

Canoe Leader Assessment Notes

Technical Syllabus

In both open water and moving water environments Canoe Leaders are expected to demonstrate appropriate paddling ability to fulfil their leadership role. Paddlers should be able to perform all the tasks on both sides i.e. bilaterally. It is expected that they will also have a range of effective cross-deck strokes as well as a range of techniques suitable for paddling on the upstream and downstream side of their boat. As a result they should be able to select which of the available techniques is best suited to any given situation.

Paddlers are expected to be able to paddle solo and as part of a tandem crew. Where the ability to paddle solo is impaired, paddlers may opt for a tandem only assessment. When paddling as part of a tandem crew the paddler is expected to be able to paddle at both bow and stern and it is expected that the other crewmember will be of a similar standard.

The essence of the requirement to be able to paddle solo and tandem is that tandem paddlers can cope if their partner becomes incapacitated, falls out, or is needed to join another crew. Whilst a solo paddler may need to be able to bring another paddler into their craft to help them. Paddlers would normally participate in their Leadership course as per their normal paddling preference (i.e. solo or tandem), but would be required to spend a short amount of time dealing with 'what if' type incidents.

For example;

- For tandem paddlers, could they solo paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade and recover their swimming partner back into their canoe
- For solo paddlers, could they carry a passenger and paddle a rapid of the appropriate grade, to reunite them with their own craft, or manoeuvre into position to rescue a pinned boat

Candidates are also expected to lead/look after both solo and tandem crews, they therefore need to understand the differences between solo and tandem boats. One way this may be assessed is to have tandem and solo paddlers to lead on the assessments.

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

A.1 Lifting, carrying, launching and landing

- Paddlers should demonstrate the principles of safe lifting and carrying.
- Paddlers should use and understand appropriate lifting and carrying techniques.
- Paddlers should be able to communicate and ensure that their group follow these principles.
- Paddlers should be able to launch and land in a variety of environments, minimising damage to the bank.

A.2 Efficient and effective open water skills

Paddle effectively up, down and across a force 4 wind: Effective trim should be evident throughout. Paddlers should demonstrate a polished, fluent and adaptive forward paddling technique throughout the assessment. This should allow them to accelerate, cruise at a steady speed and carry speed through their turns.

Rafting: Paddlers should be able to construct at least one style of raft and demonstrate awareness of safety issues relating to boat positioning or gaps, and safety issues related to ropes and knots.

Sailing: Paddlers should be able to construct a simple downwind sailing rig for use with rafted boats. They should also be able to identify potential safety issues and know how to prevent or deal with them.

A.3 Efficient and effective grade 2 river running skills

Upstream manoeuvres (ferries and S-turns): Paddlers should be able to cross a consistent grade 2 flow with an effective ferry glide. The craft should stay within the paddler's control at all times and there should be minimal loss of height throughout the manoeuvre.

Checking, setting and reverse ferry gliding: Paddlers should show initiation of a reverse ferry glide from mid-current, and create the appropriate ferrying angle to go in the desired direction.

Checking, setting and reverse ferry gliding should be used to alter the boat's position on the river, with a view to selecting a suitable line down a rapid and avoiding obstacles. Paddlers should demonstrate the safe negotiation of bends where the main current runs under trees.

Setting into eddies: from facing downstream, reverse ferry gliding into the eddy.

Note: whilst demonstrating reverse ferry gliding, it is not necessary for the paddler to enter the main current, but rather the manoeuvres should be performed whilst in the main current.

Eddy turns both into and out of the current: Paddlers should demonstrate accurate utilisation of initial positioning, speed and the angle of the boat, allied to the correct degree of tilt and trim. Awareness of the speed of current, size of eddy, tilt, trim and the desired position in the river after the manoeuvre should be evident, as well as being appropriate for the particular eddy.

Supporting and edging: Paddlers should demonstrate a support on the paddle side when in grade 2 flow.

A.4 Lining

Paddlers should demonstrate lining: the line should be appropriate for the task i.e. floating, long enough (15m), knot free and comfortable to operate.

