
Award Scheme Handbook

Education and Safety Technical Committee



Australian Canoeing Award Scheme 2015

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ABOUT AUSTRALIAN CANOEING AND THE AWARD SCHEME

Australian Canoeing is the peak national canoeing body recognised by the Federal government, and the Australian Canoeing Award Scheme (ACAS) is the national benchmark for canoeing, formulated over many years as the collective work of paddlers of authority and experience. Quality assurance of the ACAS is provided by Australian National coaches. The Scheme presents the highest standards of skills and safety to the general public, recreational paddlers, commercial operators and administrative officials.

Canoeing is a rewarding sport and recreational activity carried out on most Australian waters from rivers, lakes and canoeing venues through to white water and the sea. Paddling is carried out both by individuals or groups of friends or family, supervised or unsupervised. The Award Scheme has been created for paddler development in both skills and knowledge to enrich paddlers' enjoyment of the sport and to develop safe practices amongst all paddlers.

The Scheme is designed to allow anyone to enter at any level. The Skill Awards are milestones that many may chose to ignore even when they are operating at skill levels above those stipulated. The Skill Awards, however, help define minimum paddling skills for those who wish to guide or instruct. The Guide and Instructor Awards represent industry quality paddling awards recognised throughout Australia for use in industry, education and clubs.

The Skill Awards are more than just competency based. Holders of a given skill award have a well-tested and Australia-wide moderated set of paddling skills that allow those paddlers to operate confidently and safely within their tested conditions. Instructor Awards are given only to those who have demonstrated higher skills, good teaching abilities and leadership qualities through examination.

Australian Canoeing appoints assessors after they have completed an AC Assessor course. These people are Instructors in their own right who have additional experience and the ability to judge the standards of other paddlers.

ACAS is administered through a network of National Training Providers (NTPs), which are required to adhere to a strict set of training and assessment criteria that meet national safety standards and exceed VET requirements.

Australian Canoeing maintains a pathway to VET recognition for Instructors in all contexts via the AC Education and Safety Technical Committee.

The Award Scheme is reviewed every three years, and Australian Canoeing welcomes input into the Scheme. Comments and criticisms may be directed to the Education and Safety Committee who wrote the Award Scheme for consideration and elucidation. Contact with the Education and Safety Committee can be made directly through the Australian Canoeing website: www.canoe.org.au

The Australian Canoeing website provides resources to distribute the ACAS to members of Australian Canoeing.

DEFINITIONS

AC - Australian Canoeing Inc.

Co-requisite - Where an AC rescue award is called for, a demonstration of the necessary rescue skills during the assessment process will be adequate.

Guide - A person who leads or guides a group without the intention of imparting skills or knowledge beyond that which is necessary to participate safely and adequately in the activity. At the end of a session or program with a guide, the intent is not for the participant to have acquired the skills to independently participate in the activity.

ICF - International Canoe Federation.

Instructor - A person who facilitates skill transfer or development to participants in order that they may act independently or with minimal supervision. This requires the instructor to be able to critique technique, apply a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and may require them to assess participant's skill acquisition at the end of a program or session. Instructor awards include all the elements of the related Guide awards.

Leader - A person giving direction to a group. This includes Instructors, Guides, trip leaders, peer leaders, Scout leaders, group leaders, etc.

Participant - A person who has the necessary competencies to participate independently or under supervision in an outdoor activity. The ability to demonstrate participatory skills to the appropriate standard is a pre-requisite to performing as a Guide or Instructor in outdoor recreation.

Peer Activity - A paddling activity where no instructional or guiding structure exists and it is the responsibility of each member of the group to ensure the suitability of their equipment and themselves for the activity.

Prerequisite - Where an AC paddling Skill Award is called for, a demonstration throughout the assessment process will be adequate.

Re-registration - The process of renewing Guide or Instructor awards at their three year expiry by providing evidence of continued participation at the appropriate level.

Skill Award - Skill Awards are a demonstration that a paddler has achieved a certain level of skills and knowledge, and are prerequisites for training to Guide and Instructor awards. They have no expiry date, and it is the responsibility of holders to maintain skill and expertise to be able to participate at the appropriate level. Lack of a Skill Award in no way precludes any paddler from paddling within their limits and should not be seen as a necessary requirement for paddling. It is merely a formal statement of demonstrated skills.

VET - Vocational Education and Training.

RTO - Registered training organisation

AQF – Australian qualification framework.

ASSESSMENT

OVERARCHING METHODOLOGY

The assessment of an ACAS award should be performed in as near real conditions as possible and should be designed to clearly confirm the ability of a candidate to perform at the award level in other circumstances.

The ACAS is not a VET qualification, however its standards of information, training and assessment meet or exceed that required by the Outdoor Recreation Training Package, a path for recognition under that scheme for some awards is maintained via AC.

