



**Leadership and Raft Guide Awards**  
**White Water Leader**  
**Assessment Guidance**

## White Water Leader Assessment Guidance

### Introduction

This document provides specific guidance for Providers, Trainers, Assessors, Deployers and Aspirant Leaders on the assessment criteria and standards expected. The assessment criteria are summarised in the 'Skills Checklist' and further expanded upon here in the 'Assessment Guidance'. It is the guidance within this document that is used to inform assessment decisions.

This Assessment Guidance should be read in conjunction with:

- British Canoeing Leadership and Raft Guide Course Guide
- British Canoeing White Water Leader Skills Checklist
- British Canoeing Leadership and Raft Guide Provider Notes
- British Canoeing Participant Focused Leadership Guidance
- British Canoeing Leadership and Raft Guide Sample Programme

The 'Leadership and Raft Guide Course Guide' provides details of the award and its general requirements. The 'Leadership and Raft Guide Provider Notes' expand on the organisational matters relating to training and assessment. The accompanying 'Participant Focused Leadership Guidance' provides clarity on the expected leadership principles and approaches. The 'Leadership and Raft Guide Sample Programme' provides examples of a 1 day and 2 day assessment outlines, as well as a 2 day Leadership training course programme.

### Assessment Format

Assessments must include the leading of a suitably sized group (minimum of 3). The British Canoeing White Water Leader qualification is appropriate for leading others on journeys on grade 2(3) white water rivers. Grade 2(3) are rivers that would mainly

be grade 2 but could have short, straight forward sections of grade 3, which can either be paddled or portaged.

The group of students organised for the assessment should reflect this demand, whilst remaining within the Assessor's own risk management requirements. Assessment locations chosen by Leadership Providers must include a reasonable range of options for the Leader to choose from.

The White Water Leader Assessment can be run over 1-2 days. This will depend on the course ratios and logistics relating to access to suitable environments. The Leader will be working from their suitable chosen white water craft, for example a kayak, OC1, Sit-On-Top or inflatable kayak and will be assessed leading a group of 3 to 6 paddlers.

Any equipment borrowed for the purpose at the time of assessment will be treated as the Leaders own.

## **Assessment Methods**

Each Leader must be seen **leading a group (minimum of 3)** in conditions at the top end of the environment, this includes short sections of grade 3. Observation of practical leadership will be supplemented with questioning, discussion and specific tasks as required. Assessors need to gather sufficient evidence of competence in a range of scenarios relating to leading sessions in the white water environment, not just those experienced during the practical assessment.

## **Assessment Criteria**

### **A. Participant Focused Leadership Skills**

Leaders should understand and skilfully apply the [British Canoeing Leadership Model Principles](#) within the context of the award and environment that they operate.

For further guidance and examples, refer to the 'British Canoeing Participant Focused Leadership Guidance' document.

### **Judgement and Decision Making**

A competent Leader uses effective judgement and decision making. Decision making is an essential skill for Leaders. Both slow-time decisions and in-the-moment real-time and potentially pressured decisions will have a significant impact on the safety, enjoyment and performance of the group members.

### **Venue Selection**

The Leader is required to select venues based on the needs of their participants. It is expected that their repertoire should include all environments stated in the environmental definitions.

### **Safety**

The Leader designs and implements effective safety frameworks by undertaking sound risk assessments throughout, hazard awareness, pitching activities to suit both the group's aspirations and challenge. The Leader positions themselves within the group to cover safety and allow freedom. They will implement an effective communication strategy, involving and engaging their group to enable a safe and enjoyable day that meets the group's aims and objectives.

### **Vision**

The Leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others, showing both passion and enthusiasm for paddlesport, consistent with the British Canoeing core values (e.g. access, environment, educational philosophy, equality).

### **Support and Challenge**

The Leader provides empathetic social support in a positive atmosphere, recognising individual needs, differences, strengths and abilities. The Leader creates a supportive climate to encourage teamwork. At times, the Leader supports

appropriately challenging experiences, aligning the level inherent in the activity to motivate individuals, agreeing goals, helping others to set appropriate levels of challenge throughout.

### **Leadership Style and Behaviours**

The leadership style and behaviours applied will meet the needs of participants, the task and the environment. The Leader will empower their group when appropriate but may also need to be more controlling at times to ensure safety.

### **Equipment**

The Leader ensures that personal, group and safety equipment is suitable for the planned journey including craft choice and outfitting, clothing and supplementary resources to provide a safe and enjoyable trip.

### **Environmental Impact**

The Leader manages themselves and the group to reduce any negative impact on the environment, local communities and other water users.