A.5 Poling

Paddlers should demonstrate poling with the current on grade 1-2 water. Paddlers should have an effective stance and a dynamic poling action.

Paddlers should demonstrate upstream poling, with control of the boat when ascending a grade 1 rapid.

The assessment locations for poling should be venues where poling is appropriate i.e. shallow water.

A.6 Navigation

The provider should check the paddler's ability to use grid references, take and follow a bearing, and identify simple contour features.

Part B – Rescue Skills

B.1 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based rescue skills in open water

- Open water self-rescue: paddlers should demonstrate a self-rescue in deep water i.e. getting into a swamped boat and paddling it to shore.
- Open water deep water rescue: paddlers should demonstrate a method of recovering a capsized paddler into a canoe. The rescue should be performed in deep water and should include the rescue of the paddler's capsized canoe. The whole manoeuvre should be performed without assistance.
- Paddlers should demonstrate an all-in rescue of a swamped raft in deep water.
- Paddlers should demonstrate a rescue from a raft under power (sail) of a 'man overboard' scenario.
- Open water towing: paddlers should demonstrate a suitable towing system (with release) over a distance of 50m. The system must be quickly and securely attached, and be capable of quick release.

B.2 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based rescue skills on moving water

- Self-rescue: paddlers should show how swim lines are chosen, attached and utilised in self-rescue.
- Throwline rescue: paddlers should demonstrate throwing a throwline to rescue a swimmer descending a rapid. It is not envisaged that anyone should need to swim down the river (e.g. a twig could be used as the target) but the provider should be satisfied that the rope would land within reach of the swimmer, and that the rescuer would not be pulled off balance.
- Boat recovery of person and equipment: paddlers should demonstrate the appropriate recovery of a swimmer and their equipment at the bottom of a rapid.

B.3 Incident management and first aid in the Leadership environment

Paddlers should be able to deal with a simple scenario as set by the provider.

B.4 Effective group leader and group member in rescues and incidents

This should be assessed with B.3; when the paddler takes the part of 'student'/'team member' when other paddlers are leading the rescue scenario.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles (e.g. CLAP)

Paddlers should use appropriate leadership strategies throughout the assessment.

C.2 Appropriate leadership strategies, judgement and decision-making:

On open water: Paddlers should be able to lead groups safely on open water up to force 4; controlling the group and facilitating clear communication within the group.

On moving water: Paddlers should be able to lead groups safely on moving water up to grade 2, including being able to select appropriate lines on rapids, control the group and facilitate clear communication within the group.

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

Paddlers should be able to effectively evaluate risks and manage risks in the moderate water environment.

C.4 Group control and management

Paddlers should use and understand risk assessment, group management, judgement and safe paddling techniques for grade 2 white water and open water.

C.5 Equipment

The assessment will be taken in an open canoe; paddlers should equip themselves with suitable kit for the assessment. All equipment should be both suitable and serviceable; any borrowed equipment will be judged as the paddlers own. Where equipment is found wanting then the paddler should not be assessed. Full equipment should be presented on each day of the assessment.

Paddlers need to provide the kit they need to complete the skills section of the assessment and for their own needs plus leadership kit to cover a range of group needs and incidents. As a minimum this would include:

- Personal clothing, spare clothing and waterproof kit bag.
- Buoyancy aid and helmet; helmets are not compulsory but must be carried and worn if required.
- Simple first aid kit, repair kit and emergency equipment for group use.
- Food and warm drink.
- Sling, karabiner, whistle and an appropriate knife.

C.6 Structured evaluation of group's paddling abilities with regard to proposed trip

The paddler should structure an effective practical observation of their group to ensure that the proposed trip is suitable for their abilities.

Part D – Theory

Paddlers should display good general knowledge of the open canoe under the headings below. See Training Notes for more detail.

- D.1 Equipment**
- D.2 Safety**
- D.3 Weather**
- D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid**
- D.5 Access**
- D.6 Environment**
- D.7 Planning**
- D.8 Group awareness and management**
- D.9 Navigation**
- D.10 Etiquette**
- D.11 General knowledge**
- D.12 Leadership responsibilities**
- D.13 Water features/hazards**
- D.14 Injury prevention**