

# Working in the Moderate Water Environment



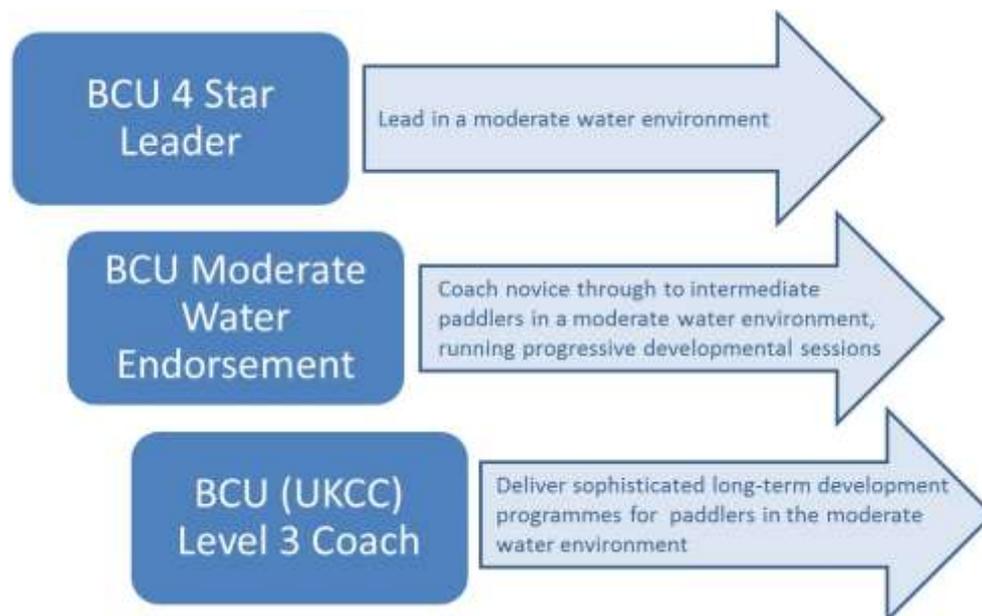
The BCU have three different qualifications targeted for coaches and leaders who wish to work in a moderate water environment. This article aims to help potential candidates and their deployers decide which is most appropriate for the job they are doing.

## What is a moderate water environment?

The BCU Terms of Reference provide definitions of the various classifications of environments (and guidance on appropriate BCU Qualifications and ratios suitable for coaches and leaders who are working in these environments), in summary;

Moderate inland water;	large areas of open water (e.g. lakes and lochs) working up to 500 metres off shore and in wind strengths that do not exceed Beaufort force 4
Moderate white water	grade 2 rivers for open canoes grade 2(3) rivers for white-water spec kayaks
Moderate tidal water/sea	coastlines with available landings every 1-2 miles (or 1-hour), including crossings up to 2 nautical miles offshore. It covers up to a maximum of 2 knots tide, but does not cover tidal races, overfalls, or winds above Beaufort force 4
Moderate surf;	sandy beaches free from significant hazard and with easy access. Gentle, sloping and spilling waves, preferably peeling, not pitching or dumping. Wave height should be no more than double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave (head high for a stand up surfer).

## Which qualifications are aimed at Coaches and Leaders working in moderate conditions?



The three different qualifications targeted for coaches and leaders who wish to work in a moderate water environment (4 Star Leader, Moderate Water Endorsement (MWE), and BCU (UKCC) Level 3 Coach) are all discipline specific awards available in White Water Kayak, Open Canoe, Sea, and Surf.

### **BCU 4 Star Leader**

The BCU 4 Star Leader is trained and assessed to lead paddlers in moderate water conditions. The syllabus covers topics such as;

- Personal paddling skills
- Rescue skills
- Appropriate leadership strategies, judgement and decision-making
- Safety awareness and risk management
- Group control and management
- Incident management
- Relevant supporting theory (e.g. weather, trip planning responsibilities, navigation, access)

The BCU 4 Star award is not a coaching award, it does not cover how to teach any of the skills involved with paddling in the given environment. However 4 Star Leaders do have the skills and judgement to select appropriate environments for paddlers with a range of experience.

Let's have a look at a couple of examples;

- A 4 Star Sea Leader may take a group of inexperienced paddlers on a 1km sea paddle on a calm warm sunny day. The paddlers may never have been on the sea before but have done enough to be able to paddle their GP kayak in a straight line. The 4 Star Leader may cut the trip short, or extend it, depending on how well the group were managing.
- A 4 Star White Water Leader may take a group of experienced kayakers from their local club on a 10km river trip that is mostly grade 2, but with some grade 3 rapids. It will push some of the paddlers, but the Leader knows them all and feels they are ready for the challenge! On the journey the leader is able to offer some help to the paddlers in choosing appropriate lines, and some top tips to help them successfully negotiate the rapids.

