Health, Physical Education and Recreation

Department of Health, Physical Education & Recreation
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The Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER) is committed to excellence in offering courses within the discipline of physical education and related disciplines. The courses provide the foundation for an undergraduate major that prepares students for leadership roles in health and fitness or outdoor recreation as well as minors and occupational endorsement certificates within the discipline. In addition, the department offers a variety of courses for students from other fields who wish to learn new physical skills and/or develop personal wellness.

Enrolling in Health, Physical Education and Recreation Courses

Acknowledgement of Risk, Release of Liability and Medical Questionnaire Form: During the first class session, students will receive information about the course. A verbal description will be provided about the inherent risks associated with specific areas and activities. Students may be asked to complete an acknowledgment of risk form and/or a release of liability statement and provide personal medical information and numbers. Students may be asked to obtain a physical examination and medical consent from a health professional before participation in classes.

Minors: Sixteen- and 17-year-old students must receive department chair approval before they will be allowed to enroll in courses. Students under 16 cannot enroll in HPER classes. Approved students must also meet the university’s Secondary School Student Enrollment Requirements (https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicpoliciesprocesses/academicstandardsregulations/secondarystudents/).

The university or the department reserves the right to deny or discontinue the enrollment of a student in a course or courses if the university or the department determines that the student lacks the maturity, intellectual ability or academic preparedness to participate on an equal footing with other students, or if it is otherwise not in the best interest of the university or the department for the student to participate.

Behavioral Expectations: Due to the inherent risks involved in activity courses, HPER’s safety and risk management policies and procedures are strictly enforced. Students are expected to comply with all policies and procedures. HPER reserves the right to withdraw from a course any student(s) who fail(s) to demonstrate adherence to policy that may pose a safety risk to themselves or others.

Any financial reimbursements related to such withdrawals are subject to standard university refund policies.

Outdoor/Adventure Courses: HPER provides outdoor adventure education through the use of hands-on techniques. Course offerings are diverse and include topics such as backpacking, rock climbing, sea kayaking, winter camping, emergency medicine and wilderness leadership. Outdoor/adventure classes are held in Alaska’s wilderness, an environment that can pose a risk to even the most experienced outdoor leader.

Students may be required to perform activities in extremely inclement weather i.e., rain, sleet, snow, wind or sub-zero temperatures. Additionally, there is an assumption that a minimum level of physical fitness is needed to succeed in and enjoy many of the activities. Consequently, before enrolling in these courses, students should review the following information.

1. Physical Fitness Level: Many 100-level courses have been designed for the student with an average level of fitness and health, e.g., a student would be expected to comfortably travel five miles over easy terrain. If a higher than average fitness level is required, a special note will identify the necessary level of fitness.
   a. Good fitness is defined as above-average fitness relative to a typical, healthy adult. Courses that require good fitness will involve a moderate degree of physical activity, and may involve travel over challenging terrain, carrying a pack weighing up to 50 pounds, or multiple hours of exercise. A student who is physically or mentally unprepared to withstand a moderate amount of exercise should not enroll in the course.
   b. Excellent fitness is defined as possessing health of outstanding quality or being in remarkably good physical condition. Excellent fitness is required for expedition courses. Expedition courses include difficult to extremely difficult terrain on uneven and steep ground with rapidly increasing elevation while carrying a backpack that may weigh 50 pounds or more in less than ideal weather. A student who is physically or mentally unprepared to withstand an intense amount of exercise with challenging conditions should not enroll in the course.

2. Venue and Terrain Difficulty: Students will hike and travel in a variety of environments in outdoor/adventure courses. The following breakdown provides an overview of terrain difficulty.
   a. Easy terrain can be negotiated by novices. Traveling is usually done on well-maintained trail systems; it can include hiking, skiing or snowshoeing; elevation gains/losses generally under 500 feet per mile; and stream crossings of calf-deep or less. Off-trail touring includes traveling on firm ground over gentle terrain.
   b. Moderate terrain requires good physical fitness. Traveling is usually done on rugged trails or off-trail. The hiking often includes inclines/declines of 500 to 1,500 feet per mile. Off-trail travel can include bushwhacking; uneven, wet or marshy ground; scrambling up, over or around small terrain features; and river crossings up to knee deep.
   c. Difficult terrain requires excellent physical fitness. Traveling is usually done offtrail and can include uneven, challenging ground; lack of firm footing; steep tundra, rock or scree; wet, snowy or icy slopes, and thigh- to waist-deep river crossings. Specialized gear may be required for travel.
d. Extremely difficult terrain requires excellent physical fitness. Traveling is done off trail and participants must be prepared to endure all of the features listed under “difficult terrain” for long hours and potentially multiple days. Specialized gear is usually required for travel.

3. Student Health Insurance: Students enrolling in many outdoor/adventure activity courses are provided with basic health insurance coverage during the field sessions only. This policy is intended to supplement personal policies and does not include the cost of emergency evacuation.