All assessments must be conducted by a current AC Assessor whilst in the employment or under contract to a current AC National Training Provider (organisation).

Assessments must follow the standards set out under Assessment Standards below.

NATIONALLY CONSISTENT

Individuals expect that they can use the skills from ACAS qualifications across Australia and employers expect that the staff they hire have the same skills no matter where they were assessed. It is important that assessment is not contextualized to a level that makes it non-transferable.

STREAMLINED

The standards for ACAS and NTPs have been simplified and streamlined to focus on outcomes. ACAS 2015 places the emphasis on providing a sound development tool to the non-competitive paddler.

TRANSPARENT

National guidelines and handbooks are readily accessible to all AC NTPS.

COPYRIGHT

All ACAS resources are copyright to Australian Canoeing and exclusively for the use of ACAS Award holders working within the National Training Provider Structure. All other use, copying or distribution requires written permission from Australian Canoeing.

ASSESSOR REQUIREMENTS

To become an ACAS Assessor candidates must apply to AC.

ACAS Assessors are appointed by AC for a period of three years.

Assessors are able to assess up to and including those awards for which they have held the equivalent level instructor for a minimum of three years.

ACAS Assessor candidates must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have operated as an AC Instructor for at least three years
- Have paddled for at least five years
- Hold a current Apply first aid certificate
- Have delivered components of at least three Instructional programs under the direction of an NTP
- Have observed or assisted in three AC assessment programs.

ASSESSOR APPLICATION PROCESS

Candidates for appointment as AC Assessors must apply in writing to AC. The application is to include:

- Copies of the paddler's logbook for the past three years
- A letter from a third party verifying the logbook
- A letter from an NTP supporting the application. This letter must include the following:
 - Duration of knowledge of the applicant
 - Areas where the applicant has been observed
 - Programs in which the applicant has been observed instructing
 - Programs in which the applicant has been observed assisting or observing assessment
 - Verification that the applicant operates safely as an instructor within the NTP.
- The candidate must also sign the sections of the application that agree to:
 - Using and understanding the Safety Guidelines
 - Complying with the constitution and bylaws of AC
 - Maintaining a personal program of continuous improvement and education.

All assessments must be conducted in accordance with AC requirements and is to be holistic; the candidate for an AC award is to operate in the full capacity of the award (cover all elements of the award being assessed) and in context with the award being assessed and is to be:

- **Valid**—Assessors must see original work which is relevant to the award and which addresses and demonstrates practical application of the knowledge and skills
- **Sufficient**—It must demonstrate that the level of skill or knowledge can be reached in a real workplace across differing conditions and contexts. It must not simply be evidence of a one off performance
- **Reliable**—If a skill or knowledge area is not directly assessed, the evidence used must match the level of evidence provided by a direct assessment
- **Current**—Evidence of performing an award role (leader, guide or instructor) must relate to performance in the last 12 months. Log book evidence of experience and skill levels must relate to performance in the last three years
- **Authentic**—The evidence must clearly refer to the work of the individual (not a group effort) and must be validated by signatures and third party contact details.
- **Types of evidence:**
 - **Direct**—Direct observation by the assessor of performance of an award role.
 - **Indirect**—Includes simulations, role plays or problem responses. This type of evidence is not allowed for on water skills.
 - **Supplementary**—Competence inferred by testimonials, academic statements and interviews.

CRITICAL AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

In all assessments the following areas will be assessed and must meet the specified criteria.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Skill Awards – Understands and demonstrates the principles.

Guide and Leader Awards – Briefs and corrects, understands and demonstrates the principles.

Instructor Awards – Teaches in both theory and practical sessions, briefs and corrects, understands and demonstrates the principles.

Assessors – Understands the background to the principles.

INJURY PREVENTION

Critical Area	Specific Component	Paddlers to understand and demonstrate
Sun Safe	Protection	Hats, Sunglasses, sunscreen, shirt, lip protection
Posture	Straight Back	The need to maintain a straight back with slight forward lean whilst paddling.
	Supported Feet	Feet to be firmly supported so as to provide support to the lower back.
	Pelvis Position	Upright seating position provides the healthiest lumbar spine configuration.
Reach/power	Paddler's box	The concept of the paddler's box is understood and all strokes are taken within its confines.
	Use of larger muscle masses	The efficiency, endurance and strength of larger muscle groups.
Body Vulnerability	Shoulders	Construction and risk associated with actions where the elbow is above shoulder and behind body plane.
	Elbows	Construction; elbows should be kept slightly bent for power and stability.
Nutrition	Drink	Drink appropriate to duration and effort
	Food	Food appropriate to duration and effort

LEADERSHIP

Critical area	Specific component	Paddler to understand and demonstrate
Personal	Equipment	Equipment appropriate to the activity context
	Safety	Correct safety equipment stowage and carriage
Group	Briefs	Clear statement and understanding of aims and objectives of the activity
		Activity signals

