**VIRTUAL BRONZE EXPLORATION (VBE)**

**AWARD LEADER’S GUIDE**

1. **What is the VBE?**

The VBE is an online resource for Participants to complete their Adventurous Journey (AJ) in a virtual (or semi-virtual) space. As with the traditional AJ, the VBE aims to develop teamwork, problem solving, cooperation, and planning skills. (Refer to Section 6.3 of the Award Handbook regarding Benefits and Outcomes of the Adventurous Journey section).

Using the template via Google Classroom, the VBE is completed in 5 Stages:

* Stage 1: Preparation & Training (Part A & B)
* Stage 2: Team Planning
* Stage 3: Practice
* Stage 4: Virtual Journey (Expedition)
* Stage 5: Research Project (Exploration)

The VBE provides an Award Centre with the option to organise an AJ virtually during COVID-19 (currently approved to Dec 30 2020).

It allows Participants an accessible option to work together to overcome challenges in a team setting while still adhering to local COVID-19 restrictions. Award Leaders will assist Participants to organise a team and complete the stages with regular virtual meetings. In this virtual setting the Award Leader is able to act as both the Adventurous Journey Assessor and Adventurous Journey Supervisor, or may get other adults to assist (please see Q & A below)

The template VBE can be accessed through Google Classroom by contacting your State Award Office. The template contains content, resources (videos and articles) and forms to assist Award Leaders and Participants to complete the VBE. This material may be swapped or altered as long as the VBE requirements are being met. These are covered under the 5 stages of information below and also as an attachment to this Guide.

For an introduction to the VBE on Google Classroom, please watch the ***Steps to Getting Started in Google Classroom*** instructional video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeOVe2YV2Io>

Please note that you can check out some longer more informative options available when searching “Introduction to Google Classroom”.

1. **Who can use the VBE?**

The VBE is designed for Bronze Level Participants who are part of an Award Centre who are not able to participate in a traditional AJ. The VBE is currently being adapted for the Silver and Gold Award Levels. Currently, Participants of an Award Centre at the Silver or Gold level may use the VBE to complete the Preparation & Training component of the AJ.

1. **Five Stages of the VBE**

**Stage 1: Preparation & Training (Part A & B)**

The team must read and watch the materials and videos provided and demonstrate their learning by completing the worksheets. Participants will upload their worksheets to their Online Record Book (ORB).

* ***Part A – Online Exploration Skills:*** Team Communication, Well-Being & Cyber Responsibility, Research Skills & Project Management, and Physical Recreation
* ***Part B – Journey Related Training:*** Trip Planning, Equipment, Map & Compass, First-Aid & Risk Management, Camp-Craft

The journey related training videos are provided by the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council. They are a comprehensive set of short resources for our target age range. Leaders and Participants are asked to take into consideration the various Australian, territorial, seasonal and regional concerns of risk, equipment, preparedness, first-aid, wildlife, and weather. The Assessor needs to discuss any concerns or observations regrading any content in the video that may not be applicable.

**Stage 2: Team Planning**

The team plan must be coherent and ensure the Assessor has enough information to know the team is working together to accomplish the overall aims of each stage. The Supervisor (may also be the Assessor) should have enough information to have confidence the team has considered all health and safety risks. The team preparation & planning document will help the team to:

1. Agree on the **Aim** of their AJ/VBE
2. Develop the VBE plan and ensure the whole team works together and shares the load
3. Decide on each of the components of the VBE
4. Look at their AJ from multiple options eg. virtual or part virtual

Note: The virtual walking videos, like all the material in the template Classroom, may be exchanged on the basis of like for like. For example, the NSW National Parks provide some alternate options to the virtual walks, <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/google-trekker>

**Stage 3: Practice**

This stage is designed to allow Participants to test their team VBE plan, review, and possibly alter it. Team members select one or two virtual walk videos and complete pre-tasks, observations, and team challenges for those videos. They test their proposed physical activities, assess research project ideas and methodologies, and complete record keeping and reporting, noting any learning and changes to the plan.