## **B. Personal Paddling Skills**

Leaders need efficient and effective personal skills to facilitate safe, quality, enjoyable sessions in a white water environment. They will need to show the application of technical and tactical skills, the underpinning physiological attributes, psychological skills and the judgement and decision making to perform safely and in control, within the stated environments.

### **Applied Technical and Tactical Skills**

The emphasis is on the ability to effectively and efficiently control their craft in real situations, with consistency, in a white water environment. Skills should be assessed holistically throughout the duration of the assessment; with manoeuvres and actions

applied tactically in the given environment and framed within the context of being able to fulfil the given leading responsibilities.

Leaders need to show consistency in their ability to achieve a desired outcome. It is expected that they can control/manoeuvre their craft without having to think too much about it, by using effective and efficient actions to achieve the outcome. While technical correctness is not emphasised, poor practice that puts the body at risk of injury is not acceptable.

Throughout the duration of assessment, Leaders should demonstrate the following personal skills:

- The Leader is able to accelerate and slow downstream momentum as required. This can be achieved through both using the environment (small waves and eddies), as well as through cadence of strokes.
- The Leader drives the boat accurately through the white water environment. The Leader can identify and paddle a range of lines that reflect the style of white water, and allow the altering of the level of challenge for the paddlers being led.
- The Leader demonstrates an understanding of the tactical options in different rapids. This is shown through line choice, timing and accuracy of the line, by predefining where they are going to end up before entering a rapid.
- The Leader used the river's terrain to create an effective outcome, which inspires confidence and encourages challenge.
- The Leader identifies and uses the water to move their boat laterally in rapids.
- The Leader can react effectively when the desired outcome is not achieved through environmental constraints (e.g. when they hit a small rock or reaction wave that they hadn't prepared for and adapt their in-action approach to solve the new situation - either reach their original target or a good alternative).



- The Leader maintains their balance with effective forward strokes, even when reacting to the white water terrain. Seldom are braces and rolling to be used as techniques for maintaining balance.
- The Leader can demonstrate an appropriate and efficient self-rescue for their chosen craft. For Leaders presenting themselves in either a kayak or OC1, a consistent roll in white water is required.
- The Leader uses the water and eddies to maximise position for group management and to maintain line of sight and position of maximum usefulness.
- The Leader can demonstrate surfing out and back on small waves from an eddy and in the flow of the river, whilst maintaining control.
- The Leader can confidently identify and surf in control in 'friendly' stoppers and have effective tactics to paddle out of stoppers.
- The Leader can get out of their craft in a wide range of situations, whilst maintaining control of all their equipment.

## **Physical and Mental Awareness and Wellbeing**

The Leader demonstrates the ability to respond to, and manage, the physical demands associated with leading. For example, the Leader is aware of their individual capabilities and can apply techniques and tactics to fulfil their leadership responsibilities within their physical limitations.

The Leader demonstrates the ability to respond to, and manage, the psychological demands associated with leading. For example, the Leader is able to perceive, understand and manage their emotions and arousal levels appropriately.

The Leader can manage themselves within appropriate safety frameworks. For example, an appropriate attitude to risk and personal hydration, nutrition and warmth.

## C. Rescue Skills

To ensure the Leaders own safety and the safety of others, they need to show they can deal with a range of rescue situations relevant to the white water environment. The emphasis for the Leader is that they have accurate judgement of personal skills and can be an effective Leader, so they can look after themselves and others while paddling in the white water environment.

Assessment session/s must be planned for the Leader to perform the necessary rescues. Realistic scenarios should be set-up to evaluate the Leaders ability to assess the situation, make appropriate decisions throughout the rescue, and maintain their responsibilities. It is likely that the assessment of criteria will be blended together through a range of practical scenarios and questioning.

**Scenarios:** It is the Leaders safety management and leadership skills that are the main priority to ensure that life threatening scenarios are not at all likely. Scenarios should reflect the typical incidents that the Leader is likely to have to deal with, whilst operating within the scope of their remit.

The Leader must demonstrate application of appropriate underpinning principles, knowledge and understanding, to inform effective actions during a rescue scenario; this includes:

- accurate assessment of the situation
- appropriate choice of rescue, appropriate tactics used
- effective execution of rescue (including safe, management of equipment/people and recovery of the swimmer)
- effective recovery of casualty (and equipment) to a stable environment
- application of shout-reach-throw-row-go principles
- application of self-team-victim-equipment protocol



- appropriate selection/use of rescue equipment
- avoidance of hypothermia
- appropriate first-aid response
- understanding of white water features and hazards
- understanding the effect of weather conditions
- appropriate personal safety precautions taken (including safe moving and handling)
- appropriate manner (calm and in control)
- appropriate support for the person being rescued and the other group members
- maintaining group management responsibilities.