		Actions in the event of capsize
Leadership (if applicable)	Group management	Clear briefs
		Management during launch and landing
		Management in the event of capsize

PADDLE STROKES

Critical area	Specific Component	Paddler to understand and demonstrate
Strokes	Body rotation	Power phase of stroke is driven by body rotation
	Hand placement on paddle	Hands should be in surrender position
	Wrist movement	Sufficient wrist movement for correct blade angle
	Paddle depth	Blade buried throughout power phases
	Entry point	Correct entry point for each stroke
	Exit point	Correct exit point for each stroke

GENERAL ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

All assessments must be separate to training. Competency observed during training must be assessed at a distinctly separate time to ensure that it is learning that is being observed and not simply the ability to copy and repeat.

Assessors are required to clearly inform candidates that they are under assessment and:

- The candidate's performance is being observed
- The candidate has the right to appeal the assessment findings
- The candidate's performance will be scored against specific criteria
- They may not meet certain criteria
- In the event of group assessment:
 - They will be required to demonstrate performance in front of their peers
 - They may be asked in front of their peers to demonstrate performance a second time
 - The assessor may need to cease an activity or demonstrate an activity differently to how it was by the candidate due to safety or injury prevention concerns

The assessor can cease assessment due to safety or injury prevention concerns at any time. Assessment is to be against specific objective criteria. If an Assessor is concerned about the performance of a candidate but due to logistics, environmental or other assessment constraints, cannot confirm a result against the criteria, assessment may be suspended; however a negative result may not be recorded against the criteria.

In the event that a candidate is found not competent in any part of the assessment process, re-assessment should not be conducted within the next four weeks. The assessor may relax this requirement if they feel the context leads itself to earlier re-assessment.

KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Knowledge can be assessed through a variety of formats including written exams, short questions, presentations, discussion and questioning, etc.

Critical areas include safety, injury prevention and group management. To be determined competent in these areas you must:

- Not indicate by word or action any action that would place people in greater risk.

TECHNICAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Technical skills must be assessed in the context of the award (i.e. water grade, sea state, sea environment, etc.)

Technical skills must be directly assessed by a current AC Assessor.

Consistency in technical skills is paramount and assessors should confirm the ability to repeat critical skills such as rolling in a variety of contexts.

LOGBOOK STANDARDS

Candidates should be recommended to make a log entry for every paddle they undertake. The log book should be divided so that each trip has its own entry, that is dated and as a minimum contains:

- Time/distance
- The type of boat
- The number of participants
- Entry and exit points
- A general weather and water description.

Summaries such as '5 paddles during December, various locations' are considered unverifiable and inadmissible in courts as evidence of currency and therefore are unacceptable when applying for or re-registering an award.

EXPERIENCE STANDARDS

Candidates are required to demonstrate a level of experience for all awards above Basic Skills. This experience should be clearly written in a verifiable logbook as detailed in this document. Unless otherwise required by the award:

- General experience must be in the previous three years
- Guiding, instructional or leadership experience must be in the previous 12 months
- Experience must cover the upper limits of the required operational or assessment conditions.

MINIMUM AGE FOR INSTRUCTOR AWARDS

Participants must be over 18 years of age to obtain an Instructor award.

Participants aged between 15 and 18 who fulfill the requirements of an Instructor award may be assessed and obtain a Junior Instructor Award that automatically converts to a full award when they turn 18 years of age.

Junior Instructors must work under supervision from an adult Instructor.

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

APPEALS AGAINST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Candidates can appeal against the results of their assessment. Appeals should be made in the first place to the NTP providing assessment, however if a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached an appeal can be lodged with AC.

Appeals must include the following:

- The appeal fee
- Details of all parties (candidate, assessor, NTP)
- Details of date, time and place of assessment
- Conditions of assessment (river level, sea state, wind, etc.)
- Specific details of the equipment used by the candidate in assessment
- Specific details of the decision being appealed against. The details must include the performance criteria in question and the evidence that is under consideration.

Note: this is not a forum for general complaints against Instructors, Assessors or NTPs.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST ASSESSORS

Concerns and complaints about the operation of an Assessor should be handled in the following way.

All concerns should first be taken to the NTP in question. When a complaint is brought before the AC Education and Safety Technical Committee, evidence that the parties directly involved have been notified will be required.

Complaints which are referred to the AC Education and Safety Technical Committee are to be addressed to the Chair and must include the following:

- The registration fee
- Details of all parties (complainant, Assessor, NTP)
- Details of date, time and place of incident
- Conditions at incident (river level, sea state, wind, etc.)
- Specific details of any equipment involved in incident
- Specific details of the incident.