**Stage 4: Virtual Journey (Expedition)**

The Virtual Journey is a one-day challenge comprised of the following activities:

1. ***Journey Videos*** – watching the selected virtual journeys as though the team were undertaking them as physical challenges. They should be encouraged to use their imagination. The team will need to write and submit a post-viewing journey report for each virtual journey they view.
2. ***Team Challenges*** – as a team, they must choose four challenges and complete them in a one-hour timeframe. They should think of the context from the virtual journey videos and answer appropriately filling in the worksheet.
3. ***Meal Challenge*** – the team must prepare one hot meal in a 30-minute time frame and then eat it together within 30 minutes to recreate a virtual campfire time. The team will need to decide on the meal and cooking method based on the ingredients and supplies the whole team has available. They may cook outside on a camp stove, so long as the whole team agrees to do so. Encourage Participants to use their imagination and have some fun!
4. ***Physical Activity Challenge*** – the team must plan a three-hour challenging physical activity. It should be something which pushes the whole team such as walking 15,000 steps in three hours, or something more imaginative. Account must be taken by the adult facilitator of any accessibility issues within the team that may make any physical activity more challenging. We want all Participants in the team to be able to engage in challenging activity and to be proud of what they are able to achieve within the three-hour period. The team may decide to complete their Physical Activity Challenge in an outdoor area and using more expedition type activities, e.g. walking up and down a tall building staircase or even engaging in a 3-hour hike. It must be done at the same time, and Participants should find a way of encouraging each other as a team.

At a minimum, Participants will need to have their Plan approved by their assessor and touch base with their Assessor at the start and end of their activities. Each Participant is responsible for uploading all worksheets and documentation onto their ORB account as they progress through the VBE.

***Leaders may incorporate additional ideas and resources:***Keep in mind any safety issues or risks when Participants are not together in a team. The team may decide to create an at-home camp site. They should be encouraged to incorporate as many aspects of a typical outdoor AJ as possible but must consider and prepare for the risks.

**Stage 5: Research Project (Exploration)**

The aim of this stage is for the team to complete and document a team research project.

* As a team they must select from the three listed themes and develop a team research project (Action Research) and complete the project within ten days of completing stage four. The team research project involves the entire team undertaking online research while sharing and learning from the personal experiences of others in the team.
* They must meet at least 3 times during this period to share their personal research findings for the team report as well as to share personal views from their own experience.

***For example*:** Conduct a research project about the impact of Covid-19 on the education of 13-15 year-olds in their local area. They could each survey ten friends and document the thoughts and feelings of those respondents, combined with the views of their own team. Learning from and sharing their own views as 13-15 year-olds reinforces the experiential learning aspect of the VBE.

* Participants must upload a copy of their team research project to their ORB.

1. **Leader Responsibilities Q & A**

Below are the answers to a few questions you may have on how to manage your team. Some answers vary depending on the team.

*Q****. Who is the Leader and what roles can they play?***

A. the VBE can be used by one adult to fulfil a number of different roles. The Google Classroom structure refers to any adult helper as a “teacher” and there can be numerous co-teachers. An Award Leader must request access to the VBE and may use this too themselves. Normally an AJ requires an AJ Supervisor, responsible for health and safety and management of the trip and an AJ Assessor, responsible for ensuring that learning objectives and the requirements of the Award have been met. In the VBE the one adult can play all these roles if they are happy to do so, or they can invite other adults to help as co-teachers. In this Q & A we will refer to the overall adult facilitator as the Leader.

*Q.* ***Are the Participants or Leaders scheduling the meetings for their team?*** A. The Planning component of the VBE is more demanding and important than what is typically required for a physical team AJ. It is up to the Participants to schedule their meetings and report to their Leader about their journey planning. The Leader will need to check in if they have not been informed of the proposed schedule.  
  
*Q.* ***Are meetings all set up and run through Google Classroom?***A. Participants can schedule meetings through Google classroom, email, or discuss other options with their team to determine the best time and way to meet.

*Q.* ***Can the Leader act as the Assessor?***A. Yes, the Leader may act as the Assessor. Please remember that in this role the Assessor is checking for attainment of the learning outcomes and ensuring that Participants meet the requirements of the Award as laid out in the Award Leaders handbook (available on the Award Leader Resources Portal – registration required)

*Q.* ***Can a parent be involved?***Under normal circumstances parents cannot be involved in a trip comprising team peers, working together. Under flexibilities brought in to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, an Award Leader may approve a parent to act as the Supervisor where a non-family member is not possible, but the parent must not intrude or disrupt the learning process and problem solving that the Participants are required to do on their own. The regular AJ standards remain intact, and any parental decisions (other than health and safety) that interferes with the leadership of the Participants may disqualify the journey.