### **BCU Moderate Water Endorsement (MWE)**

The BCU MWE is designed for BCU (UKCC) Level 2 Coaches (with their 4 Star Leader Award) who wish to extend their remit to be able to coach in the moderate water environment. As a Level 2 Coach they already have the skills to coach a complete novice over a series of sessions to a point where they could achieve the BCU 2 Star Award; and as a 4 Star Leader they can take paddlers out on trips and journeys. Now the MWE training and assessment builds on this so they can develop paddlers on to become intermediate paddlers in the specific discipline concerned. The MWE covers topics such as;

- How to coach discipline specific skills and tactics
- Physiological and psychological considerations for the discipline
- How to provide a high quality learning environment, matched to the learners needs
- Developing paddlers performance through progressive sessions

The Coach with their MWE can coach complete beginners, right through to developing into intermediate paddlers in the discipline. Let's have a look at a couple of examples;

- A MWE Surf Coach runs introductory 5-day courses coaching paddlers how to surf
- A MWE Sea Coach runs sea kayak day trips for tourists visiting the area, in the morning they cover basic boat handling skills, ready to go on a journey in the afternoon
- A MWE Canoe Coach is helping a group of paddlers in their local club work towards their 3 Star Canoe

### **BCU (UKCC) Level 3 Coach**

A BCU (UKCC) Level 3 Coach is trained and assessed to plan, deliver, and review long-term coaching programmes in their specialist discipline, where they are likely to have responsibilities for participants' development for up to a year. They too work in a moderate water environment, and can take paddlers from Novice to Intermediate, but their coaching behaviours are much more sophisticated. They are able to maximise an individual's learning, via thorough needs analysis and individualised coaching to meet the needs of each student. They should be able to offer a higher quality experience for similar situations that the MWE Coach works within, but with the added needs analysis and annual planning will be able to support paddlers through longer-term goals and development. For example they may be responsible for staff development in a centre, for managing a paddlesport department within a centre, or for developing and integrating new ideas into a club or centre. A centre may also choose to deploy BCU (UKCC) Level 3 Coaches as a mark of excellence to help them offer/provide/promote a higher quality of service.

Comparing the requirements for the awards should help us understand the different levels between the qualifications;

	4 Star Leader	MWE	BCU (UKCC) Level 3
<b>What can they do?</b>	Lead in a moderate water environment	Coach novice through to intermediate paddlers in a moderate water environment, running progressive developmental sessions	Deliver sophisticated long-term development programmes for paddlers in the moderate water environment
<b>What is the minimum amount of experience required?</b>	10 trips as assistant leader in MW	10 trips as assistant leader in MW	10 trips as assistant leader in MW
		40-hours coaching in SW 20-hours leading in MW	40-hours coaching in SW 20-hours leading in MW 12-months regular coaching in MW
<b>What training have they done?</b>	2-4 days 4 Star Training	2-4 days 4 Star Training	2-4 days 4 Star Training
		4-days Level 1 training 4-days Level 2 training	4-days Level 1 training 4-days Level 2 training
		1-day MWE Training	1 day MWE Training (optional)
			6-8 days L3 Training
<b>What assessment have they done?</b>	2-day 4 Star Assessment	2-day 4 Star assessment	2-day 4 Star assessment
		1 day Level 1 assessment 1 day Level 2 assessment	1 day Level 1 assessment 1 day Level 2 assessment
		1-day MWE assessment	1-day MWE assessment (optional)
			1-day Level 3 assessment

### BCU Terms of Reference;

The BCU Terms of Reference provide guidance on appropriate BCU Qualifications and ratios suitable for a range of paddlesport instructional, coaching and leadership situations. The guidance is relevant to anyone involved in the provision of paddlesport activity including clubs, centres, schools, local authority or community sports programmes.

The guidelines are designed to be used in conjunction with the safety management systems, risk assessments, and codes of practice relevant to the activity concerned to ensure that the coach/leader concerned has adequate personal competence, currency of performance, is equipped and practised in the use of all necessary equipment, and is aware of all the potential hazards of the environment/activity in question. The BCU recognise that deployers may need to use differing ratio's and/or qualifications for specific activities. An example of this maybe if a club or centres activity sits somewhere between the normal operating environment of a 4 Star Leader and a MWE Coach, they may choose to use a BCU (UKCC) Level 1 (or 2) Coach with a 4 Star Leader qualification, maybe including some site-specific training and/or assessment to plug any gaps.

### **What about the 'old' BCU Level 3 Coach Award?**

Coaches who achieved the 'old' BCU Level 3 Coach award are also qualified to work in the moderate water environment. These awards covered how to coach the technical and tactical aspects of the discipline concerned, but did not cover the same level of coaching process content as the current MWE. They concentrated on the coaching skills to run single sessions to novice/intermediate paddlers. However, as they are likely to have qualified some years ago they could well have accrued a great deal of invaluable experience. The BCU continue to recognise this qualification as long as Home Nation coach update status is maintained by the Coach.

### **Who can I speak to for more information?**

Providers of the BCU 4 Star Leader, MWE, and (UKCC) Level 3 courses will be able to provide advice to help candidates choose the correct award for their individual needs, and be able to explain more detail about what is involved in achieving the different qualifications. If you are having trouble, contact your Home Nation Coaching office who will be able to point you in the right direction.

**You can find more details of all of these qualifications on your Home Nation website, including prerequisites, registration details and course dates if you are interested in pursuing any of these qualifications.**