Southern Utah University, Outdoor Recreation in Parks and Tourism

Essential Eligibility Criteria

Revised: 06/23/2026

Program Overview

The Outdoor Recreation in Parks and Tourism (ORPT) program at Southern Utah University integrates academic coursework with experiential, field-based learning in outdoor environments. Many ORPT courses include activities such as hiking, backpacking, winter travel and camping, rock climbing, canyoneering, rappelling, mountain biking, river and flatwater paddling, challenge course initiatives, and other outdoor recreation experiences.

Field based courses take place across the diverse landscapes of Southern Utah and beyond, including desert, sub-alpine environments, slot canyons, rivers, slickrock terrain, and remote backcountry settings, in all seasons and weather conditions.

Participation in ORPT field based courses involves exposure to inherent risks, including physical exertion, environmental hazards, variable weather, remote locations, and group living. Outdoor recreation activities are inherently dangerous, and despite careful planning, instruction, and risk management practices, the possibility of injury, illness, or death cannot be eliminated.

These Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) describe the fundamental functional requirements necessary for students to meaningfully participate in ORPT courses and achieve course learning outcomes.

Commitment to Access and Inclusion

Southern Utah University and the ORPT program seek to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for all students, including individuals with diverse abilities. The ORPT program does not exclude participants based on ability. These EEC are intended to clearly communicate course expectations related to safety, learning objectives, and group functioning.

Students who anticipate barriers to participation are encouraged to contact the course instructor, the ORPT Program Director (Jason Burton - jasonburton@suu.edu), and/or the SUU Disability Resource Center as early as possible to discuss potential reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations will be considered in accordance with University policy, provided that such accommodations do not fundamentally alter the essential nature, learning outcomes, or safety requirements of the course.

Universal Essential Eligibility Criteria

All participants in ORPT field-based courses must be able to:

1. Engage in Field-Based Learning
    - Participate in outdoor activities that include travel over uneven, rugged, or variable terrain that may include elevation change, exposure, water, snow, ice, sand, or rock.
    - Manage personal health and well-being, including nutrition, hydration, medication, personal hygiene, toileting, and self-care independently or with the assistance of a companion (excluding course instructors).
    - Sustain physical activity for extended periods in changing and potentially uncomfortable environmental conditions.
    - Monitor and communicate changes in personal physical or mental health to instructors in a timely manner.
2. Sustain Mental and Emotional Engagement
    - Remain alert and attentive during instruction and group activities.
    - Manage the cognitive and emotional demands of outdoor learning, including uncertainty, problem-solving, stress, discomfort, fatigue, and changing conditions.
    - Demonstrate emotional regulation and a willingness to engage respectfully within group dynamics during extended periods of close proximity and shared responsibility.
3. Judgment, Communication, and Risk Management
    - Be able to independently recognize risks including environmental and human hazards.
    - Understand and follow verbal and written instructions related to safety, logistics, and learning activities. Instruction is predominantly delivered in English; fluency is not required.
    - Communicate effectively with instructors and peers regarding needs, concerns, hazards, and emergencies using verbal, visual, or agreed-upon signals.
    - Recognize and respond appropriately to environmental hazards, which may include but are not limited to: falling objects, loose or unstable rock, cliff edges, uneven terrain, extreme temperatures, water hazards (moving or still), wildlife, and insects.
    - Act responsibly and exercise sound judgment around hazards and risks, even when not under direct supervision.
4. Travel and Live Outdoors
    - Withstand environmental conditions common to Southern Utah, including temperatures below freezing and exceeding 90°F, intense sun exposure, wind, precipitation, and limited shade.

- Travel in outdoor environments while carrying personal and/or group equipment during day trips, overnight trips, and multi-day expeditions.
- Live and function in remote settings where immediate access to medical care, communication, and evacuation may be limited or delayed.

5. Contribute to a Learning Community
    - Participate cooperatively in a group setting, including shared responsibilities such as travel logistics, camp setup, meal preparation, equipment care, and Leave No Trace practices.
    - Maintain respectful behavior toward peers, instructors, local communities, and natural environments.
    - Communicate ideas, feedback, and concerns constructively in both individual and group contexts.
6. Transportation
    - Travel by passenger vehicle (e.g., large-capacity vans) to and from activity sites.
    - Enter and exit university transportation independently or with the assistance of a companion.
    - Students unable to utilize university transportation may choose to travel independently, including when transporting a service animal, provided they meet course requirements and logistics.

Note, additional EEC may be required by specific courses and will be included in the course syllabus.