The Leader can carry out emergency procedures when necessary. This will include, for example:

- following organisational procedures
- assess – consider options – raise alarm – stabilise – execute plan
- being able to evacuate from the water
- knowing when to take an individual out of a session
- having knowledge of nearest phone, help, vehicle
- calling for qualified assistance where required; understand who to call and with what information they may need
- giving accurate information when calling for qualified assistance

The Leader should be prepared to demonstrate rescue skills in white water within the remit for the award. Leaders are required to demonstrate the management of effective rescues. These should be informed by an effective decision-making process.

The emphasis for the Leader is that they can be an effective leader of a team. This would include the ability to look after themselves and others while paddling in white water environments.

Throughout all the rescues, the Leader should be able to retain all of their own equipment and be able to formulate a plan of what to do next. The Leader is required to demonstrate the following rescues:

- Recover a capsized paddler (swimmer) and their equipment in white water, getting the swimmer out of the water and recovering both boat and paddle to the side.
- Rescue and stabilise an unconscious paddler and have an open airway. The Leader is required to explain appropriate further actions after initial stabilisation.
- Stabilise an entrapped paddler in white water (the paddler is either pinned in their boat or on a submerged obstacle in the river).

The Leader should be able to make decisions regarding the suitability and appropriateness of chase boating depending on the environment and group needs. This is an essential skill for a Leader, but in the environment, there may be alternatives that they suggest.

### **Incident Management:**

Leaders are required to show that they have the competence to lead a team of paddlers during rescues and incidents. Scenarios will incorporate incidents that involve people, equipment and/or rescues and may include:

- The process of maintaining an overview of the situation so that the safety and wellbeing of the whole group is never forgotten.
- Various strategies for group control, leadership styles and positioning.
- Moving groups in more challenging situations.

- 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.
- Incidents that involve people, e.g. medical conditions such as allergic reactions, hypothermia and physical injuries to group members, etc.
- Incidents that involve equipment, e.g. boat repair, broken/lost paddle, etc.
- The necessity of carrying, and having easily accessible, a suitable means of summoning help in an emergency and a first aid kit, along with familiarity with the use of the first aid kit contents.

#### **D. Underpinning Background Knowledge, Understanding and Experience**

Leaders should demonstrate that they are aware of potential risks, safety precautions and safety thresholds pertinent to leading groups on white water.

##### **Equipment**

- Leaders will demonstrate knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment, both personal and group safety.
- Leaders will know how to evaluate any equipment they use and the importance of how it should be maintained and carried, or worn when in use.

##### **Safety**

- Leaders will be able to show they are aware of the risks and potential dangers associated with travelling on white water.
- Leaders will show they have an understanding of simple solutions to common problems that they may encounter whilst paddling moving water.
- Leaders should demonstrate dynamic risk assessments for themselves and the group.

## Weather, Planning and Navigation

- Leaders can access a variety of sources of weather forecasts and interpret such weather forecasts to predict the actual conditions to be encountered.
- Leaders can plan an appropriate safe journey based on the group's aspirations and ability.
- The Leader will navigate effectively and should be able to locate their current position on a map or via a suitable navigational device.
- The Leader should be able to work out an appropriate escape route using a map.

## Access and Environment

- Leaders can demonstrate that they are aware of the range of access issues that exist and where they can find additional information.
- Leaders demonstrate an appreciation of the environment they paddle and an awareness of how to protect it.
- Leaders should promote a positive image for paddlesport with other water users and local residents.

## Experience

Quality experience is critical to underpin sound leadership decisions. Assessors must be confident that the Leader has a relevant and adequate experience base from which to draw upon and support their decision making process. Examples of evidence could include a logbook, practical assessment, and thorough discussion and questioning.

It is expected that the Leaders base of experience support:

- leading at a variety of white water venues
- rescues in a range of situations
- being able to deal with a range of problems

- working with a range of different clients; for example, known and unknown participants, with different needs and aspirations.

This experience may be gained through a variety of different roles within paddlesport and can be supplemented with relevant experience outside of the paddlesport environment.

### **Deployment Matters and Leadership Responsibilities**

The Leader demonstrates an understanding of deployment matters and their responsibilities. For example:

- First Aid training
- Keeping up-to-date with current best practice
- Safeguarding training and disclosure
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Equality
- Medical declaration, working with injuries, physical competence
- Duty of Care
- Code of Conduct
- Incident reporting
- Injury prevention and manual handling
- Insurance
- Deployer's risk assessment and operating procedures.