

New British Canoeing Leadership Award for Sheltered Water

At British Canoeing, we are currently in the process of developing a new qualification to add to the existing suite of Coaching and Leadership Awards. The new **British Canoeing Paddlesport Leader** qualification is aimed at paddlers taking on formal leadership responsibilities in sheltered water environments.

The current 4 Star Leadership awards provide a range of qualifications for Leaders operating in moderate conditions. This new award aims to fill a gap to support Leaders working in more benign conditions; the environment where a large proportion of paddlesport activity takes place. Through this new award we aim to increase the accessibility of our leadership awards, reduce entry barriers for those wanting to take on specific responsibilities and ensure our range of qualifications allows people to target their learning and development to the specific role they wish to undertake.

Award Summary

The Paddlesport Leader award is designed to support Leaders run safe, quality, enjoyable trips based on their group's needs and aspirations. The syllabus will cover the safety, leadership and personal skills required. Safety, quality and enjoyment will primarily be achieved through choice of venue, equipment and leadership strategies that match the group's specific needs. The award does not include progressive coaching of technical skills, but focuses on learning through experience.

The purpose of the trips/journeys may be wide ranging. It is designed for use in sheltered water environments (see overleaf) and could be used:

- to support an educational experience; e.g. school or outdoor education activity
- to support a social experience; e.g. club activity, social celebrations
- for travel/exploration; e.g. to access or visit special places
- to support an opportunity to practice or train; e.g. staff training or club activity
- to support unstructured participation; e.g. free play
- to provide the opportunity to try a new activity; e.g. guided trips

We anticipate that the qualification is likely to be used by:

- Leaders in clubs
- Leaders for providers/centres who offer paddlesport activity
- Commercial paddlesport guides
- Leaders within schools, Duke of Edinburgh, youth groups, uniform groups etc.

Given the nature of activity that most often takes place in these environments, candidates will be assessed operating from the craft of their choice and have the skills, judgement and decision making capabilities to look after paddlers in a range of craft, including mixed fleets. This will place the responsibility on the Leader to use their skills and judgement to select appropriate craft, trips, journeys for paddlers with a range of experience. These decisions will be based on their own abilities and skills, and the profiling of their group's needs and aspirations. If deployers require further assurance that the Leader has the craft specific knowledge for their particular scenario, we suggest that 3 Star standard (in the chosen craft) as a suitable measure of personal competence.

What do we mean by 'Sheltered Water Environments'?

The award is designed to be used in benign sheltered environments where the conditions (physical and environmental) match the group's needs. We include in the definition that the group will be able to land easily and quickly, and avoid hazards present. We also include guidance on maximum wind speed, flow etc.. This will include venues such as canals, slow moving rivers, areas of open water, small enclosed bays or enclosed harbours, defined beaches and slow moving estuaries.

It is NOT designed to be used in more dynamic conditions such as white water, surf, or where the group could get blown or swept into trouble.

Link to the Level 1 Coach Award

We believe that a Paddlesport Leader who also holds the Level 1 Coach award is well placed to fulfil their coaching duties with more autonomy. The Paddlesport Leader award requires a higher level of personal skills and safety/rescue skills than the Level 1 Coach award; providing further assurance that they have the skills to make, and fulfil, sound leadership decisions whilst out on the water.

Prerequisites

The formal prerequisites for assessment are minimal; direct entry to assessment is available to those aged 16 or over who have valid first aid training (1-day) and Home Nation Association Membership.

Candidates will be responsible for making decisions about what preparation they need prior to assessment. We recognise and value informal learning, experience based learning and an availability of individualised choices as important for developing skilled leaders. To supplement this, we will provide quality training opportunities for those that seek it. This will place more ownership with the candidates to ensure that they choose the appropriate preparation, training and experience to support their development. We are aware that this will require a shift in culture and support mechanisms to help candidates navigate through their choices of how they learn the necessary skills to prepare them for the award.

Assessment

Personal paddling skills, rescue skills, leadership skills and the relevant background knowledge and understanding will be assessed through a predominantly practical assessment.

Next Steps

The award will be launched in April 2017. We are currently in the main phase of development, administration system development, resource development and workforce development. This will be supported by an appropriate communication strategy to ensure all of the relevant parties are kept up-to-date with relevant information throughout the various stages of development.