*Q.****Does the Leader need to be present for the meetings? Does the Assessor or Supervisor need to be at the meetings?***A. The AJ Assessor needs to be checking in from time to time to assess if the Participants are completing assignments correctly and to help and observe as Participants learn the skills in the challenges and videos. The AJ Supervisor needs to also check in to see if the Participants are confidently prepared at the end of each stage to move onto the next stage. As mentioned above these roles may all be done by the same Award Leader **for the VBE**.

**Q. Could Silver or Gold Participants act as an Assessor for Bronze Participants?**A. If they are over the age of 18, are knowledgeable about the requirements of the AJ section of the Award and are appropriately vetted and approved by an Award Centre to act as a volunteer within your organisation they may be able to act as an AJ Assessor.

***Q. Can a Participant fail the VBE if a certain mark is not reached on their worksheets?***A. No – But when the Participant completes their worksheets and assignments, they must save the documents and upload them to their ORB and notify their Leader that they are complete. The Leader must review the assignments to confirm that the Participant has a clear understanding of the learning. If the Leader does not consider the Participant to be fully understanding of the material, they may ask the Participant to re-submit to better evidence their learning.

Please also note that we believe every Award Holder has worked hard to gain the recognition they deserve. Interventions by parents or other family members to assist and complete the Award are frowned upon and may lead to the refusal to grant the Award.

***Q. If a member of the team is struggling, what should a Leader do?***A. To encourage a positive experience, the Leader is to consider if the team is struggling and or if an individual team member is struggling. This inevitably happens in a field based AJ and the team would normally provide support each other and work on an area together. If it is apparent that one-on-one support is needed to gain a skill, the Leader/Assessor/Supervisor is free to contact the Participant and open a dialogue into strengthening a skill or overcoming a challenge. The Leader should encourage the Participant to reach out to work on any skills or issues with which they are struggling.  
   
***Q. How does a Participant record the VBE on their ORB?*** Participants must upload their VBE worksheets and assignments to their ORB as they go through the five stages. Documents from stages one, two, and three can be uploaded as a file to the Practice Journey section on their ORB. Documents from stages four and five can be uploaded as a file to the Qualifying Journey section on their ORB. The Leader is to ensure that all assignments and the team research project are completed and uploaded to the Participant’s ORB prior to submitting to the Award Office for approval.

1. **Getting Started!**

**Contact your State/Territory Award Office to register your Award Centre for the VBE**

1. ***You will be invited to be a co-teacher with a person from your Award State/Territory team***

You should not remove this person in case you need any assistance in the future with your team. They will not interfere or answer Participant queries, unless you request help from them.

1. ***Read the Welcome Introduction and Stages 1-5 in the Google Classroom to determine if this option is appropriate for your team.*** This is no easy option as we have combined some elements from both the Expedition and Exploration type of Adventurous Journeys. See our instructional video ***Steps to Getting Started in Google Classroom***.
2. ***Communicate the VBE option to your team***
   1. Invite Participants to read the Welcome Introduction and the VBE Checklist (Provided as separate email attachments upon registration). Once you confirm the final team of 4-8 people, you must invite them as “students” and you must “Assign/post” each activity in the Google classroom.
   2. This is also a good time to invite any “co-teachers” and explain in a post who is helping you and what role they will play e.g. “Please all welcome Mrs Brown as the AJ Assessor for this team, she will now be able to see all communications posted here and will be able to see your progress through the Google classroom site. If you have any queries about your training or the requirements of the exercises please post a question in the classroom – please note that all teachers can see all comments.”
3. ***Start your VBE***   
   Once students are invited (please check back on the student list to see who has accepted) and all activities posted, they can start completing the activities. Please note they have a maximum of 5 weeks to complete this virtual experience and put their documentation onto the ORB before the Classroom will be closed and archived.

If you as the Award leader experience any problems please contact your Award Office asap.

1. **Virtual Bronze Exploration (VBE) Requirements**

V 1.3

The Virtual Bronze Exploration (VBE) is a new temporary option (COVID-19 period, initially to Dec 2020) to completing the Adventurous Journey (AJ).

A proof of concept and pilot was developed and from this a template (using Google Classroom) was developed and the following requirements have been identified and approved by the International Award Foundation (IAF).

Award Centres and their Award Leaders may approve their Participants undertaking a VBE that they have customised subject to all of the following requirements being met.