Note: This is not a forum for general complaints against Instructors, Assessors or NTPs. Concerns and evidence must be specific.

COMPLIANCE WITH RTO STANDARDS

AC NATIONAL TRAINING PROVIDERS PROVIDE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The following items form part of the auditing of AC NTPs:

- 1.1 NTPs collect feedback after assessment programs, using the information to maintain a culture of safety and continuous improvement
- 1.2, 1.3 NTPs use the ACAS assessment tools which meet training package requirements. NTPs are required to provide AC with regular feedback on the assessment tools
- 1.4 Assessment is conducted by current AC Assessors under the supervision of a current AC NTP
- 1.5 RPL is available, however to ensure consistency in national safety, technique and injury prevention standards, the technical skills must be assessed by a current AC assessor.
- 2.1 NTPs continuously improve client services through 1.1 and via continuous national education and networking programs.
- 2.2 Candidates for assessment have free access to assessment standards and summaries and detailed information about their rights and obligations
- 2.3 Both the ACAS and NTPs have open channels for review and development with assessors and candidates.
- 2.4 Within the framework of nationally consistent standards of technique, injury prevention and safety, individuals receive support and assessment to meet their needs
- 2.5 Candidates have access to their results
- 2.6 Complaints are dealt with directly by Assessors or through their associated NTPs. Where parties are dissatisfied with the results, complaints can be taken to the AC Education and Safety Technical Committee.
- 3.1 The ACAS is reviewed every three years and as a result of request for review of specific areas. NTPs are required to implement updates as well as continuously monitoring and using a system of continuous improvement on their management systems
- 3.2 NTPs ensure they deliver ACAS components as required by AC.
- 3.3 NTPs must keep copies of all assessment documents including assessment summaries, exams, assessor's notes and log books for a minimum of seven years. Details of student enrolment and results must be kept for 30 year

FLATWATER DEFINITION

Flatwater areas are areas such as lakes, dams, slow moving rivers, etc. An area should **not** be classified as flatwater if any of the following apply:

- rapids of any grade
- surf (of any size) entry or exit
- if the area is in the entrance structure to an estuary or embayment
- an area affected by swell
- documented tidal rips (see chart)
- documented tidal current greater than 1 knot (see chart)
- any area where the tide (rise or fall) removes a landing area or makes it unsuitable
- distances greater than 400 metres from shore
- fetch greater than 1 nautical mile.

The transition from flatwater to sea will often occur in the area of the following features:

- major river bend
- barrier sand bar structure
- Constriction in river.

AWARDS

For further information on the awards below including award definitions and evidence guides, please click [here](#)

FLATWATER AWARDS:

- Basic Skills
- Flatwater Skills (Canoe, Kayak, SUP)
- Flatwater Guide (Canoe, Kayak)
- Flatwater Instructor (Canoe, Kayak, SUP)
- Overnight camping Endorsement
- Moving Water Endorsement

SEA AWARDS:

- Introduction to Sea skills
- Sea Skills
- Sea Leader
- Enclosed Sea Guide
- Sea Guide
- Enclosed Sea Instructor
- Sea Instructor
- Advanced Sea Skills
- Advanced Sea Instructor

WHITEWATER AWARDS:

- Whitewater Skills
- Whitewater Guide
- Whitewater Instructor
- Advanced Whitewater Skills
- Advanced Whitewater Instructor
- Rescue 1
- Rescue 2
- Rescue 3

AUSTRALIAN CANOEING LOGOS

COMPANY ACCREDITATION

NATIONAL TRAINING PROVIDER

Licensed to deliver AC Award Scheme training

Uses AC Guides and Instructors

Complies with the AC Safety Guidelines

Meets VET, AQF training and assessment standards

Current: One year registration

Up to date: Informed of the latest in technique, safety and injury prevention

Quality assurance through a regular audit program

AUSTRALIAN CANOEING ACCREDITED COMPANY

Uses AC Guides and Instructors

Complies with the AC safety Guidelines

Current: One year registration

Up to date: Informed of the latest in technique, safety and injury prevention

Quality assurance through a regular audit program

INDIVIDUAL ACCREDITATION

AUSTRALIAN CANOEING INSTRUCTOR

Trained in the latest in training and educational techniques

Current: Three year registration

Up to date: Informed of the latest in technique, safety and injury prevention

AUSTRALIAN CANOEING GUIDE

Qualified to guide novice paddlers

Current: Three year registration

Up to date: Informed of the latest in technique, safety and injury prevention

AUSTRALIAN CANOEING ASSESSOR

Current AC Instructor

Current: Three year registration

Up to date: Informed of the latest in technique, safety and injury prevention

Equivalent to VET, AQF training and assessment standards

To display the AC logo a company, association or individual must:

- Be registered with AC
- Comply with the AC:
 - Safety Guidelines
 - Minimal Impact Standards