



— TE KURA O TITITEA —
MOUNT ASPIRING COLLEGE

OUTDOOR PURSUITS STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026





Welcome

Kia ora and welcome to Mount Aspiring College Outdoor Pursuits

At Mount Aspiring College our ākonga have the opportunity to enrich their learning through doing a course of Outdoor Pursuits. We have an abundance of spectacular outdoor venues across our rohe, and we love bringing learning alive for our students by undertaking a wide variety of adventurous activities in some very special places.

Our staff are extremely passionate about the outdoors and have abundant skills and knowledge to be the kaiārahi that will safely care for our rangatahi in the outdoors.

School Values in Outdoor Pursuits

Our school values represent what we stand for as a school community and inform how we treat ourselves, each other and our environment. In Outdoor Pursuits we strive to model and reinforce these values in all the experiences we share with our ākonga.

- Whanaungatanga:** We develop strong bonds within our class groups through shared adventures on which we have to look after each other's physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Manaakitanga:** We look after each other. We show mutual respect and support when we awahi to each other.
- Tikanga:** We follow protocols and guidelines for how to act in the outdoors and how to show our respect for the environment and the atua associated with each place.
- Aroha:** We act with empathy, compassion and kindness to others in our groups.
- Ihi:** We grow resilience through being challenged and overcoming adversity.
- Kaitiakitanga:** We show guardianship for our precious maunga, roto, awa and ngahere.

Overview of Outdoor Pursuits

Outdoor Pursuits (OP) gives students the opportunity to learn skills and knowledge and gain NCEA credits in a range of outdoor related contexts. A strength of the course is that students have weekly practical lessons where they learn and practice skills in a range of outdoor venues.

For each student there will be one day a week when OP is their afternoon period, and this is the day that the practical session is scheduled. On this day the class will leave school at lunchtime and be out doing activities until about 5.30pm. It is expected that students avoid scheduling after school activities or work for that day so that they can fully participate in the course. There are three other timetabled periods for OP across the week. Two of them are OP lessons which are framed around outdoor related teaching and reflection. The final lesson is set up as a senior study class. In Term 3 we need to leave an hour earlier than usual in order to have sufficient time on the snow for a snowsports lesson. This means students will miss their period 4 class on that day. It is expected that they use their study period to catch up on any work missed.

Each Outdoor Pursuits class has a specialist teacher who facilitates all the learning for their ākongā. They will teach all lessons as well as instruct on the practical sessions. In addition, we employ qualified outdoor instructors for the practical sessions. Each class will have 1 or more instructors assisting the teacher for every practical session.

There are no prerequisites for students wishing to take an OP course. It is far more important to us that the students have a positive attitude and a willingness to work well with others and give every activity their best effort. Safety is paramount and we insist that students comply with all safety expectations.

No student will be forced to do any activity. We operate with a philosophy of challenge by choice.



Level 1 Outdoor Pursuits

What you can expect

This programme is designed to offer an introduction to a range of Outdoor Pursuits.

The goal of the course is to:

- Teach fundamental outdoor skills
- improve students' confidence in the outdoors
- encourage students to be safe and responsible in the outdoors
- Emphasise the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga through groupwork.

Activities

The activities in Level 1 Outdoor Pursuits usually include the following:

- Canoeing (on Lake and Upper Clutha River)
- Canyoning
- Rock climbing
- Abseiling
- Tramping and camping
- Navigation
- Service
- Skiing or Snowboarding
- Nordic Skiing

Extended trips

We offer selected opportunities for students to do extended (overnight) trips. These are optional and incur additional costs.

Additional extended duration trips planned are:

- An overnight tramp to Fernburn Hut.
- An overnight Nordic ski trip to a hut at the Snow Farm.

Assessment

There are opportunities to gain NCEA credits through the Outdoor Pursuits course. These are predominantly Level 1 Unit Standards in Outdoor Education. Up to 20 credits are available.

Course related costs

A request for a contribution towards course costs will be sent out at the start of Term 1.

