

5 Star Open Canoe Leader Assessment Notes

Technical Syllabus

A quality, advanced open canoe day will be one of either open water with a large fetch in windy conditions, or rivers with good grade 3 sections and of all volumes and gradients. The paddler's experience should show a strong bias towards 'wilderness journeys' of anything from a day trip to a multi-day expedition.

British Canoe 5 Star Leaders 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. 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 5 Star 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

Paddlers should show a high level of ability and understanding of the strokes and techniques necessary to handle a canoe, both on white water and on exposed open water. Paddlers should display effective and efficient techniques, which underpin a smooth, controlled and consistent performance and not the reliance on strength.

A.1 Efficient and effective grade 3 river running skills

- On grade 3 moving water paddlers should demonstrate a solid performance of all the 4 Star moving water skills, with anticipation and control.
- Paddlers should be able to descend technical rapids using controlled, effective manoeuvres.
- Paddlers should use lines as appropriate when descending technical rapids.
- Paddlers should demonstrate paddling a loaded canoe in grade 3 water.

A.2 Efficient and effective open water skills (wind up to force 5)

- Paddlers should demonstrate the ability to manoeuvre and control a canoe in a variety of wind and wave conditions, including being able to launch into and negotiate waves created by wind up to force 5 over a large fetch.
- Paddlers should demonstrate paddling a loaded canoe in exposed open water conditions.
- Paddlers should be able to construct improvised sailing rigs to allow the group to journey on open water. They should also be able to safely manage the group on the water.

A.3 Lining and tracking

Paddlers should demonstrate varied strategies for travelling up and downstream on a river and up wind on an exposed shoreline.

A.4 Poling and snubbing

Paddlers should demonstrate varied strategies for travelling up and downstream on grade 2 sections of river and up wind on an exposed shoreline.

A.5 Navigation

Paddlers should demonstrate an ability to navigate on open water in adverse conditions (in fair weather conditions this may be assessed at night).

Part B – Rescue Skills

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

B.2 Incident management and first aid in the 5 Star environment

To include setting up a 3:1 haul system (providers should note that it is not necessary to pin a boat to assess this).

B.3 Effective group leader and group member in rescues and incidents

Paddlers should be able to deal with a range of rescue scenarios (both as leader and group member) requiring a range of rescue techniques. This should include the safe retrieval of any equipment that may have been lost as a result of an incident.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

C.1 Skilful application of leadership principles (e.g. C.L.A.P.)

Paddlers should be able to effectively implement a leadership strategy in the advanced environment.

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

Paddlers should be able to effectively implement a leadership strategy in the advanced environment.

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

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

C.4 Group control and management

- Paddlers should demonstrate an organised approach both on and off the water.
- Paddlers should demonstrate good judgement when effectively and safely leading groups on class 3 water, as well in as on open water in adverse weather conditions (in fair weather conditions this may be assessed at night)'.
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- Paddlers should be able to identify hazards and evaluate suitable lines for different designs of craft e.g. white water and touring boats.
- Paddlers should use an effective communication system and maintain line of sight.

C.5 Equipment

- Paddlers should present themselves for evaluation with suitable personal equipment, plus any additional equipment deemed to be appropriate to support a group in their charge.
- Any such equipment should reflect such things as the season, the ability of their companions and the difficulty of the waters to be paddled.
- Borrowed equipment will be assessed as if it were the paddler's own. On the level of water being paddled at 5 Star, having too much equipment can be nearly as hazardous as having too little.

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

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

C.7 Provide guidance through top tips and handy hints

Part D – Theory

The provider may question paddlers on any of these subject areas and a good depth of knowledge is expected:

- 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 and hazards**
- D.14 Injury prevention**