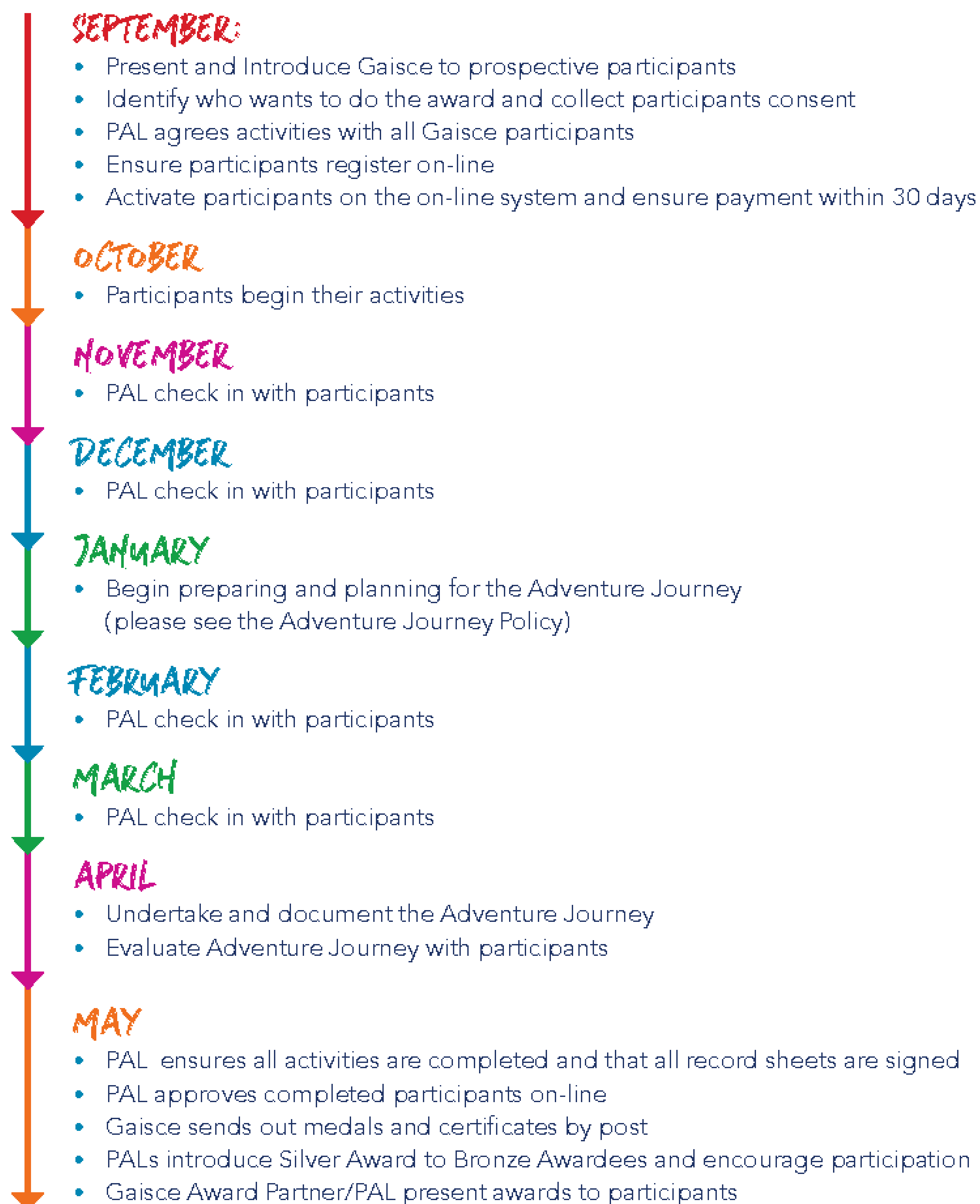
- Participants begin their activities
- PAL checks in with participants regularly
- Begin preparing and planning for the Adventure Journey
- Undertake and document the Adventure Journey
- Evaluate Adventure Journey with participants

Completing a Gaisce Award

- Ensure all activities are completed and that all record sheets are signed
- Approve completed participants through the on-line system
- Gaisce sends out medals and certificates or ceremony invitations (takes a minimum of 10 working days from completion)
- Awards presented to participants
- PAL keeps record sheets for 2 years.