The costs below are approximate and subject to confirmation.

Base Cost (4 terms) \$585

This covers transport, specialist instructors and venue costs for all weekly afternoon activities. It also includes an overnight tramp in Term 2.

Additional costs (for optional activities):

Snowsports (5 lessons): \$235

Overnight Snow Farm trip: \$145

A lift pass and snowsports equipment is also required if participating in the snowsports lessons.

For students without a season pass, day passes are available for \$10 per day. Equipment rental is also available for \$10 per day.

Level 2 Outdoor Pursuits

What you can expect

This programme is designed to provide a greater level of challenge for students.

The goals of the course are to:

- Develop new outdoor skills
- improve students' confidence in the outdoors
- increase the level of challenge and mastery of specific skills
- emphasise the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga through groupwork.

Activities

The activities in Level 2 Outdoor Pursuits usually include the following:

- Whitewater kayaking, rafting and/ or canoeing
- Rock climbing (top-rope and option to lead)
- Tramping and bushcraft
- Service
- Skiing or Snowboarding
- Alpine camping skills (snowcaving)

Extended trips

We offer selected opportunities for students to do extended (overnight) trips. These are optional and incur additional costs.

For 2025 the extended and overnight trips planned to be offered are

- A 3 day tramp on the Routeburn Track
- A snowcaving trip at the Snow Farm

Assessment

There are opportunities to gain NCEA credits through the Outdoor Pursuits course. These are predominantly Level 2 Unit Standards in Outdoor Education. Up to 20 credits are available.

Course related costs

A request for a contribution towards course costs will be sent out at the start of Term 1.

Estimates shown.

Base Cost (4 terms) \$630

This covers transport, specialist instructors and venue costs for all weekly afternoon activities.

Additional costs (for optional activities):

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Snowsports (5 lessons): | \$235 |
| Routeburn tramp Term 2: | \$180 |
| Snowcaving Term 3: | \$145 |

A lift pass and snowsports equipment is also required if participating in the snowsports lessons.

For students without a season pass, day passes are available for \$10 per day. Equipment rental is also available for \$10 per day.

Level 3 Outdoor Pursuits

What you can expect

This programme is designed to offer the most challenge and set up students to be more independent in the outdoors.

Activities

The general theme is that practical sessions in Term 1 are based around whitewater activities (kayaking and rafting), and the rest of the year is land based (climbing, tramping and alpine).

- Whitewater Kayaking and Rafting
- Rock climbing
- Tramping
- Outdoor leadership skills
- Skiing or Snowboarding
- Alpine camping
- Mountaineering skills (optional alternative to snowsports)

Extended and overnight trips

There are several optional extended or overnight trips offered. There are additional costs associated with these trips.

1. Shotover or Pukaki River kayaking day trip
2. Mt Cook rock climbing trip
3. Alpine snowcaving or snowshoeing trip

Assessment

There are opportunities to gain NCEA credits through the Outdoor Pursuits course. These are predominantly Level 3 Unit Standards in Outdoor Education. Up to 20 credits are available.

Course related costs

A request for a contribution towards course costs will be sent out at the start of Term 1.

Estimates shown

Base Cost (4 terms): \$710

This covers transport, specialist instructors and venue costs for all weekly afternoon activities. Also includes the Shotover kayak trip.

Additional costs (for optional activities):

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Snowsports (5 lessons): | \$235 |
| Shotover River trip: | \$90 |
| Aoraki Mount Cook overnight trip | \$160 |

A lift pass and snowsports equipment is also required if participating in the snowsports lessons.

For students without a season pass, day passes are available for \$10 per day. Equipment rental is also available for \$10 per day.

Clothing and equipment

We are able to supply most of the equipment for student use on our activities. We need students to be dressed appropriately for each activity, and the lists below will serve as a guide as to what is expected.

We do maintain a small supply of clothing and equipment that can be loaned to students who are unable to source their own outdoor clothing and equipment.

A comprehensive gear list will be supplied prior to each trip or activity.

