

The International Award was founded by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh in 1956, in conjunction with Kurt Hahn, the German educationalist. Both were concerned that young people's development was lacking in certain key areas, and they resolved to create a programme that would be a "do-it-yourself kit in the art of civilised living".

Hahn persuaded Prince Philip to chair a committee to oversee the programme's development. It was this committee that decided the Award should adopt the principle of no competition and no membership requirements. In addition, it would respond to Hahn's concern about the decline of compassion, skills, physical fitness and initiative in young people.

The programme took the name of its founder and leader: The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. It later became known as The International Award for Young People for participants outside the UK. The subsequent spread of the Award across the globe is evidence of the universal appeal of the programme and the vision of its founder. However, even Prince Philip admits that this took him by surprise. "When the first trial of the Award was launched in 1956, no one had any idea quite what would happen. In the event it was an instant success and the Award has been growing and expanding worldwide ever since." It has now spread to 126 countries and the goal is to have 1,000,000 young people participating in the programme by the end of the decade.

The International Award is an exciting self-development programme available to all young people between the ages of 14 and 25. It aims to equip them with life skills to make a difference to themselves, their communities and the world. Young people who do the Award discover what they are made of, make an impact on their community, develop a set of life skills and most of all, they have fun!

The Award is not an organisation, but a programme. It can be undertaken at different levels, Bronze, Silver



and Gold. All levels have 4 sections – service, skills, physical recreation and an adventurous journey.

Young people can start the Bronze award at 14 years old and they undertake to show commitment in carrying out an activity for 1 hour per week for 3 months in two of the above sections and for 6 months in the third section. For example, a broad programme choice could include planning and carrying out charitable fundraising activities for 3 months, learning a musical instrument for 6 months and improving basketball techniques for 3 months. The adventurous journey aims "to encourage a spirit of adventure and discovery whilst undertaking a journey in a group". At Bronze level the commitment could be to walk in groups of 4 – 7 people for 6 hours a day for two days, camping and cooking for themselves overnight. For some people, participation in this award is the beginning of a lifelong interest in a particular skill or outdoor pursuit. Silver and Gold levels of the award require progressively longer commitment times and the Gold requires an additional 5 day/4 night residential project which could involve a conservation/clean-up project or constructing houses for poor communities.

