

5 Star White Water Kayak Leader Training Notes

Technical Syllabus

The emphasis is on the application of strokes to achieve suitable techniques and boat control in real situations. The paddler is required to show the ability to deal with a range of paddling conditions and have tactics to deal with the variety of paddling scenarios on advanced white water.

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

The emphasis for the paddler is that they have a holistic approach to running the river. The manoeuvres and strokes should be blended as appropriate. The assessment should not be seen as a tick box of skills.

Paddlers are required to show all skills on both sides, and on grade 4 water.

A.1 Efficient and effective on-sight (without inspection) grade 4 river running skills

That would enable the paddler to lead up to 20km in one day: Paddlers need to be aware of the variety of strategies available to them so that they could paddle 20km at this grade with a group. This is in essence about their swift decision-making process as well as their ability to use the group to good effect. Training should cover this variety of strategies and leave the paddlers with practical tools to enable them to develop as river leaders and gauge their own development.

Making a variety of different types of eddies: At this level paddlers should be able to show competence in attaining many different types of eddies that are found on advanced water. Training should enable paddlers to adapt their paddling so that they can make these eddies with ease and flow in their paddling. Providers should focus in on forward paddling, positioning, use of speed and blend of strokes.

Positioning within the flow that allows paddlers to maintain and change direction as required:

Paddlers should leave their training course with the ability to hold their kayak on its course, as well as move to a different course as they see fit. Training should look at areas of clean flow and disturbed flow. While developing these tactics forward paddling should be high on the agenda.

Running slides, drops and waterfalls: Features such as slides and drops are commonly found on advanced white water and therefore training should give paddlers strategies for paddling and leading on them. Training should include the boof and the understanding of core principles such as posture, maintaining shape and core stability. Training should also highlight the importance of timing in the manoeuvres, as well as good forward paddling and the appreciation of 'where next'.

Using, or avoiding, features to aid descent (including: waves, stoppers, diagonals & towbacks):

Training should enhance paddlers' understanding of hydrology and how to read the water in such a way that allows them to use the river to their advantage. This should then allow paddlers to know what features and therefore what skills should be blended to enable them to move around on the river in control and with a sense of flow.

A.2 Tactical understanding

Advanced white water kayaking is all about the appropriate blend of tactics to aid the descent of the river. The importance of understanding river features and the hydrology as well as the range of options available should be the core of the training.

A.3 White water roll

Rolling is vital in the repertoire of skills that the advanced white water kayaker will have. Paddlers need to be able to roll in control and have an awareness of where they are in the rapid and get back on line. Training should cover the sense of anticipation and aid the paddlers in their sense of feel once back upright.

Part B – Rescue Skills

The emphasis for paddlers is that they can be an effective member of a group. This would include being able to look after themselves and others while paddling on advanced white water. Training should highlight the appropriate white water safety & rescue course for the paddlers.

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

During training providers should ensure that paddlers are aware of situations where it would be appropriate to be on the bank, and ensure that they are able to understand the limitations as well as the advantages of this.

Portaging techniques should be explored where the paddlers understand their role in looking after the group as well as themselves.

During training providers should ensure that paddlers are aware of and have appropriate boat based solutions for the safety of the group as well as rescue strategies.

B.2 Incident management and first aid in the advanced white water environment

During training providers should look at ways to manage incidents and administer first aid in the advanced white water environment.

This should look at ways to move/look after the casualty for an extended time as well as gaining outside help.

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

Training should look at what makes an effective group leader/member and provide practical examples and strategies for this.

Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

During the assessment paddlers should show they have the ability to lead others on the successful descent of advanced white water. These skills will be blended throughout the assessment and take place on rivers up to and including grade 4(5). The following skills should be trained for use with both experienced and inexperienced advanced environment paddlers:

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

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

C.3 Safety awareness and risk management

C.4 Group control and management

Paddlers should experiment with a range of leadership strategies that allow them to make the appropriate decisions for the route down the river. They should be able to adapt these decisions and show good judgement as required. Training should look at the CLAP model as a basis to work from so that the paddlers have varied and adaptable leadership tools available to use.

Paddlers should leave the training course with a clear understanding of:

- Identifying suitable lines down complex rapids.
- How to use their team on the day to affect a positive outcome.
- Prompt and suitable decision-making.
- Sound leadership strategies for the advanced water environment.
- Skilful boat control to aid positioning on the river.

C.5 Intervening strategies

Training should cover the following areas and ensure that paddlers understand their options and how to intervene at the appropriate time to ensure that potential problems don't escalate.

These may include:

- The skilful application of leadership strategies.
- The decision to rest/scout or portage.
- The decision to change tactics or techniques.
- The use of goal setting.
- Managing paddlers' arousal levels.
- The decision to change the pace and nature of the descent.

C.6 Controlling and managing outcomes

Training should cover the following areas and ensure that paddlers understand their options and how to manage the outcome successfully during the trip to ensure the safety of all concerned.

These may include:

- Route planning and trip choice.

- Change of route plan.
- Use of emergency action plans.
- Use of safety briefs.
- Managing expectations from the team.
- Change of leadership strategies.

Part D – Theory

The emphasis of the assessment is that paddlers can show the required knowledge of an advanced white water kayaker. Training will blend the following subject areas:

D.1 Equipment

Paddlers should understand fully the equipment required for operating at this level and in the advanced water environment. Paddlers should understand what required equipment they should carry and why they should carry it.

D.2 Safety

Training should provide paddlers with the knowledge of up-to-date safety requirements for the advanced water environment. Paddlers should be aware of the need to dynamic risk assess the advanced water environment and understand how to evaluate these risks. Training should also highlight where further training is required including the British Canoeing AWWWS&R course.

D.3 Weather

Training should cover how to gain an up-to-date weather forecast and how the forecast affects the decision-making process.

D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid

Training should ensure that paddlers have the right level of first aid training and understand how to apply this training to the advanced water environment.

D.5 Access

Paddlers should understand the range of access issues that exist throughout the UK and where they can find additional information. They should leave the training course understanding how this will apply to them as a river leader.

D.6 Environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in is a key underpinning principle for many in paddlesport. Paddlers should receive training in how to maintain and protect the environment they play in and travel through.

D.7 Planning

Paddlers should be trained in gaining an understanding of what is involved in planning a successful descent of a river. This should include the full range of skills including contingency and emergency action plans.

D.8 Group awareness and management

Paddlers need to be aware of what constitutes being a productive member of a group. They need to be aware of what questions to ask of themselves and others, and show that they understand fully the roles required when organising a group on/around and off the water.

D.9 Water features and hazards

Training should cover dynamic risk assessments as well as an understanding of hydrology and how to use this while river leading.

D.10 Navigation

Vital skills for river leaders include the ability to use a guidebook, the ability to find where they are on a map, and being able to direct outside agencies to their location. Training should ensure that paddlers understand this.

D.11 Etiquette

- Paddlers should be aware of the British Canoeing Code of Conduct.
- Paddlers should have an understanding of river etiquette and/or other users.
- Paddlers should have a general awareness of others coming into eddies and their own positioning.

D.12 General knowledge

Paddlers should gain an understanding of the types of paddlesport that they are involved in as well as the range of options available to those who they will be leading.

D.13 Leadership responsibilities

Paddlers should understand their roles and responsibilities as a river leader.

D.14 Personal paddling skills

Training should ensure that the paddlers have an understanding of the skills required and why they need to keep them up-to-date. Training should also highlight what further training is required.