

4 Star Sea Kayak Leader Assessment Notes

Technical Syllabus

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

If the paddler's kayak is fitted with a rudder, it must be disabled for the duration of the assessment.

The paddler will demonstrate their ability to skilfully control their kayak in the prescribed conditions through the blending of their body, boat and blade positions.

Paddlers should show knowledge of and use of trim and skegs.

The assessment will incorporate application of the practical techniques listed below.

The paddler should keep their actions within the 'safety box' and perform strokes on both sides.

A.1 Lifting, carrying, launching and landing

Paddlers should show an awareness of boat-packing techniques appropriate to the conditions. They should be able to launch and land in a variety of situations including small surf and rocky shores, ensuring minimal damage to person and equipment.

A.2 Efficient and effective sea paddling skills

Forward paddling: Paddlers should demonstrate efficient and sustained forward paddling in conditions up to sea state four throughout a day's journey.

Reverse paddling and stopping: Paddlers should demonstrate accurate and efficient reverse paddling and stopping in the environment.

Maintaining direction, changing direction, moving sideways: Using a range of techniques paddlers should demonstrate the ability to handle the kayak in waves from all directions and at the interface between flow and eddy (caused either by wind or by tide).

Supporting: Paddlers should be able to perform support strokes with the kayak well off balance. These should be seen in realistic conditions where the recovery stroke or brace is needed e.g. surf, rough water and waves.

A.3 Rolling in rough water (on one side only)

Paddlers should demonstrate an effective roll performed in sea state 3-4 (not set up).

A.4 Practical navigation on the water and in poor visibility

Paddlers should demonstrate an ability to:

- Plan by interpreting maps, charts and sources of tidal information for the purpose of navigation.

- Use a variety of simple techniques to navigate accurately (avoiding danger areas) along coastlines, on small crossings (up to 2 nautical miles) and in poor visibility using a combination of dead reckoning, tidal timing and a compass.
- Use a handheld GPS receiver if carried, to obtain a position fix.

Part B – Safety and Rescue

B.1 Have knowledge of, and demonstrate skilful application of, appropriate rescues

Paddlers should have a range of rescues and be able to adapt them to the prevailing conditions including putting incapacitated paddlers back in their kayak.

B.2 Self-rescue

Paddlers must be able to get back into their kayak from the water unaided in sea state 2-3.

B.3 Be conversant with different methods of towing

Paddlers must demonstrate the use of a variety of towing techniques (including tows where a casualty requires the support of a non-towing paddler) in moderate conditions on open water e.g. tandem tow, rafted tow, contact tow, anchored tow etc. The demonstration will be over a reasonable distance and will include sections of following, beam and quartering seas. The use of the towline's emergency quick release mechanism must be demonstrated under load. The paddler must be aware of the inherent dangers of towing.

Part C – Leadership

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

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

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

C.4 Exercise appropriate group control and management and show concern for the general welfare of other group members

Paddlers need to demonstrate they can effectively lead a group in moderate tidal water. Paddlers will be able to:

- Identify hazards.
- Choose suitable routes for the group/individual.
- Be an active member of the team.
- Make prompt and suitable decisions.
- Position themselves effectively during communication and pre-empt any issues.

- Use signals for effective communication.

Paddlers will be able to add to the group dynamic, which enables swift decision-making, clear communications and positive outcomes.

Paddlers need to be able to judge the conditions and the standard of the group and make appropriate decisions about the planned route along with the need to modify plans as required.

C.5 Demonstrate the capability to manage a range of incidents

Paddlers should demonstrate the following whilst maintaining an overview of the situation, so that the safety and well-being of the whole group is never forgotten:

- Various strategies for group control, including positioning, appropriate leadership styles etc.
- The ability to judge the conditions and the standard of the group and make appropriate decisions about the planned route along with the need to modify plans as required.
- Although not a coaching award paddlers must be able to pass on sufficient information to group members in order to achieve the day's proposed objectives. For example the paddler may need to guide and encourage group members around small headlands where the sea state is increased. Paddlers would need to have the skill to pass on tips to improve the group members' overall paddling ability and confidence.

Paddlers should be equipped and prepared to manage any incidents which could occur during the course of the journey, including:

- Incidents that involve people e.g. seasickness, hypothermia, injuries etc.
- Incidents that involve equipment e.g. boat repair, paddle repair, lost hatch etc.
- Incidents that involve rescue in different circumstances and conditions thereby requiring a working knowledge of a variety of approaches.

Paddlers must carry and have easily accessible:

- A suitable means of summoning help in an emergency.
- A first aid kit and familiarity with the use of its contents whilst afloat, as well as being able to deal with more substantial problems whilst ashore.
- A repair kit. It should be possible to repair on a kayak whilst afloat as well as being able to deal with more substantial damage to the equipment whilst ashore.

C.6 Provide guidance through top tips and handy hints

Paddlers should demonstrate the ability to pass on tips to group members to improve paddling ability and confidence, as well as giving sufficient information in order to achieve the days proposed objectives. For example, the leader may give paddlers top tips to allow them to get through a challenging area.

Part D – Theory

D.1 Equipment and design

Paddlers should have knowledge of the advantages, range and application of sea specific equipment e.g. kayaks, skegs and rudders, paddles, clothing, towlines, emergency communication, and navigation resources.

D.2 Safety (includes Coastguard and rescue services)

Paddlers must be able to operate a marine band VHF transceiver and show good operating procedures for radio traffic. UK residents must understand the VHF radio licencing requirements. Paddlers must be able to identify potential hazards (environmental and other water users), and put in place necessary safety control measures.

D.3 Weather

Paddlers should be aware of a variety of sources of weather forecast. They should also be able to interpret such weather forecasts and be mindful of the conditions actually experienced, showing an understanding of the impact of various weather conditions on the sea environment.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Paddlers should demonstrate sound judgement and the ability to deal with the most likely injuries that may occur as part of paddlesport activities on the sea. It should be evident that paddlers can deal with an incident and see it through to its conclusion (including simple evacuations, dealing with emergency services and group care). This should complement first aid training.

D.5 Access

Paddlers should be aware of regional and national access issues and legislation as well as our basic freedom to paddle on the sea.

D.6 Environment

Paddlers should show an appreciation of the environment they paddle and help paddlers to gain maximum enjoyment from this natural environment. They should be able to give advice on how to protect the environment and demonstrate awareness level knowledge of typical coastal flora and fauna.

D.7 Group awareness and management

Paddlers must be aware of potential risks, safety precautions and safety thresholds pertinent to leading groups on moderate tidal waters and providers should question them on the following:

- The likely effect and interaction of tide, tidal stream and wind.
- National Coastguard Organisations and rescue services.
- Potential hazards (environmental and other water users).
- Personal, legal and ethical responsibilities.

D.8 General knowledge

Paddlers should have a knowledge and awareness of the history of sea kayaking and current developments.

D.9 Navigation

Paddlers should be able to navigate accurately on journeys in the moderate tidal water environment using appropriate pilotage skills. For example:

- Understand buoyage
- Identify position by using a variety of methods
- Maintain a course, calculate distance and estimate paddling time

D.10 Show basic knowledge of collision regulations and sound signals

D.11 Leadership responsibilities

Paddlers should demonstrate an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as a leader on the sea.

D.12 Water features and hazards

Paddlers should be able to demonstrate the ability to perform dynamic risk assessments as well as an understanding of hydrology and how to use this while leading on the sea. This will include for example, understanding the characteristics of swell, tidal flow, and surf.