

4 Star Freestyle Leader Assessment Notes

Technical Syllabus

Part A1 – Core Elements

The following core elements are integral to the execution of the core skills. The paddler needs to show evidence of the following core elements within the core skills (A2) that will be demonstrated (section A2 contains examples of how these core element may be demonstrated within the core skills).

A1.1 Warm up and down

Warm-up is about the ability to prepare both body and mind for the activity to be undertaken. This may take place a number of times during the session.

Warm-down is about the ability to effectively aid muscle recovery and reduce sport related injuries.

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate a fully tailored warm-up based on the actions they are about to undertake. Through conversation, providers should check why techniques are chosen and what the benefits are for the types of warm-up selected. The paddler should demonstrate awareness of the need to utilise warm-ups between breaks in activity.

Paddlers must also demonstrate a fully tailored warm-down giving consideration to aiding muscle recovery and reducing sports-related injuries.

A1.2 Mental rehearsal

Mental rehearsal is about the ability to apply fundamental tools that can be used to improve and enhance learning and performance.

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate bank-based rehearsal of core skills and have an understanding of reflective practices to enhance their learning and performance. The provider should provide an opportunity for paddlers to mentally rehearse and through conversation ask what are the benefits of mental rehearsal. Paddlers should demonstrate exercises that suit the demands of the activity.

A1.3 Posture and connectivity

Posture is about the ability to adopt a sitting position that allows a greater and more powerful range of movement. This also helps prevent sports injuries and fatigue.

Connectivity is about the ability to efficiently transfer the paddler's energy to and from the boat in order to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate a degree of dynamic bilateral movement and functional stability. Providers will be looking for an efficient dynamic posture to gain an impression of the paddler's overall functional status.

This is not a pass or fail, but paddlers will be expected to have a basic understanding of the relationship between posture, performance and injury prevention.

A1.4 Rotation and synchronicity

Rotation is about the ability to wind up and unwind the torso to generate rotational momentum and torque through a pivot point.

Synchronicity is about the ability to move the upper and lower body independently yet co-operatively to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

Paddlers will need to demonstrate smooth transitions in head and body movement in phase with the boat, blade and the demands of the environment.

A1.5 Intensity and relaxation

Intensity is about the amount of energy being transmitted. Maximum intensity is not necessarily the optimal level for performance.

Relaxation is not necessarily the opposite of intensity; relaxation and intensity work together in complementary ways to bring out the best in the paddler and their performance.

Together they are about the ability to free the body to perform in a powerful yet flowing way.

Paddlers must demonstrate the ability to apply power without impairing technique and remaining relaxed. Paddlers should understand how to reflect on their performance and identify if they were too tight or tense.

A1.6 Control, balance and paddle dexterity

Control is about the ability to use the core muscles to control the boat's edge and trim.

Balance is about the ability to maintain static and dynamic stability both proactively and reactively.

Paddle dexterity is about the ability to adapt the use of the paddle to meet the demands of the environment whether proactively or during reactive measures.

Paddlers must demonstrate the ability to dynamically gain and maintain variety of balance points across three axes. This will be assessed through a series of flat or moving water exercises that test the paddler's ability to make constant small adjustments through edge, trim, and paddle dexterity.

A1.7 Methods of position and set-up

Position is about the ability to manoeuvre to a pre-determined point on the feature.

Set-up is about the ability to set-up with the correct position and angle required to initiate the desired manoeuvre once on the feature.

Paddlers must have a firm understanding of how to gain position on any feature by selecting the appropriate techniques and tactics. Paddlers should demonstrate 3 to 4 distinct approaches to achieving set-ups on features.

A1.8 Methods of initiation

Pre-initiation is about the ability to pre-establish momentum to assist the initiation of the manoeuvre.

Paddlers will have to demonstrate the ability to efficiently initiate vertical manoeuvres. Paddlers are expected to generate pre-empted momentum without relying on the current to take the ends of the boat downstream. The paddler will be expected to be proactive in initiating manoeuvres under control and in balance when opportunities arise. This could occur during a manoeuvre or be demonstrated in isolation.

A1.9 Methods of release/momentum

Release is about the ability to release the boat from the feature by an explosive combination of edge and trim.

Momentum is about the ability to generate the required body movements to perform the desired manoeuvre.