14.2 Sample Bronze Award Timeline

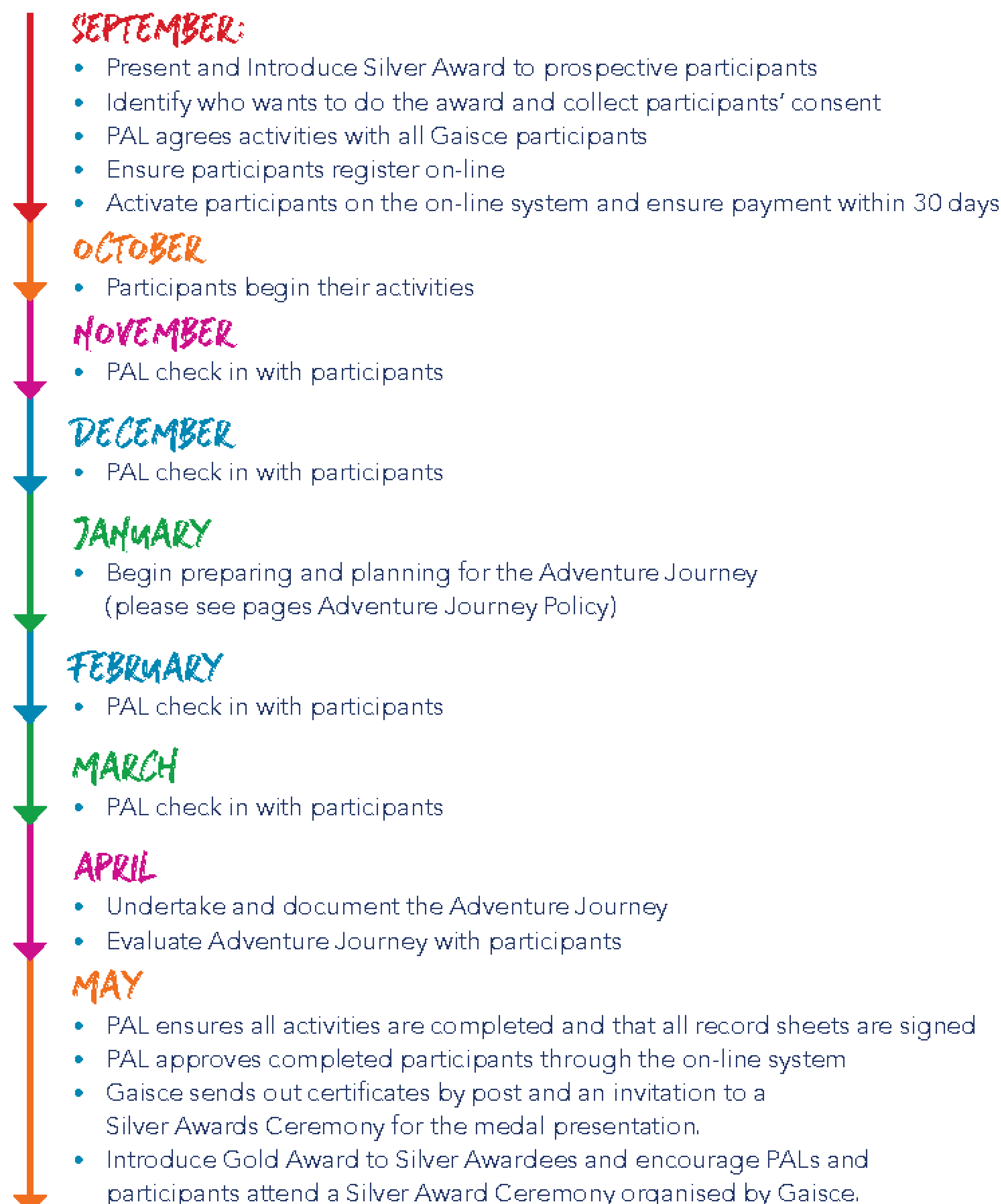
The Bronze Award takes a minimum of 26 weeks to complete. Participants can register for the Bronze Award at any time of the year. This is an example for illustrative purposes.



