

MODULE 3 · LEARNER GUIDE

STAFFING & SUPERVISION

The cornerstones of learning safely. Not how many adults — but how those adults are deployed, briefed, and supported to manage risk and respond to change.

1 THE THREE CORNERSTONES OF LEARNING SAFELY

Module 2 gave you the tools to assess risk. This module is about the people who carry that out on the day. The most common causes of EOTC incidents are not unusual hazards — they are **inadequate staff competence, poor systems and processes (or failure to apply them), and poor supervision structure.**

CORNERSTONE 1

Clear roles & responsibilities

Every adult knows what they're responsible for, who they're responsible for, and what they're not. Overlaps and shared duties are explicit, not assumed.

CORNERSTONE 2

Effective supervision structures

How adults are deployed across the activity — not just how many. Designed for normal operations *and* emergency response.

CORNERSTONE 3

Competent staff

The number and competence of leaders is matched to the demands of the activity, the group, the location, and the day.

2 LET'S NO LONGER TALK RATIOS

Schools often plan EOTC supervision by ratio: *one adult per eight students*. Ratios are easy to apply, but they are a blunt tool. They tell you how many adults you need; they don't tell you how to keep students safe.

RATIOS ALONE

What ratios miss

- Provide a false sense of security — assume coverage without clarity of roles
- Don't adapt to terrain, weather, or group dynamics
- Ignore the quality and competence of supervisors
- Don't clarify who is responsible for what, or where

SUPERVISION STRUCTURES

What structures add

- Define roles — lead, middle, tail-end, first-aid, etc.
- Support dynamic decision-making as conditions change
- Match coverage to terrain and risk
- Build in communication and emergency response
- Encourage professional judgement over rule-following

3 SIX FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING YOUR STRUCTURE

The group

Age, experience, prior outdoor exposure, special needs, behavioural considerations.

The activity & environment

Complexity, terrain, weather exposure, water, remoteness, time of year.

Staffing

How many adults, who they are, what other roles they hold (driver, cook, first-aider).

Competence

Skills, qualifications, current first aid, prior experience with this activity / context.

Supervision methods

Lead/middle/tail · Zoned · Allocated group · Dynamic · Buddy. See the Methods reference card.

Communication & emergencies

Briefings, check-ins, comms tools, chain of command, escalation paths.

4 COMMUNICATION IS THE GLUE

An effective structure relies on clear communication, defined responsibilities, and a shared understanding of the management strategies. **Assume people haven't read what you sent them.** Use briefings to bring everyone onto the same page.

PRE-EVENT BRIEFING

Outline the programme, roles, students of concern, comms plan, weather contingencies, and emergency procedures. Allow time for questions.

ON-THE-DAY BRIEFING

Mandatory pre-activity briefing covering risks and how they will be managed. Regular check-ins throughout. Check for understanding, don't just "tell".

5 MULTIPLE PCBUS — OVERLAPPING DUTIES

When more than one organisation is involved (e.g. school plus a third-party provider), each **PCBU** has a duty to **consult**, **cooperate** and **coordinate**. Each must discharge their duty *to the extent possible based on their ability to influence and control the matter*. Be very clear on who owns which duty — and where duties overlap.

EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION — IN FIVE LINES

① Have a process for setting an effective supervision structure. ② Match number and competence of leaders to the activity, group, location, and day. ③ At a minimum, meet the accepted good practice for the activity. ④ The person approving the structure must have, or source, the competence to do so. ⑤ Set the structure to deal with emergencies, not just normal operations.