There are two types of momentum generation in freestyle, pre-take off and post-take off. Pre-take off allows paddlers to initiate the momentum required, whilst post-take off requires the manipulation of the pre-established momentum.

Providers will be looking for moments where the boat fully or partially leaves the water and the paddler's use this opportunity for position or manoeuvres.

A1.10 Methods of recovery

Recovery is about the ability to efficiently and effectively complete the manoeuvre, correcting any faults within the manoeuvre, and maintaining the feature.

Paddlers will be expected to demonstrate the ability to maintain orientation and adapt their technique to re-establish boat control.

Providers will be looking for paddlers to consistently take a proactive approach where recovery leads to actions that maintain balance and continuity of the manoeuvre.

A1.11 Linking ends and manoeuvres

Linking ends is about the ability to effectively perform multiple ends under control and balance.

Linking manoeuvres is about the ability to put manoeuvres together whilst ensuring technical elements of each individual manoeuvres are not lost during linking.

Paddlers must effectively make transitions between inactive and active blades and maintain orientation on the given feature. Paddlers must also show the ability to link two manoeuvres, without sacrificing the technical elements of those two individual manoeuvres.

Part A2 – Core Skills

All core elements will need to be demonstrated within the core skills.

A2.1 Rolling

The ability to back-deck roll is required at this level.

Paddlers will be required to perform front and back deck rolls (one side may be preferred with the other having evidence of a base level) on moving water with a reasonable consistency. Swimming is not considered as a failure but paddlers must show confidence and the ability to operate in the environment.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: Effective roll on one side and beginnings of the roll on the less preferred side.

Capability: Synchronicity, posture and connectivity.

A2.2 Entering and exiting play features

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate the ability to cross eddy lines and fast flows to catch play features. Providers would expect paddlers to drop onto a moderate sized play feature and exit the feature via points that would lead to the most effective route to re-gain the eddy. Missing the feature would not be a fail, but the paddler would be expected to make the appropriate adjustments within 2 to 3 attempts.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: Crossing eddy lines and catching features with reasonably regular reliability.

Capability: Posture, intensity and relaxation, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

A2.3 Cartwheels

Cartwheels involve performing two consecutive ends in the same rotational direction, whilst retaining the feature. Both ends should be at a vertical angle of between 45° and 100°.

Paddlers must understand the dynamics of the hole and modify their cartwheel to respond to the demands of the feature. Providers will require the paddler to initiate the cartwheel (from either the bow or stern) when the boat is static and stable.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: The cartwheel should achieve an elevation of more than 45° and consist of 3 consecutive ends (the paddler is to perform 3 ends on their preferred side and 2 on the non-preferred side).

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

A2.4 Split-wheels

The split-wheel contains elements of the shovit and involves performing two consecutive ends (above 45°) whilst changing direction (180° rotation) between each end.

Paddlers must understand the dynamics of the hole and modify their split-wheel to respond to the demands of the feature. Providers will require the paddler to initiate from either the bow or stern when the boat is static and stable.

Environment: Grade 2-3 (hole).

Behaviour: Paddlers should demonstrate two consecutive ends, with a change of direction between them.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

A2.5 Front loops

The front loop is a vertical front flip initiated and finished between a horizontal angle of -20° and 20° , landing in the hole or on the wave.

Paddlers must understand the dynamics of the hole and modify their front loop to respond to the demands of the hole. Providers will require the paddlers to pre-empt the initiation point and proactively plug the bow. As the boat rejects, paddlers must show the ability to slow down the boats rotation by leaning back and decisively reaching for the water or reaching for the sky before throwing the loop (just before the apex of the boat's rejection).

Environment: Grade 3 (hole).

Behaviour: The boat should vertically flip with a lateral deviation of no more than 20° . The loop should be recovered rapidly maintaining the feature.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

A2.6 Front and back surfing

Paddlers must demonstrate confident front and back surfing. They should carve back and forth from one ferry angle to another, whilst adopting a slightly aggressive posture and maintaining control and awareness.

Environment: Grade 3 (wave/hole).

Behaviour: Providers should observe the paddler's ability to establish a controlled front and back surf at any point through a run, using both carving and braking stroke techniques to keep the boat out of the trough.

Capability: Position and set-up, posture, connectivity, rotation and synchronicity.

A2.7 Blunts

The blunt is a fundamental building block of all aerial manoeuvres and contains elements of the front or back pivot turn. The blunt evolves a dynamic change from front to back surf (or vice-versa) elevating the stern or bow through an arc of 45° - 60° to land in a back-surf or front surf.