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|  | **REQUIREMENTS** | **MIN. TIME** |
|  | The VBE will have 5 stages.  Stage 1: Preparation and training  Stage 2: Planning  Stage 3: Practice  Stage 4: Journey & Physical Activity  Stage 5: Research Project  The format established by Australia and Canada (using Google Classroom) and approved by the IAF will act as a template and minimum standard.  General Requirements:   1. To be completed within a 5-week period 2. The VBE to be facilitated and supervised by an AJ Assessor or AJ Supervisor approved by the Award Centre/Award Leader 3. The VBE to be logged on ORB and all documentation to be uploaded onto the ORB |  |
|  | 2.1 Complete virtual/cyber training based on the 4 topics and resource material provided in the VBE Package (Google Classroom)   1. Team Communication 2. Wellbeing and cyber responsibility – “Safe from Harm” 3. Research skills and project management 4. Physical Preparation (Min. 2 x 20 min Cardio physical activities) | 1.0 hr  40 mins |
| 2.2 Complete field based AJ training on the following topics:   1. Trip Planning 2. Equipment 3. Route planning, navigation and mapping 4. First aid and Risk management 5. Camp-craft | 1.5 hrs |
| 2.3 Complete a Training Assessment for each of the Training Topics | 1.0 hr |
|  | Complete and document a detailed planning process to become familiar with:   1. the virtual journey video format, 2. the Pre-Viewing Tasks, 3. the Team Challenges, 4. Full day meal plan (for the virtual journey) and meal preparation (min. one cooked meal), 5. Physical activity selection, 6. Research project selection and completion. | 1 hr |
|  | Pre-viewing and route preparation tasks  Allocated virtual journeys should be pre-viewed by specified team members (documented in the planning template) and discussed by the team (20 mins per route plus discussion time) | 1.5 hrs |
|  | Complete a Practice Session with a minimum:   1. 1 video journey (not to be used for the qualifying journey), 2. 1 team challenge, 3. 30 mins testing of the selected & agreed physical challenge, 4. Assessment of the research project. Minimum 1 team discussion and 1 hour of individual research. | 3.5 hrs |
|  | Complete a Virtual Qualifying Journey with the following minimum requirements:   1. 3 virtual journey videos with a minimum total of 2 hours of viewing, 2. Min 4 Team Challenges - 1 hour for all discussion and write up, 3. 3 hours of physical activity with the benchmark being 15,000 steps or a similar challenge suitable to the team’s capacity, 4. Complete feedback report after each video of 250 words each, 5. Cook one “joint” meal (lunch or dinner). 1 hr | 8 hrs |
|  | Complete a team research project with the following minimum features:   1. To be completed within 10 days of the Virtual Qualifying Journey, 2. Preparation to include learning about Action Research, 3. The topic to be familiar to all the team members so that each can bring some experiential learning to the team discussions, 4. Team members will undertake their own research (min 2 hours), 5. The team will meet at least 3 times for at least 30 minutes, 6. A final report to be prepared as a team in a format agreed with the VBE Assessor. | 5 hrs |

**Total Hours: 23+ hours**

**How to get started?**

**Contact your local office / division / National Office [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE] to register your Award Centre for the VBE**

* ***You will be invited to be a co-teacher to a unique Google Class assigned only to your Award Centre by a person at your local office / division / National Office [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE***
* You should not remove this person in case you need any assistance in the future with your group. They will not interfere or answer participant queries, unless you request help from them.
* Only students and fellow Award Leaders who you invite will have access to this class for data protection and privacy.
* ***Read the Welcome Introduction and Stages 1-5 in the Google Classroom to determine if this option is appropriate for your group.*** 
  + his is no easy option as we have combined some elements from both the Expedition and Exploration type of Adventurous Journeys. See our instructional video ***Steps to Getting Started in Google Classroom***.
* ***Communicate the VBE option to your group***
  + Invite participants to read the Welcome Introduction and the VBE Checklist (Provided as separate email attachments upon registration and included on the Google Classroom). Once you confirm the final group of 4-8 people, you must invite them as “students” and you must “Assign/post” each activity in the Google Classroom.
  + This is also a good time to invite any “co-teachers” and explain in a post who is helping you and what role they will play e.g. “Please all welcome Mrs Brown as the AJ Assessor for this group, she will now be able to see all communications posted here and will be able to see your progress through the google classroom site. If you have any queries about your training or the requirements of the exercises please post a question in the classroom – please note that all teachers can see all comments.”
* ***Start your VBE!***
  + Once students are invited (please check back on the student list to see who has accepted) and all activities posted, they can start completing the activities. Please note they have a maximum of 5 weeks to complete this virtual experience and put their documentation onto the ORB before the classroom will be closed and archived.

If you as the Award leader experience any problems, please contact [INSTERT RELEVANT DETAILS] asap.