Kayaking / rafting / canoeing

All Outdoor Pursuits classes

MAC will supply the following:

- Kayaks, rafts, paddles, pfd's, helmets
- Neoprene booties
- Paddle jackets

Students should have the following items:

(we do have some for loan if needed)

- Wetsuit: 2/3mm steamer
OR
- Polypropylene top and pants, and boardshorts.

Canyoning

Level 1 Outdoor Pursuits classes

MAC will supply the following:

- Harnesses with seat protectors
- Neoprene booties
- Helmets
- Paddle jackets

Students should bring the following items:

(we do have some for loan if needed)

- Wetsuit: 2/3mm steamer
- Sturdy shoes that can get wet

Mountain biking

Level 1 and 2 Outdoor Pursuits classes

We do not supply bikes (apart from a couple we keep to loan out in exceptional cases). We encourage students to use their own bike (if they have one) or to arrange to borrow a bike from a family member or friend.

Mountain bike: Your mountain bike needs to be safe to ride. It needs brakes that work and be mechanically sound. We will check bikes before we go riding.

We do our mountain biking on single track, forest floor and other unpaved environments. On these tracks you will encounter rocks, wash-outs, ruts, loose gravel, mud, sand, tree roots, steep gradients and small drop-offs. Your bike needs to be able to handle this terrain.

The ideal bike is a cross country style bike with front suspension and disc brakes. A full suspension bike is a plusher ride, but is not essential.

Students should bring the following items (we have some for loan if needed)

- Bike helmet
- Bike gloves (recommended)
- Shorts and warm top layers
- Windproof jacket
- Drink bottle or water bladder
- Spare tube of correct size for bike
- Small backpack for personal gear

Tramping / camping

Level 1 and 2 Outdoor Pursuits classes

Students should have the following items:
(we do have some items for loan if needed)

- Tramping pack: minimum 65 litre.
- Pack liner
- Waterproof Raincoat
- Waterproof pants (optional)
- Sleeping Bag (3 season)
- Tramping Boots
- Tramping socks
- Polypropylene tops and pants
- Warm fleece or merino top
- Puffer jacket
- Gloves and beanie
- Headtorch
- Water bottle

MAC can supply the following:

- Cookers
- Gaiters
- Backpacks (limited)
- Boots (limited)

Snowsports

All classes

Students ideally have their own equipment.

They can rent equipment (\$10 per week) if they do not have their own gear.

They need

- Skis boots and poles
OR
- Snowboard and boots
- Helmet
- Goggles
- Appropriate snow clothing (pants and jacket)

Alpine Trips

All classes

For trips above the snowline they will need

- Snow jacket and pants
- Sunglasses and/or goggles
- Ski Gloves

MAC can supply the following:

- Snow Safety equipment (if required)
- Gaiters
- Backpacks (limited numbers)
- Boots (limited numbers)
- Snowshoes, ice axes, crampons etc



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Term 3 Snowsports options

Overview

The Term 3 programme includes a block of snowsports lessons as well as some other alpine experiences.

The snowsports lessons are provided by Cardrona / Treble Cone. They are 2 hour group lessons and include NCEA assessment.

[Level 1 OP](#) will get 5 weeks of lessons at Treble Cone, and an overnight trip to a Snow Farm Hut.

[Level 2 OP](#) will get 5 weeks of lessons at Treble Cone or Cardrona, and an overnight snowcaving trip.

[Level 3 OP](#) will get 5 weeks of lessons at Treble Cone, and options for a backcountry alpine trip or a snowcaving trip.

[Reserve days are built into the programme to allow for weather closures.](#)

Costs

The snowsports lesson programme fees are paid directly to Cardrona. A link to the payments page will be sent to families prior to the winter. On this page payment can be made for the lesson package, student season passes and rental packages (if required). Payment can also be made at the Cardrona office prior to the winter.

Refunds

Refunds will only be considered for students who are unable to complete half or more of the programme due to injury or illness. The OP Department will forward requests for refund consideration to Cardrona. Medical certificates may be required.