Paddlers will be required to demonstrate the ability to: initiate the manoeuvre clear of the foam pile, achieve an elevation of the stern or bow through an arc of 45° - 60° , land and recover to a surfing position. Providers will be looking for the paddler's ability to initiate the manoeuvre at optimum speed off the wave's shoulder or using natural surges in the wave face.

Environment: Grade 3 (wave/hole).

Behaviour: The bow/stern should snap under the paddler quickly followed by a recovery stroke to retain the feature.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, release, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

A2.8 Competition routine

During the assessment paddlers will have to perform a 45 second run to score 4 moves, which should be in the current British Canoeing / ICF competition scoring moves. At least 2 moves should have a base score (prior to addition of any bonus) of 30 or more from the current rules.

Environment: Grade 2-3 hole/wave.

Behaviour: In a 45 second ride perform 4 moves from the above skills.

Capability: All.

Part B - Rescue Skills

B.1 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based safety and rescue skills

Paddlers should be able to demonstrate:

- Safe white water swimming and self-rescue.
- Using a throwline to rescue a swimmer and being rescued using a throwline.
- Rescuing a capsized, swimming paddler and their equipment.

B.2 Incident management and first aid appropriate to the environment

The park and play nature of freestyle means that paddlers are often not far from civilization or help. Paddlers should understand where and when it is appropriate to carry a first aid kit (or not) and why, and the procedure for dealing with an incident in common freestyle venues. During the assessment paddlers will be presented with a basic first aid incident so they can put first aid training and team leadership into a 'real' situation.

B.3 Effective team leader

The paddler should be confident to take a leading role, co-ordinating other group members in a rescue situation. The provider will set-up an appropriate scenario within the 4 Star Freestyle environment.

B.4 Team member in rescues and incidents

It is important at 4 Star level that the paddler can be an effective team member, whether there is a designated group leader or not. This is particularly important in rescues or incident management when 'teams' can be formed by fellow paddlers who weren't even necessarily paddling together

before the incident occurred. The paddler will show effective teamwork in a rescue scenario in the 4 Star Freestyle environment.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

C.1 Group control and management

Paddlers must show they have the experience and judgement required to safely lead a small group (maximum of 4) of competent paddlers on a 500m section of grade 2-3 whitewater. Competent paddlers are those who do not require coaching to be in/on that environment. Paddlers must demonstrate the ability to identify hazards and choose suitable freestyle features for the group's level of ability. Paddlers will be required to lead a group on a short section of grade 2-3 white water safely and competently.

All paddlers will need to be active members of the group, contributing to its safety and acting in leadership roles when required. Paddlers acting as leaders should position themselves in effective rescue locations when operating in and around the chosen play features. The use of signals or other communication strategies must be demonstrated.

C.2 Personal risk management

Paddlers will need to work together and help each other in achieving a safe, fun, freestyle session.

C.3 Awareness of others

During the assessment the paddler must demonstrate awareness of what is occurring in the environment around them and the actions of others. Paddlers do not need to be responsible for others (not in their group) but they should work together and help each other, through communication and physically moving out of the way to allow others to perform manoeuvres.

Part D – Theory / Knowledge

Paddlers must demonstrate a good level of general knowledge of freestyle paddlesport. Demonstration of this knowledge should be incorporated throughout the assessment.

D.1 Equipment

Paddlers should have knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment. Know how and why equipment has evolved and how best to use it.

D.2 Safety

Paddlers should have knowledge of up-to-date safety requirements for the moderate white water environment. Paddlers will be able to dynamically risk assess the moderate white water environment and understand how to mitigate the identified risks.

D.3 Weather

Paddlers will be able to gain an up-to-date weather forecast and know how this affects the decision-making process.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Paddlers will have the right level of first aid training and know how to apply this training to deal with the most likely paddlesport injuries in a moderate white water environment.

D.5 Freestyle environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in should be a key underpinning principle for all paddlers. Paddlers should be aware of their environmental impact and be proactive in minimising this.

D.6 Competition

Paddlers should have an understanding of the basics of UK competition structure and rules.

D.7 General

Paddlers should have a wide general knowledge of all aspects of the sport.

D.8 Etiquette

Paddlers should promote a positive image for paddle sports with other river users and local residents.