14.3 Sample Silver Award Timeline

(if a participant has completed a Bronze Award previously)

The Silver Award takes a minimum of 26 weeks to complete. Participants can register for the Silver Award at any time of the year. This is an example for illustrative purposes.



14.4 Sample Gold Award Timeline (if a participant has completed a Silver Award previously)

The Gold Award takes a minimum of 52 weeks to complete. Participants can register for the Gold Award at any time of the year. This is an example for illustrative purposes covering 2 years from registration to completion.



GOLD AWARD PORTFOLIO

14.5 The Gold Award Portfolio

Gold Award participants are required to prepare a portfolio. The Portfolio is a record of a participant's Gold Award experience, exhibiting evidence of their award activities. It can be compiled during their Gaisce journey, or when they complete all of the activities. When they have it prepared, the PAL should review and then, if satisfied it meets the standard required, confirm their Gold Award participant as complete on Gaisce's on-line system. Participants then send the portfolio to Gaisce who assess the portfolio and will confirm if it meets the appropriate standard.

The portfolio can be in digital or hard copy, written and/or visual, once the key pieces of evidence are included. These include:

- photos/video of activities;
- certificates of participation/achievement;
- residential letter confirming attendance;
- maps and route plans from the adventure journey as well as details or photos of meal preparation;

PALs should remind participants to send the hard copy of their record sheets with the portfolio as omission can delay award confirmation by Gaisce.

Participants should also include details on each of the activities undertaken in the 5 Gold Award Challenge Areas along with any stories, memorable moments, obstacles, observations and learnings. The Portfolio is returned to awardees after they receive their Gold Award and is a lovely reminder of their Gaisce Journey.

Hints & Tips

PALs: remember to sign off on the completions for all awards via the on-line system! If a PAL or participant needs any further support at Gold Award level it is highly recommended to attend a 'Going for Gold' session. Encourage Gold Award participants to join the dedicated Gaisce Gold Participants' Facebook page.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES



Silver Awardees from Maria Immaculata Community College
Dunmanway, Cork

Section 15 - Support and Resources

15.1 Keep connected

Facebook: [Facebook.com/gaisceaward](https://www.facebook.com/gaisceaward)

Twitter: [@GaisceAward](https://twitter.com/GaisceAward)

LinkedIn: [@GaisceAward](https://www.linkedin.com/company/gaisceaward)

Instagram: [@GaisceAward](https://www.instagram.com/GaisceAward)

YouTube: [Gaisce - The President's Award](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGaisceAward)

Tel: 01 617 1999

Address: Gaisce -The President's Award, Ratra House, North Road,
Phoenix Park, Dublin 8, D08YD6

Note: Elements on this page have been updated since.

- You can find your Development Officers at [gaisce.ie/development-officers](https://www.gaisce.ie/development-officers).
- You can email info@gaisce.ie for Gaisce Online support.
- You can visit [learn-gaisce.ie](https://www.learn-gaisce.ie) for PAL Resources.
- You can visit [gaisce.ie/gaisce-projects](https://www.gaisce.ie/gaisce-projects) for research.
- You can visit [learn-gaisce.ie](https://www.learn-gaisce.ie) for Gold Award Portfolio information or attend a Going For Gold Online Session. Check our website to see upcoming events, [gaisce.ie/whats-happening](https://www.gaisce.ie/whats-happening)
- You can visit [gaisce.ie/presidents-award-leaders](https://www.gaisce.ie/presidents-award-leaders) for PAL training dates.
- You can visit [gaisce.ie/challenge-partner](https://www.gaisce.ie/challenge-partner) for a list of our Gaisce Challenge Partners.



GAISCE
THE PRESIDENT'S
AWARD

PAL GUIDE

**A President's Award Leader Guide to
the Gaisce programme**

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@Gaisce - The President's Award

www.gaisce.ie