Alternate Options

The snowsports lesson package is optional. Students may opt out of that part of the OP programme and will remain at school in a study class for those weeks that lessons are scheduled. We will also refund the portion of the OP fees related to the transport for the snowsports package. The students can still participate in other programme options such as alpine, nordic or overnight trips.

We will not take students to the skifield if they are not participating in the lesson programme.

[Level 3 OP](#) students may also choose to receive mountaineering skills instruction (if offered) instead of snowsports lessons.

Some lesson options may not be offered:

We need to create viable groups at each ability level for snowsports lessons. This can be problematic for beginners and all snowboarders. If there are insufficient numbers to make a viable group we may be able to offer an alternate day to do lessons, but may not always be possible due to timetable constraints.

Equipment and rentals

Rental is available. The cost is \$10 per week, paid as a lump sum for the duration of the programme.

We require students to have a helmet, goggles and gloves. We only keep a few items to loan to students in exceptional cases.

Lift passes

Local student season pass (\$249 in 2024) or day passes (\$10 per session)

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to be experienced?

No. We can teach you everything.

Can I miss the things I don't like?

We expect you to try everything. If you need help, we will provide it. You are expected to attend all sessions and participate to the best of your ability.

Can I do OP for the first time in Level 3?

Yes, we do not insist on prerequisites. All we ask is that you have a good attitude and give everything your best effort.

Do I have to do kayaking? I hate it.

We will try and encourage you to overcome fears. If needed we have other watercraft options that will help you feel less afraid when on the river.

Do I have to buy a mountain bike for OP?

No. We don't want you to have to buy expensive new equipment for OP if you are not going to use it outside of school. You should try borrowing or renting items that we cannot provide for you. As a last resort you could miss out on a few sessions if you couldn't get the gear.

Do we get time to ski by ourselves?

Rarely. Most of the time we are on the skifield you will be in a group lesson. Sometimes we have a spare day at the end of the season that can be a free ski opportunity.

I don't own a wetsuit / tramping boots etc...

It is a bit like "ask 3, then me". See if your family or friends have something you can borrow (thank them profusely), and if you have no joy then come and ask the OP Department. We keep a few items of most things to lend as a last resort.

Can I do Snowboarding?

We will try and get you into a group. If there are not enough snowboarders on your OP Day then we may need to move you to an alternate day, or suggest you try skiing. It is easier to make skiing groups as 75% of our students are skiers.

I have work at 5pm. Will I be back in time?

We are usually always back by 5.30pm. It is best to avoid having work or other commitments close to that time on the day of your OP practical.

Are the credits just for Achieved?

Most assessments are Unit Standards, which can only get an Achieved grade. The credits gained do count towards NCEA. There are also 1 or 2 Achievement Standards in each course.

I missed a session of OP. Will I get a refund?

The course is costed for the whole programme. We cannot refund for occasional sessions missed. However, if a student is legitimately unable to participate for a long duration (eg injury) then a request for a partial reimbursement will be considered. Overnight trips are charged separately so that only those that attend are charged.

Can I take my phone on OP?

We need students to be attentive and focused when out on OP, and phones can be a distraction. Level 1 OP students need to leave their phones in a secure box at the OP shed while on practical OP. Level 2 and 3 students may take their phones with them, but the phones must be left in the vans or in their bags and not be out and in use during the activity.

Why can't I wear my t-shirt and hoodie?

We have expectations about what clothing is suitable for an activity. Cotton is never OK for an activity you might get wet for (eg kayaking) but may be fine when all you need is to keep the sun off your skin (eg climbing).

Safety Management

Safety of our staff and students is of paramount importance.

We employ staff and instructors who are qualified and competent in a range of outdoor disciplines.

We have a comprehensive Safety Management System which has been audited and certified by AdventureMark®.

This provides assurance that our programmes match the highest standards applicable in the outdoor industry.





We look forward to a fantastic year in Outdoor Pursuits.



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